

Grade Descriptions for Cambridge IGCSE History 0470

What are Grade Descriptions?

Grade descriptions describe the level of performance typically demonstrated by candidates achieving the different grades awarded for a qualification. For Cambridge IGCSEs, they describe performance at three levels – grades ‘F’, ‘C’ and ‘A’.

Grade descriptions sit alongside other key documents that illustrate examination standards, including:

- the syllabus, which presents what students should be taught over a course of study and explains how this is assessed
- the specimen assessment materials, which illustrate the structure of the assessment and the kinds of tasks that candidates complete
- grade thresholds, which show the total mark required to achieve a grade.

Grade descriptions are produced with a wide range of audiences in mind. For teachers, they support lesson planning and curriculum development, while students may gain useful insights into what is required to achieve a high grade and what candidate performance at lower grades typically looks like. For university admissions staff and employers, and those less familiar with Cambridge, they paint a picture of typical performance at different grades.

Cambridge publishes grade descriptions for a qualification once examinations have taken place for the first time and we review them when a qualification is substantially revised. They are developed by highly experienced examiners who understand performance standards in the subject area and have studied samples of candidate work.

How do I use this resource?

Grade descriptions are presented as a grid, with content areas at the start of each row and the different grades at the top of each column.

The content areas group together various aspects of the syllabus – they reflect topics, assessment objectives, key concepts, syllabus aims and/or components. The way they are organised is specific to each subject.

For each content area there is a descriptor for each grade. Reading across the row from left to right, the descriptors represent increasing levels of performance, with each grade descriptor building on, and including, the last.

Each column represents overall performance at a particular grade. Reading down the column from top to bottom, the descriptors capture the range of knowledge, understanding and skills that a candidate ‘comfortably inside the grade’ is likely to demonstrate.

Cambridge produces grade descriptions to support teaching and learning and the interpretation of candidate scores and grades. We do not use them to set grade thresholds. As such, they cannot be used to challenge the grade awarded to any individual candidate.

Grade Descriptions

Area of knowledge, understanding and skills	Typical performance at grade F	Typical performance at grade C	Typical performance at grade A
Recalling, selecting, organising and deploying historical knowledge	Students recall basic historical knowledge. They select limited knowledge which is organised to produce writing with a simple structure.	Students recall relevant historical knowledge with some accuracy. They select, organise and deploy mostly relevant knowledge to produce structured writing.	Students accurately recall relevant and detailed historical knowledge. They consistently select, organise and effectively deploy relevant and accurate knowledge to produce coherent and logically developed writing.
Understanding events, developments and key features of the past	Students demonstrate basic understanding of events, developments and key features and characteristics of the past. They use this understanding to construct narratives and descriptions. For example, they might describe some of the events of the Cold War.	Students demonstrate a sound understanding of events, developments and key features of the past, with some awareness of the broad context. They use this understanding to produce explanations. For example, they might explain the nature of East–West relations during the Cold War.	Students demonstrate a good understanding of events, developments and key features of the past, with sound awareness of the broad context. They use this understanding to analyse aspects of the past and to support arguments. For example, they might reach and support conclusions about how close, during the Cold War, the world came to a ‘hot’ world war.
Understanding the motives, intentions and beliefs of people and societies in the past	Students demonstrate some knowledge of the motives, intentions and beliefs of people and societies in the past. They use this understanding to construct descriptions. For example, they may describe the actions of the Italian army in Abyssinia.	Students demonstrate a sound understanding of the motives, intentions and beliefs of people and societies in the past. They use this understanding to explain people’s actions. For example, they might explain reasons why Mussolini ordered the invasion of Abyssinia.	Students demonstrate good understanding of the motives, intentions and beliefs of people and societies in the past. They use this understanding to analyse and explain. For example, they might evaluate possible reasons for the Italian invasion of Abyssinia.

Area of knowledge, understanding and skills	Typical performance at grade F	Typical performance at grade C	Typical performance at grade A
Understanding the importance of inter-relationships in the past	Students appreciate basic aspects of inter-relationships in the past. For example, they may understand attitudes in the USA towards the Vietnam War.	Students demonstrate understanding of aspects of inter-relationships in the past. They might, for example, use this understanding to explain the impact of events in the Vietnam War on public opinion in the USA.	Students demonstrate good awareness of the importance of inter-relationships in the past. They use this awareness to construct complex explanations, for example demonstrating how events in Vietnam and developments in the USA interacted with each other.
Understanding and evaluating the significance of events, people, developments and beliefs in the past	Students describe the impact of events, people, developments and beliefs in the past. For example, they might describe the impact of the Depression on the lives of German people.	Students demonstrate a sound understanding of historical significance. For example, they might use this understanding to explain why the Depression was significant for Germany.	Students demonstrate good understanding of how to assess historical significance. For example, they may assess how far the Depression was significant for Germany in different ways and for different reasons.
Constructing historical explanations	Students begin to construct basic descriptions of causes and consequences, changes and continuities, and similarities and differences. For example, they might describe some of the events leading up to the Cuban Missile Crisis.	Students demonstrate reasonable understanding of cause and consequence, change and continuity, and similarity and difference. They construct valid historical explanations. For example, they might explain a single cause of the Cuban Missile Crisis.	Students demonstrate a good understanding of cause and consequence, change and continuity, and similarity and difference. They construct complex, developed and well-supported historical explanations. For example, they construct a multicausal explanation of the Cuban Missile Crisis.
Constructing arguments and reaching reasoned and supported judgements about the past	Students can assert points of view and reach some simple conclusions about the past. For example, they might assert that the policy of appeasement was a mistake.	Students construct and support sound arguments and reach valid conclusions about the past. For example, they may explain why they think the policy of appeasement was a mistake.	Students construct and support convincing arguments and reach reasoned and substantiated judgements about the past. For example, they might explain and balance arguments for and against the policy of appeasement and reach a supported conclusion.

Area of knowledge, understanding and skills	Typical performance at grade F	Typical performance at grade C	Typical performance at grade A
Interpreting and evaluating a range of sources as evidence in their historical context	Students comprehend surface meaning of sources. For example, they might pick out details of a cartoon.	Students interpret and begin to evaluate a range of sources in context. For example, they might explain the intended message of a political speech or begin to recognise the purpose of a newspaper article.	Students critically interpret, analyse, evaluate and use a range of sources in context. For example, they might infer the purpose of a political speech and use it to evaluate the claims being made.
Using a range of sources to reach and support judgements about the past	Students reach simple conclusions using one or two sources. For example, they might reach a conclusion about the causes of the Second World War by using surface details in one or two sources.	Students interpret and use a range of sources in their historical context to reach supported judgements. For example, they might explain how several sources support a certain view about the causes of the Second World War.	Students investigate historical issues, using a range of sources critically and in their historical context to reach reasoned and well-supported judgements. For example, they might use a range of sources to explain and compare differing views about the causes of the Second World War. They then reach their own conclusions.

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