History Key Stage 4 Curriculum Overview

Years 10 and 11 | Pearson Edexcel GCSE History | Qualification 1HI0

GCSE History develops our commitment to Discipline and Discovery, informed by Ben Walsh and Teaching History. Scholars deepen their knowledge of Britain and the wider world while investigating how historians construct and debate accounts of the past.

What scholars study

The course combines change across a long period, close study of a historic environment, a period study and two depth studies. Scholars connect broad patterns with the detailed experiences of particular people and societies.

Examination	Topics taught at Castle Mead Academy	Time	Raw marks
Paper 1 1HI0/13	Migrants in Britain, c800–present Notting Hill, c1948–c1970	1 hour 20 minutes	52
Paper 2 1HI0/2P	Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91 The reigns of King Richard I and King John, 1189–1216	1 hour 50 minutes	64
Paper 3 1HI0/32	Mao's China, 1945–76	1 hour 30 minutes	52

All assessment is through three written examinations at the end of Year 11. There is no coursework. The total is 168 raw marks, including 8 marks for spelling, punctuation, grammar and specialist terminology across Papers 1 and 3. In topic dates, c means approximately.

Why these studies belong together

Medieval kingship builds on Year 7 learning about authority, the Church and Parliament. The Cold War and Mao's China develop understanding of ideology, state power and international relations. Migration connects earlier studies of conquest, religion, empire and rights, with Leicester as a significant local case study.

What successful historians learn to do

Scholars explain events and change, connect developments, compare experiences, evaluate sources in context and assess interpretations. Accurate knowledge supports every explanation and judgement. These habits prepare scholars for further study in History and other subjects, and informed engagement with public debate.

The Two Year Curriculum

Teaching sequence and progression

The sequence below shows the usual route through the course across the school's three learning cycles each year. Retrieval means recalling earlier learning from memory. Retrieval, assessment, feedback and revision are built into teaching. Time within each cycle responds to scholars' understanding and the school assessment calendar.

Year and cycle	Main teaching	Purpose and connections
Year 10 Cycle 1	Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91	Establish chronology and ideology; explain consequences, connected events and the importance of developments for international relations.
Year 10 Cycle 2	Mao's China: establishing communist rule; economic policy; the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath	Build detailed knowledge of how a regime gains and uses power; explain policy and effects; begin sustained source and interpretation work.
Year 10 Cycle 3	Complete Mao's China: life under Mao. Begin Richard I and John: life and government in England	Connect political control to daily life, then revisit medieval society and kingship in greater depth.
Year 11 Cycle 1	Richard I and John: involvements overseas; John's downfall	Develop explanations of royal power, crusading, conflict and rebellion; construct supported judgements.
Year 11 Cycle 2	Migrants in Britain across the medieval, early modern, eighteenth and nineteenth century, and modern periods	Compare causes, experiences and impact over time; recognise change, continuity and the role of different factors.
Year 11 Cycle 3	Notting Hill, c1948–c1970; cumulative revision and final examinations	Use detailed knowledge to evaluate evidence and frame further enquiry; consolidate all four studies through targeted practice.

How independence grows

Teachers model how to select evidence, explain a relationship and develop a judgement. Scholars rehearse ideas, practise parts of an answer and then complete increasingly independent responses. Support is reduced as knowledge and confidence grow, while more demanding tasks require greater precision, depth and evaluation.

The Cold War and Mao's China

Year 10 studies

Superpower relations and the Cold War 1941 to 1991

The origins of the Cold War, 1941–58. Ideology and the wartime alliance; Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam; Soviet control in Eastern Europe; the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan; Soviet responses; the Berlin Blockade and airlift; NATO, the Warsaw Pact, the arms race and Hungary in 1956.

Cold War crises, 1958–70. Berlin and the refugee problem; the summit meetings and the Berlin Wall; the Cuban Revolution, Bay of Pigs and Cuban Missile Crisis; the Prague Spring and Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia.

The end of the Cold War, 1970–91. Détente, SALT and Helsinki; Afghanistan and renewed tension; Reagan, Gorbachev and changing relations; the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Soviet control and the Soviet Union.

Scholars track when and why tension rose or fell. Chronological overviews, retrieval and carefully sequenced examples help them explain consequences, write connected narratives and judge the importance of events for particular relationships or outcomes.

Mao's China 1945 to 1976

Establishing communist rule, 1945–59. The Civil War and the strengths and weaknesses of the CCP and Guomindang; Mao's leadership and the new government; consolidation of power; the Hundred Flowers campaign and the Anti-Rightist purge.

Economic policy, 1949–65. Land reform and collectivisation; industry and the First Five-Year Plan; the Great Leap Forward, communes and famine; economic reform under Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.

The Cultural Revolution and its aftermath, 1966–76. Mao's motives, the Red Guards, attacks on the Four Olds and the effects of political upheaval; restoration of order, changing leadership and Mao's death.

Life in Mao's China, 1949–76. Propaganda, censorship and control; family life and women; education and health; changes to culture and the treatment of religious beliefs.

Scholars use detailed knowledge to explain policy, experience and change. They practise inference, source usefulness and the evaluation of interpretations, considering what historians emphasise and how evidence and context shape their conclusions.

Medieval Kingship and Migration

Year 10 into Year 11 studies

The reigns of King Richard I and King John 1189 to 1216

Life and government in England, 1189–1216. Feudal society and the Church; kingship and succession; government and finance; life in towns and the countryside; Jewish communities, royal exploitation and antisemitism.

Involvements overseas, 1189–1204. The nature of crusading, Richard and the Third Crusade, its aftermath and Richard's captivity; Richard, John and the loss of Normandy.

King John's downfall, 1205–16. The dispute with the papacy, worsening relations with the barons, Magna Carta, the First Barons' War and the succession.

Scholars explain how power was exercised and challenged, compare royal decisions and reach supported judgements. Precise knowledge of government, the papacy and royal finance helps them move beyond simple stories of good and bad kings.

Migrants in Britain c800 to the present

Medieval migration, c800–c1500. Vikings, Normans, Jewish communities and other migrants; reasons for migration, experiences, reactions and impact; Viking York.

Early modern migration, c1500–c1700. Religious change, trade and global connections; experiences and impact of migrant groups; Sandwich, Canterbury and the Huguenots.

Migration, c1700–c1900. Industrialisation, internal movement and migration from overseas; empire and work; Liverpool and Jewish migration to London's East End.

Modern migration, c1900–present. War, work, empire, decolonisation and changing laws; migrants' experiences and contributions; campaigns for equality, including the Bristol Bus Boycott, Imperial Typewriters in Leicester and the Windrush scandal. Bristol and Asian migration to Leicester connect national patterns with specific communities.

Scholars compare reasons for migration, experiences and impact within and across periods. They consider continuity as well as change, evaluate the importance of different factors and use precise examples to support thematic judgements.

Notting Hill c1948 to c1970

This close study explores migration, housing, work and Caribbean culture; racism and violence, including the riots and the murder of Kelso Cochrane; Carnival, Black activism and the Mangrove. Scholars evaluate sources using detailed context and consider how to follow up an enquiry with further evidence.

Learning Assessment and Support

Key Stage 4

Reading evidence and historical scholarship

Story, Sources, Scholarship continues at GCSE. Clear stories and chronological or thematic overviews establish context. Guided reading, vocabulary and discussion help scholars explore evidence and historians' arguments. They identify an interpretation's claim, tone and emphasis, consider its evidence and explain why historians might disagree before reaching a judgement. Source evaluation considers content, who created a source, when and why, alongside contextual knowledge.

Purposeful practice

Retrieval keeps earlier learning available. Teachers model answers and the thinking behind them. Scholars practise selecting precise knowledge, explaining relationships and sustaining an argument. They learn each paper's particular demands, including consequence, narrative, importance, comparison, source enquiry and extended evaluation.

Knowledge checks, written practice and mock examinations identify strengths and gaps. Scholars receive feedback and improve responses. Teachers revisit misconceptions and use assessment to target teaching, revision and support. Examination analysis also informs improvements to the course.

Homework and revision

Homework includes Look, Cover, Write, Check, extended reading and wider historical learning, alongside written practice. Teachers show scholars how to revise: recall without notes, check and correct, revisit weaker knowledge and apply it to a question. Schedules help scholars plan regular practice across all four studies.

Satchel One provides homework and assessment preparation. Families can discuss learning, ask questions from knowledge organisers and encourage focused revision. School resources and the recommended revision guide support the specific Edexcel options taught here.

Access and ambition

Clear language, layouts and manageable steps help scholars access challenging content. Teachers use vocabulary teaching, visuals, supported reading, rehearsal and models, responding to needs recorded in Scholar Passports and Education, Health and Care Plans. Support reduces as independence grows; deeper knowledge and evaluation provide further challenge. History Society and local heritage extend learning beyond examinations.

Pearson Edexcel GCSE History specification and course information

Official Pearson Edexcel course materials and assessment resources

The Thinking Behind Our Curriculum

Research and professional practice informing History at Castle Mead Academy

Discipline and Discovery. Ben Walsh's contribution to our curriculum thinking connects rich knowledge of the past with rigorous historical enquiry. Scholars encounter compelling stories and learn how evidence and argument shape our understanding.

Coherent knowledge and enquiry. Michael Riley's work informs questions that bring a sequence of lessons towards a historical argument. Christine Counsell's work informs the connection between knowledge and historical thinking: ideas such as monarchy, empire and migration become useful foundations for later learning.

Evidence and interpretations. The Historical Association's Teaching History work on evidence and interpretations, alongside Abby Reisman's work, informs how scholars investigate sources in context, test claims and explain how and why historians reach different conclusions.

Reading historical scholarship. Rachel Foster and Tim Jenner inform our use of historians' writing. Guided reading helps scholars identify a question, argument and evidence; increasingly demanding texts, discussion and writing build confidence in engaging with academic history.

Understanding and memory. Kate Jones informs planned retrieval; Oliver Caviglioli informs how we combine words and useful visuals; Daniel Willingham informs attention to prior knowledge and manageable demands on memory. These principles shape our explanations, booklets, timelines, maps and revision routines.

Selected professional reading

Ben Walsh (2022), History Curriculum External Review Visit Report for Castle Mead Academy.
Dan Warner-Meanwell (2020), Story, Source, Scholarship. Credits ideas shared by @SPBeale and @mrfitzhist.
Michael Riley (2000), Into the Key Stage 3 history garden: choosing and planting your enquiry questions. Teaching History 99.
Christine Counsell (2018), Taking curriculum seriously. Impact 4.
Historical Association (2019), What's the wisdom on… Evidence and sources. Teaching History 176.
Historical Association (2019), What's the wisdom on… Interpretations of the past. Teaching History 177.
Rachel Foster (2011), Passive receivers or constructive readers? Teaching History 142.
Tim Jenner (2019), Making reading routine. Teaching History 174.
Abby Reisman (2016), Teaching students to think like historians. Penn Graduate School of Education.
Kate Jones (2019), Retrieval Practice: Resources and Research for Every Classroom. John Catt.
Oliver Caviglioli (2019), Dual Coding with Teachers. John Catt.
Daniel T Willingham (2009), Why Don't Students Like School? Jossey-Bass.