

HISTORY SYLLABUS

Pre-University

H3

Implementation starting with
2016 Pre-University One Cohort



Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE VALUE OF LEARNING HISTORY

1.1 DESIRED OUTCOMES OF EDUCATION AND HISTORY EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE

The Desired Outcomes of Education are attributes that educators aspire for all Singaporeans to have by the completion of their formal education. These outcomes establish a common purpose for educators, drive our policies and programmes, and allow us to determine how well our education system is doing.

The person who is schooled in the Singapore education system embodies the Desired Outcomes of Education as:

- a **confident person** who has a strong sense of right and wrong, is adaptable and resilient, knows himself, is discerning in judgement, thinks independently and critically, and communicates effectively;
- a **self-directed learner** who questions, reflects, perseveres, and takes responsibility for his own learning;
- an **active contributor** who is able to work effectively in teams, is innovative, exercises initiative, takes calculated risks and strives for excellence; and
- a **concerned citizen** who is rooted to Singapore, has strong civic consciousness, is informed about Singapore and the world, and takes an active part in bettering the lives of others around him.

History education is an important process in achieving the Desired Outcomes of Education. At the heart of learning History is the quest to uncover the complexities that define the human experience – past, present and future. This develops students' capacity as confident and independent learners who ask critical questions and consider different perspectives.

1.2 PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY EDUCATION

The Statement of Philosophy of History education encapsulates the fundamental purpose and value of learning History. It underpins the role of History education in Singapore and guides the development of our syllabus design to capture the place of History in the school curriculum. This Statement of Philosophy was distilled from dialogues with teachers, students and professional historians about the character and value of History as a subject and discipline, as well as the learning outcomes we hope our students can achieve.

Statement of Philosophy

History Education in Singapore seeks to develop in students an appreciation of past human experiences, critical awareness of the nature of historical knowledge, and the ability to make connections between the past and present.

Qualities of a History Learner

There are seven Qualities of a History Learner, which the History syllabuses from lower secondary to pre-university aim to develop in students:



Figure 1.2a: Qualities of a History Learner

1.3 DEVELOPING 21ST CENTURY COMPETENCIES AND CHARACTER AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION THROUGH HISTORY EDUCATION

The Qualities of a History Learner support the development of competencies that allow our students to thrive in the 21st Century. As outlined by MOE's 21st Century Competencies Framework, nurturing future-ready Singaporeans involves focusing on capacity building (comprising knowledge, skills and dispositions). This entails developing the capacity for complex communication, civic literacy and global awareness as well as critical and inventive thinking¹.



Figure 1.3a: Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes¹ (from 2014)

Complex communication in the study of History involves the making of effective oral and written arguments and obtaining information from different types of sources. As students learn to read like historians, they develop the capacity to observe patterns, make sense of contradictions and develop reasoned interpretations. This process of working with historical information and evidence often requires students to work together in small groups to create knowledge. This provides a platform for students to develop the ability to work effectively with others.

The History curriculum supports Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) in similar ways. The skills related to citizenship competencies are articulated in the components of the domain on Civic Literacy, Global Awareness and Cross-cultural Skills. When students learn about local, regional and global developments in the syllabus content, they develop the knowledge and skills to reflect on and respond to issues as informed and responsible citizens. They also demonstrate socio-cultural sensitivity and awareness. By deepening students' understanding of Singapore and regional history, the History curriculum fosters pride and development in our national and cultural identities.

¹ More information on MOE's 21st Century Competencies can be obtained from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/21cc/>.

1.4 AIMS OF H3 HISTORY

The H3 History syllabus is designed for H2 History students who have a strong ability and passion in the subject. H3 History builds on the knowledge and skills students develop in H2 History by providing them with the opportunity to extend their learning and engage in a wider range of learning and assessment modes. The syllabus seeks to cultivate students' appreciation of historical understanding as they deepen their learning of historical concepts, methods and processes.

To allow students to explore History in greater depth and breadth, the H3 History syllabus comprises two elements: a taught element, known as *Investigating History*, and a research element, known as *Historical Inquiry*. In *Investigating History*, students deepen their understanding of the nature of History and the historian's craft through discussing historical debates and case studies that exemplify historical issues. *Historical Inquiry* further engages students in the task of 'doing history' as students apply their understanding of how historical knowledge is constructed by writing an independent research paper on a topic of their own choice.

The syllabus aims to encourage students to:

- engage in independent research;
- develop an appreciation of History as a discipline by examining how and why it is studied;
- critically appraise how the past is interpreted, portrayed and represented;
- recognise that historical interpretations and judgements are based on available evidence and are provisional in nature;
- reach informed conclusions about historical issues and developments through the study of fields of History and the methods and processes of the discipline;
- communicate substantiated arguments on historical issues and events in a clear and well-structured manner; and
- develop a lasting interest in History.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Knowledge & Understanding

At the end of their H3 History experience, students should be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the following:

- history as a construct—history is constructed from evidence and there are different interpretations of historical events;
- historical concepts, which help develop a stronger awareness of the nature of the discipline, problematise the study of historical developments, and provide tools to undertake an inquiry into the past; and
- the key characteristics of the period or issues studied—this includes the nature of History and the historian's craft discussed in the taught element, and the chosen area of study in the student's independent research.

Skills

Students should also demonstrate their knowledge and understanding by employing the following skills:

- unpack demands of the research question they have chosen to respond to independently;
- conduct research to select relevant sources and information to address their research question;
- systematically analyse various factors and synthesise multiple perspectives and interpretations to construct a valid, balanced and persuasive argument;
- present meaningful interpretations of the past by drawing appropriately from analysed evidence, historical contexts and frames of reference;
- develop a nuanced understanding of complex cause-and-effect relationships;
- recognise, analyse and evaluate the dynamics of change and continuity over time and space, and relate these patterns to larger historical themes;
- categorise events into discrete periods to evaluate turning points and assess their historical significance; and
- identify, compare and evaluate multiple perspectives on a given historical issue or event.

Values and Attitudes

Students demonstrate the internalisation of key values and mindsets associated with the understanding of the historian's craft when they:

- show sensitivity to how people's views and perspectives shape their interpretation of events, issues or developments in any specific time and space;
- are aware of how cultural, intellectual and emotional contexts shape the thinking, value systems, decisions and actions of different peoples and groups in different times and places;
- show openness to and respect for diverse and sometimes opposing viewpoints;
- tolerate ambiguity and are able to pose relevant questions to conduct further investigation independently;
- modify and adapt their thinking according to multiple sources of information, perspectives and different circumstances, underpinned by sound moral values;
- recognise, question and refine the value system which provides a moral compass in governing their actions as citizens;
- empathise with people from different social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds; and
- identify and embrace connections between themselves and the larger community (past and present) and realise that their actions impact others, thus promoting a commitment to improve the world.

2. PEDAGOGY: DEVELOPING HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING THROUGH INQUIRY

History is an interpretation of the past that is constructed through a process of investigation. This process of investigation is known as historical inquiry. When students learn History through inquiry, they engage in ways of thinking associated with ‘doing history’. This builds their capacity to think critically and make informed judgements when they encounter different perspectives or contradictory evidence.

Historical inquiry is a cyclical process (**Figure 2.1a**). It begins by asking guiding historical questions. To answer these questions, students establish historical evidence by locating and analysing historical sources and use historical evidence to construct historical interpretations. The final stage of the historical inquiry process involves reflecting on the contributions and limitations of the historical interpretation or presenting a conclusion through an end-product². This reflection may generate more historical questions that form the basis for another historical inquiry.

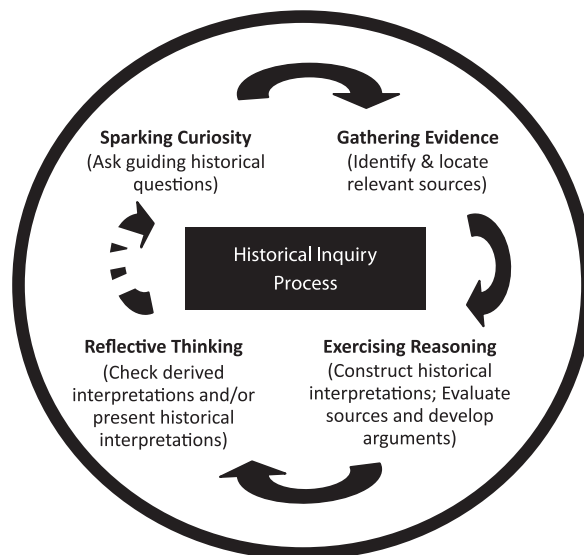


Figure 2.1a: Cycle of Historical Inquiry

Historical inquiry is central to the H3 History learning experience. This is most evident in students undertaking the research element which involves students embarking on a historical inquiry based on primary or secondary sources. Students identify a topic that they would like to research and craft a question that their research essay would answer. Students identify relevant sources, gather evidence and exercise reasoning to construct an argument. This argument constitutes their answer to the research question. In historical inquiry, students actively construct their own knowledge and gain further insights into the discipline by reflecting on the knowledge-construction process.

To support students in historical inquiry at the H3 level, the taught element, *Investigating History*, is designed to build students’ capacity to examine the History question that they have chosen to explore. The content in *Investigating History* provides students with a theoretical understanding of the nature of History and the historian’s craft while engaging students on historical debates and issues that they may further pursue in their research.

² Adapted from Mike Gorman, “The ‘structured enquiry’ is not a contradiction in terms: focused teaching for independent learning” in *Teaching History*, Historical Association, London, September 1998; and from Peter Doolittle, David Hicks & Tom Ewing, Virginia Tech, *The Historical Inquiry Project*, 2004-2005.

3. CONTENT: DEVELOPING HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING THROUGH THE H3 SYLLABUS

3.1 SYLLABUS CONTENT FOR *INVESTIGATING HISTORY*

H3 History takes the form of a non-examinable taught element, *Investigating History*, and an examinable research element, *Historical Inquiry*. *Investigating History* builds students' capacity to undertake a critical approach to examining the History research question they have chosen by introducing students to the fundamental question, 'What is History?', and guiding students in applying their understanding of how the past is constructed. Through *Investigating History*, students will gain a theoretical understanding of the nature of History and the historian's craft. Students will examine the following issues which shape historical research and writing:

- different views on the relationship between History and truth;
- how and why history is constructed;
- from whose perspective is history written; and
- the nature and limitations of historical knowledge.

These issues will be explored through three topics:

What is History? introduces students to the debate on the relationship between History and truth. Students learn that perceptions about the nature of History have changed over time and continues to be contentious. This overarching debate provides the context for students to understand the issues historians debate about and forms a basis for them to reflect on the historical accounts they construct in their research essays.

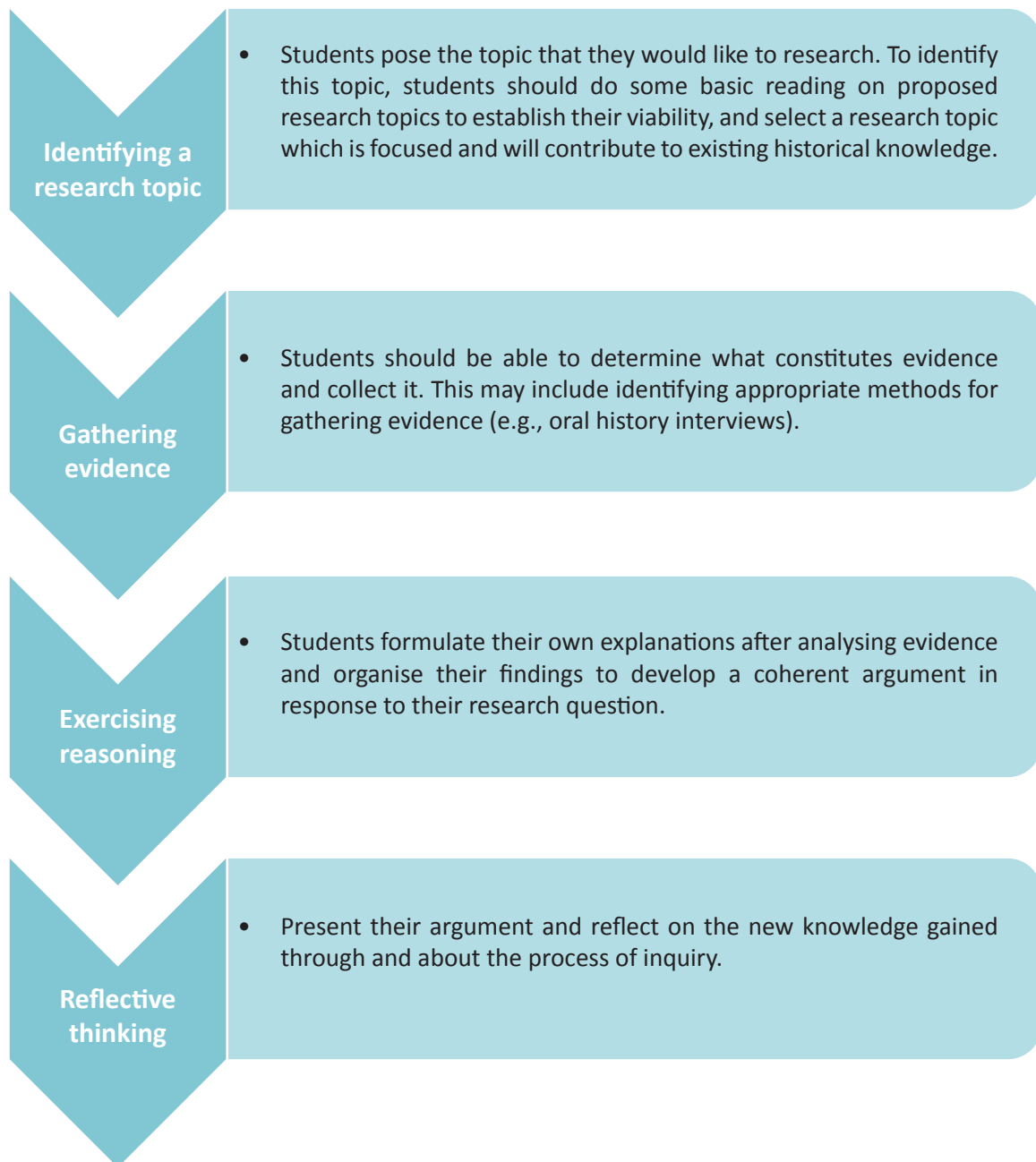
In **What Makes a Good History Question?**, students understand how History is constructed and contested, using examples drawn from different historical fields. Students will learn to question how and why different historical narratives are constructed, and learn how to assess such existing narratives. These issues help students to identify gaps in the current stage of knowledge about a topic, which they may choose to research.

How is Historical Knowledge Constructed? focuses on the research process of writing history. It helps students understand the value and limitations of sources in constituting historical evidence so that they may identify suitable sources for their research and develop the ability to think critically about them.

3.2 HISTORICAL INQUIRY

For their H3 research paper, students could embark on a historical inquiry based on primary and/or secondary sources. They could conduct fieldwork studies concerning national landmarks, religious and archaeological sites. Other types of historical inquiry could include oral history projects, book reviews and critical appraisal of works of art such as films, painting and sculpture. Alternatively, they could study the problems involved in using documents, such as newspapers in the portrayal of people, events or places.

Students' inquiry should reflect the following stages:



4. DEVELOPING HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING THROUGH ASSESSMENT

4.1 ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

Students will be expected to:

AO1: Demonstrate historical understanding through the use of historical methods and processes to acquire, select and synthesise knowledge.

AO2: Demonstrate a critical awareness of the range of differing historical viewpoints by establishing connections, making comparisons and interpreting them in the context of historical events or issues.

AO3: Interpret and evaluate evidence by distinguishing between fact, opinion and judgement, highlighting gaps and inconsistencies in the available body of historical knowledge.

AO4: Present well-substantiated arguments, displaying independence of thought and analysis as well as an understanding about the nature of history, which are communicated with clarity and coherence through an independent historical investigation.

4.2 SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment Format

The examination for H3 History involves the submission of a 3000—3500-word Research Essay based on a topic of their choice which had been approved in advance by Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). Research should commence in November of the first academic year and the essay should be ready for submission to CIE by September of the second academic year.

The table below provides a suggested framework for the Research Essay.

Structure of the Research Paper	Description
Research Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the research question.• Explain the rationale for the choice of the research question.• Explain the rationale of the approach/method of inquiry adopted to conduct the research.
Literature Scan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Show evidence of a range of relevant readings.• Assess critically existing state of knowledge.• Explain how the literature scan contributes to the understanding of the research question.
Analysis, Interpretation and Explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use relevant evidence in the discussion with proper citation.• Demonstrate skills of historical analysis through the critical evaluation of sources used to answer the research question.• Show an understanding of change and continuity and cause and consequence in historical explanation.• Show cogency and coherence in argument.• Where appropriate, demonstrate originality in terms of interpretation and judgement.
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effectively summarises the main arguments of the research essay in relation to the research question.• Highlight contributions and limitations of the research.