

NSS Assessing Student Learning for the History Curriculum: Workshop on how to set assessment tasks in progression for the S4-S6 History curriculum (New) Part 2

Issues related to essay-type question setting

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Issues related to essay-type question setting

- I. Steps of Question Setting**
- II. Objectives of the question paper?**
- III. Question tasks and their level of thinking**
- IV. Marking Scheme – how detailed/prescriptive?**
- V. Questions to ask upon finalizing an essay-type question paper**
- VI. Purpose of the assessment: formative or summative?**

I. Steps of Question Setting

- **Select a theme/topic/key point in the curriculum.**
- **Phrase the questions.**
- **Check against “Questions to ask when preparing a question paper”.**

II. Objectives of the question paper?

Assessment Objectives of DSE History:

(A) Acquire knowledge & understanding of:

- 1. basic historical concepts, such as cause and effect, change and continuity, and similarities and differences;**
- 2. diverse standpoints and perspectives inherent in different ways of representing and interpreting the past;**
- 3. the beliefs, experiences and behaviours of their own nation as well as of other nations, and the ways in which they have shaped the development of the contemporary world;**

II. Objectives of the question paper?

Assessment Objectives of DSE History:

(A) Acquire knowledge & understanding of:

4. the inter-relations of major events and movements that have occurred in the local community, the nation, Asia and the world in the 20th century; and
5. the major historical developments and trends that have shaped the contemporary world.

II. Objectives of the question paper?

Assessment Objectives of DSE History:

(B) master the skills of:

- 1. distinguishing** fact from opinion; **detecting** biased viewpoints, ambiguous assumptions and unsubstantiated arguments; and building up proper historical **perspectives**;
- 2. comparing** and **interpreting** historical data; arriving at reasoned **conclusions** based on available evidence; and recognising the fact that history is subject to **reassessment** based on the interpretation of new evidence;

II. Objectives of the question paper?

Assessment Objectives of DSE History:

(B) master the skills of:

5. **ascertaining and explaining** the extent to which historical documents and archives reflect contemporary attitudes, values and passions;
6. **presenting** logical and coherent arguments through the proper selection and organisation of historical data;
7. **searching for, selecting, analysing and synthesising information** through various means, including the Internet, and considering various ways of arriving at conclusions and making appraisals; and
8. **applying historical knowledge and skills in everyday life.**

II. Objectives of the question paper?

Ask yourself:

Which assessment objective(s) of DSE History do I want to achieve in the DBQ paper I am going to set?

i.e. What knowledge, understanding, and skills do I want to assess whether the students have acquired/mastered?

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

5 Common Tasks in History papers:

1. Identifying
2. Explaining
3. Comparing
4. Arguing
5. Evaluating

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

Level of Thinking:

Low —————→ **High**

- 1. identifying**
- 2. explaining**
- 3. comparing**
- 4. arguing**
- 5. evaluating**

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

1. **Identifying**: key word(s) in question setting:

1.1 Describe (描述)

1.2 Identify/State (指出)

1.3 In what ways /How (如何)

1.4 List (列舉)

1.5 Suggest (提出)

1.6 Trace (追溯)

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

1. **Identifying**: example questions:

Trace and explain the development of the ‘Cultural Revolution’ (1966-76).

(“HKALE, 2002 AS/AL Hist 2 Q6)

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

2. **Explaining**: key word(s) in question setting:

2.1 **Account for/Explain** (解釋)

2.2 **Analyse** (分析)

2.3 **Discuss** (討論)

2.4 **Examine** (探討)

2.5 **Why** (為何)

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

2. **Explaining**: example questions:

Examine the foreign policies of Kaiser William II and those of Hitler.

(HKCEE 2004 Hist 1 Q.8 (a))

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

3. Comparing: key word(s) in question setting:

3.1 Compare/Contrast/Compare and Contrast (比較)

3.2 Identify/What are the similarities and differences between (指出相同及相異之處)

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

3. **Comparing:** example questions:

Compare the parts played by the League of Nations and the United Nations in maintaining world peace.

Identify the similarities and differences in the rise of totalitarian rule in Italy and in Germany during the inter-war period.

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

4. **Arguing**: key word(s) in question setting:

4.1 **Comment on** (評論)

4.2 **Do you agree/think** (你是否同意/認為)

4.3 **Justify** (提出理據支持)

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

4. **Arguing**: example questions:

‘The revolution has not yet succeeded, and all comrades should continue to fight for its success.’ This statement was made by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in his will when he passed away in 1925. Do you agree with this statement?

Justify your answer with reference to China’s political development in the period 1912-25.

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

5. **Evaluating**: key word(s) in question setting:

5.1 Assess (評估)

5.2 Evaluate (評價)

5.3 How far/ To what extent do you
(你在多大程度上/在什麼程度上)

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

5. **Evaluating**: example questions:

Evaluate the impact of the missionary activities on Hong Kong society in the period 1900-1941.

In what ways was year 1939 *a turning point* in 20th-century history of Europe?

To what extent was the year 1937 *a turning point* in the history of modern China?

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

What tasks to set for certain year-level?

In principle: as year-level (S4, S5, S6) goes up, tasks go from lower to higher level of thinking.

Identifying → **Explaining** → **Comparing** → **Arguing** → **Evaluating**

But real situation varies according to a number of factors: student ability, time constraints on teaching, etc.

e.g. 1: **1911 Revolution**

S4: What were the factors that contributed to the outbreak of the 1911 Revolution? (**Identifying/Explaining**)

S5: Who played a more important part in bringing about the downfall of the Qing Dynasty, Dr. Sun Yat-sen or Yuan Shi-kai? Explain your answer. (**Comparing/Arguing**)

S6: To what extent do you think the downfall of the Qing Dynasty was due to its own failure to implement reforms in the decade before its downfall? (**Arguing/Evaluating**)

III. Question tasks and their level of thinking

What tasks to set for certain year-level?

e.g. 2: **The two world wars and the peace settlements**

(Theme B, Topic (4) Major conflicts and quest for peace Key point (ii))

S4: What were the major peace settlements arrived at the Paris Peace Conference in relation to Germany? (**Identifying**)

What efforts of collective security were made by the Western powers after the First World War in the hope of preventing another general war? (**Identifying**)

S5: Discuss the importance of the Great Depression relative to other factors in contributing to the coming of the Second World War. (**Comparing/Arguing**)

S6: Assess the significance of the Second World War in relation to the spread of democracy and self-determination. (**Arguing/Evaluating**)

IV. Marking Scheme – how detailed/prescriptive?

Level Marking: When an assessment item tests a certain higher-order skill, students who can only manage to reach a certain level under that will be awarded corresponding marks.

i.e level marking = ability-oriented marking = positive marking.

In what ways was the 1911 Revolution a turning point in modern Chinese History?

Able to compare transformations before and after the Revolution, and to explain how they took place after the Revolution

Same as above, but lopsided to the period before or after the Revolution, and/or does not focus well on the Revolution

Only point out the impact of the Revolution to modern Chinese history

Some narration on events after the Revolution, but weak to relate to the Revolution

An account of facts about the Revolution

IV. Marking Scheme – how detailed/prescriptive?

‘China was on the decline in every respect in the period 1916-37.’ Do you agree with this statement? Explain your view. (“HKALE, 2009 AS/AL Hist 2 Q3)

Covers both decline and growth; balanced treatment of ‘respects’ and the ‘period’ in question; able to reach a logical conclusion.



Same as above, but lopsided to certain respects and/or certain portion of the period; at least shows attempts to reach a logical conclusion.



Discusses many respects but fails to focus on ‘decline’.



A general survey of the period in question without any attempt on ‘decline’ and ‘respects’.

V. Questions to ask upon finalizing an essay-type question paper

- *Aims and objectives:* Does the paper reflect the stated examination aims and objectives?
- *Coverage:* Do the questions cover the syllabus adequately? Are the questions within the limits of the syllabus?
- *Standard:* Is the paper of the right standard, in the sense that the paper as a whole provides a fair test for the average student? Is there room for stretching the more able students?

V. Questions to ask upon finalizing an essay-type question paper

- *Basic knowledge/skills versus higher-order skills:* Is there an appropriate balance between questions testing basic knowledge/skills and those testing higher-order skills?
- *Wording:* Do the questions contain any ambiguities? Are the questions easily understandable, precise and definite, so that even a weak student can understand what they are about, while a brilliant candidate will not read difficulties into them?

V. Questions to ask upon finalizing an essay-type question paper

- ***Marking:*** Is the marking scheme clear, concise, easy to follow, and sufficiently flexible to allow a reasonable degree of discretion for markers?
- ***Choice of questions:*** Are the questions at a comparable level of difficulty?
- ***Language versions:*** Where the paper is bilingual, are the two language versions identical in meaning?

VI. purpose of the assessment: formative or summative?

Formative assessment: assessment for learning

Summative assessment: assessment of learning

In the school setting: S4, S5, S6, mostly formative assessment.

In the school setting: S4, S5, S6, mostly formative assessment, including Mock exam.

In a formative assessment,

- **the assessment objectives addressed in the question paper would be those knowledge, understanding and skills that have been taught across the span of time that the assessment covers (e.g. S4 Term 1),**
- **students would be informed of their performance not merely their grades/marks but also the strengths and weaknesses of their answers in tackling the questions, and**
- **students would be given suggestions on how to enhance the knowledge, understanding and skills that they have demonstrated to be relatively weak in.**

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