

2019 VCE Australian History examination report

General comments

The 2019 Australian History written examination assessed student achievement in the key knowledge and skills indicated in the *VCE History Study Design 2016–2020: Australian History*. The examination consisted of four sections corresponding with the four Areas of Study, and students were required to answer each section. Each section was worth 20 marks.

Student responses to the analysis and explanation of the sources provided in Sections A and C were generally very good and they demonstrated familiarity with the demands of the questions. These were the highest-scoring sections of the exam. High-scoring responses to the four ten-mark questions were clear, direct and focused, while also offering some of the complexity of the historical material available. There was a wide range of material available and the evidence provided was efficiently used to support the various arguments. In these responses there was also a clear sequence of ideas. High-scoring essays in Section B displayed similar qualities as well as the use of a range of evidence and an ability to sustain a discussion within the parameters of the question. They displayed an awareness of the need to use precise or qualified language. Many mid-range essay responses displayed an over reliance on prepared essays that did not sufficiently engage with the terms of the questions.

Most students answered only one of the options in Section C and at least attempted all appropriate questions, suggesting a clear familiarity with the sections of the examination and the demands of each section.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	7	20	32	38	3

Student responses needed to describe the attitude of JT Gellibrand (expressed in Source 1, a memorandum written early in 1836) in relation to the abilities of Aboriginal people to adapt to the land use practices of the Europeans. There was no need to refer to any other information or sources, although broader knowledge of European attitudes to land use practices may have assisted students in describing Gellibrand's attitude. Most responses discussed Gellibrand's optimistic or positive attitude to the adaptability of Aboriginal peoples and were able to outline Gellibrand's argument and the various assumptions that underpinned it. High-scoring answers were able to establish Gellibrand's optimism and support their description of his attitudes with brief quotations from the source. Low-scoring responses tended to quote extensively from the source without referring to the question, or ignored the source altogether and just wrote generally about European attitudes to land use practices or drifted onto different attitudes to land ownership. It is important to remember to be efficient in these shorter answers.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	1	0	3	18	37	27	13	4.2

Students were asked to use Source 2, Source 3 and their own knowledge to explain how British settlers' views of land use differed from those of Aboriginal people in the Port Phillip District and Victoria up to 1860. There were many effective responses to this task, often using the sources in an integrated way and supplementing that evidence with their own knowledge. High-scoring responses provided the explanation demanded by the question, while mid-range responses often resorted to summary of the sources with a small amount of extra information to satisfy the 'own knowledge' requirement.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response that remained focused on the explanation and used the sources and other knowledge as evidence within both body paragraphs.

The ideologies of land use were very different for Aboriginal people and British settlers.

Aboriginal people maintained and used the land in ways that helped to have it remain as it was. Following the law of The Dreaming, Indigenous people did not alter the land in any form, except "cultivation by fire" (Gammage) which maintained its usefulness for hunting and harvesting. Additionally, as source 2 pictures, the Aboriginal population rarely destroyed or built on land, rather adapted to nature. Moreover, Aboriginals "spiritual life and their economy" (Source 3) came from their obligations as the "guardians of the land" which thereby promoted the necessity of keeping the land the same.

However, European land use stemmed from the idea of economic prosperity. British settlers worked on and destroyed the land in order to create "economic progress" (Source 3) that would inevitably "produce goods" needed for the strengthening of Britain. Historian Graham notes that these settlers only saw "limitless economic growth and development" from the use of agriculture and infrastructure. Notably, in source 2, it is evident that the British settlers have utilised the land to create the 'Minjah station farmhouse' which depicts multiple buildings that suggest the

use of the Doctrine of Land Improvement to benefit from the land. Ultimately, British and Aboriginal ideologies of land use differ considerably.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	0	3	7	10	16	17	17	16	7	4	6

Students were asked to analyse the varying outcomes for Aboriginal people resulting from the transformation of the land up to 1860. They were directed to use evidence to support their response. Most responses demonstrated familiarity with the required content. High-scoring responses fulfilled the demands of the question by providing a tightly controlled, sustained analysis and using accurate and detailed evidence in a relevant manner. These responses often began with a consideration of the environmental consequences of the European presence – addressing the terms ‘transformation of the land’ – but went on to discuss other aspects of the ‘transformation’ in broader terms. These outcomes included dispossession of Aboriginal peoples, the loss of traditional food sources and the rapid spread of diseases and violent conflict, as well as other possible outcomes as a result of Aboriginal adaptation to the changing circumstances. Higher-scoring responses maintained a clear focus on the outcomes for Aboriginal peoples while low- and medium-scoring responses drifted on to Aboriginal responses or did not provide the variation of outcomes demanded by the task.

The following excerpt from the first half of a high-scoring response opens with a clear introduction and a first body paragraph that dealt specifically with ‘transformation of the land’.

There were varying outcomes for Aborigines resulting from the transformation of the land, such as a loss in culture, land practices and there had been violence.

The European use of the land had resulted in environmental degradation leading to a lack of food and thus starvation. The Europeans had bought a “tide of sheep” (Broome) to the lands which had contributed to environmental degradation. As in 1836 there was 265 000 sheep and 100 cattle, and in 1846 there was 1 790 000 sheep and 230 000 cattle. Thus Aborigines were not able to maintain “regular food supplies” leading to a loss of food as “Their main source of sustenance has greatly diminished” (Protector Parker). This starvation led to a fight for resources causing interclan violence in what Nance approximates resulted in 300 deaths. Thus the land degradation had resulted in an increased deaths of Aborigines due to starvation and interclan violence.

Section B

Question chosen	none	2	3
%	3	48	49

Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	4	1	1	2	1	2	4	4	5	6	8	6	9	9	9	8	7	6	5	3	1	11.6

Students were required to write an essay on either Question 2 or Question 3.

Most students demonstrated that they were familiar with the style of essay writing demanded by the assessment criteria. There were many high-scoring essays that addressed the question in an introduction and established a relevant sequence of well-constructed and coherent paragraphs, each making use of a range of evidence from both contemporary perspectives and historians' interpretations. Many students also displayed detailed knowledge and an ability to use specific examples and direct quotes from their reading. High-scoring responses contained accurate detail and developed complex or wide-ranging arguments; they also recognised the specific terms and parameters of the question. This was particularly important for the questions in the 2019 exam. A large number of responses scoring in the middle range presented material prepared for different essay questions from previous exams.

Question 2 required students to measure the extent that a combination of tariffs, defence and the restriction of non-European immigration provided the main stimulus for Federation. Among the key words in this question were 'stimulus', suggesting that much of the relevant material would be drawn from the period 1890–1901. While it was possible and appropriate to use early Commonwealth legislation as evidence of what priorities were leading to Federation (as long as the necessary argument was made, supported by evidence), high-scoring essays usually addressed this earlier period in quite a substantial manner. Responses that relied on early legislation as the evidence for the impetus for Federation often missed other stimuli for Federation from the period 1890–1901. High-scoring responses referred to a range of well-chosen evidence to indicate the debates and desires leading to Federation (evaluating the importance of trade, defence and immigration policy) and demonstrated a complexity of understanding of cause and consequence by referring to other stimuli, for example an emerging Australian nationalism, the desire to be a united democratic nation or the idea of achieving a 'workingman's paradise'. Students should take up the specific terms of the question and not rely on revisiting a prepared essay. A sense of the specific terms of the question is important.

Question 3 asked students to measure the extent that Australia's participation in World War I changed Australian society in the period 1914–1920. High-scoring responses usually began by referring briefly to initial continuities in society, mainly focused on the unity and pride in the British Empire that was evident in Australia's response to the outbreak of World War I. This was often extended to the end of 1915, covering the Gallipoli campaign and the emergence of the ANZAC legend. Responses were then able to explore the nature of the changes that followed and evaluate their importance, referring to a range of evidence such as the War Precautions Act and the regulations that changed people's lives, economic changes and industrial disputes, the bitter sectarian divisions that emerged after the conscription plebiscites and the political division that continued well beyond 1916. Many students also referred to the high number of deaths and horrific injuries to young men who had enlisted voluntarily, which affected the lives of these men and their families in the post-war period. Some responses also referred to the development of the ANZAC legend as a positive change, arguing that this symbolism added to the sense of pride and Australian nationalism that had emerged during the war. Most students attempted to analyse whether change had occurred and evaluated the nature of that change.

The following extract from a high-scoring response established a clear line of argument and then discussed the continuities evident at the beginning of the war, using a range of appropriate evidence. Nevertheless, stronger use of the terms of the question would have been helpful at the beginning and end of the first body paragraph to consolidate the idea of early continuity.

World War 1 (4 August 1914 – 11 November 1918) greatly altered existing Australian life. Initially the war gave the population pride, confirming our loyalty to Britain and in the establishment of the ANZAC legend. However, as the War progressed, the immense pressure of crisis exacerbated pre-existing political, sectarian and class schisms in society ensuring the influence of the war was felt by all Australians.

Australia followed Britain into the War (4 August 1914), confirming our identity as a country of “independent Australian Britons” (Deakin) as according to Parkes, “the crimson thread of kinship runs through us all.” This was exemplified by Andrew Fisher declaring, Australia will “defend Britain to the last man and the last shilling” as 20 000 men enlisted in the first 6 weeks. However, not all were in favour of War, such as pacifists like Vida Goldstein and socialists such as the International workers of the world as Direct Action asked, “War What For?”. Following the Gallipoli Landing (25 April 1915) and during the subsequent campaign, Australians were united behind the valour of the diggers as the Anzac Legend fused with the pre-existing unique Australian identity of the “convict derived bush ethos that formed the most important basic component of the national mystique” (Ward).

Section C

Question chosen	none	4	5
%	0	37	62

Part a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	3	15	34	47	3.3

Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	1	6	21	34	23	12	4.1

Part c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	6	2	3	6	10	14	17	17	14	8	3	5.7

Section C required students to answer either Question 4 (using Sources 4, 5 and 6) or Question 5 (using Sources 7, 8 and 9). Question 5 was the more popular question. Very few students attempted both Question 4 and Question 5.

Both Questions 4a. and 5a. were handled well. Question 4a. required students to outline the causes of the Great Depression that were suggested in Sources 4 and 5. There was no need to refer to any other material. High-scoring responses were usually divided into two short paragraphs, one for each source. Australians’ unrealistic optimism, an addiction to credit and reliance on borrowing and ‘unrestrained expenditure’ were offered as reasons suggested by the sources. Question 5a. was phrased a little differently to Question 4a., asking students to explain how some Australians responded to residents of non-British origin. Students were directed to use Source 7, but other material was also appropriate. Responses usually made use of the violence and threats directed at non-British residents described in Source 7.

Questions 4b. and 5b. asked students to use the sources and their own knowledge to explain an aspect of the Area of Study. Most students handled the demands of these questions reasonably well, referring to the sources and then providing extra information and examples. Responses to Question 4b. often began by using Source 6 to explain the dilemma that Australian governments faced, discussing the governments’ inexperience and the difficult choice between helping the

unemployed and honouring Australia's obligation to pay interest on overseas loans. High-scoring responses included further detail on the nature and extent of this dilemma as well as other material, including the various plans that were proposed to deal with the crisis or the political conflicts that made resolution more difficult. Responses to Question 5b. tended to divide the answer into a discussion of the attempts to contribute to the war effort made by women (supported by use of Source 8) and Aboriginal people (supported by use of Source 9). The higher-scoring responses included some further detail or complexity, including different opportunities that emerged as the war progressed. Low-scoring responses typically limited the discussion to the sources or discussed only women or Aboriginal people rather than both.

Question 4c. was generally handled well as many students effectively grappled with evaluating the extent 'to which Australian people successfully coped' with the Great Depression and attempted to refer to a wide range of evidence in support of their argument that some groups of Australian people managed to cope successfully. Responses often focused on how unemployed Australians found support within their families, drew on resources offered by church groups and charities, used various strategies to find work (including 'susso' work), and, when faced with eviction, either moved in with relatives or relocated to the shanty towns that emerged. However, other unemployed Australians found it difficult coping with unemployment and resisted offers of help and support from Government or church groups. More complex responses referred to the resilience and kindness demonstrated during this period as well as examples of those landlords who evicted unemployed families from their homes when they fell behind in their rent.

Question 5c. required students to evaluate how Australian governments and people 'successfully managed' the crisis of World War II 'as the threat to Australia increased'. Responses varied in their interpretation of the time period, though most based their discussion from 1940 to 1943. High-scoring responses were able to cover government and public responses in a balanced manner, providing some detail of the responses that were both successful and not successful. The Curtin Government's 'austerity' program was often used as an example of successful government management, while the involvement of women in non-traditional roles was also used as evidence of a successful public response to the crisis. Both Questions 4c. and 5c. required students to select, edit and organise their material from a large bank of content.

The following extract from a response to Question 5c. scored in the middle range. It provided a good description of government management. It addressed the second demand of the question less effectively: an evaluation of how people managed the crisis. Managing the requirements of the question and responding to its terms are characteristics of responses that score in the higher ranges.

After Australia joined World War Two on the 3 September 1939, Menzies stated "business as usual" and only called up half of the 80,000 Militia. The National Security Act was passed on the 9 September 1939 and resulted in 1748 Government regulations which enforced cohesion. At this point in the War, World War Two was somebody else's war with all the fighting happening in Europe. 68% Germans were interned, then approximately 20% of the Italian population when Italy joined the war, later the Japanese were as well. In 1940, only petrol was being rationed, "Rationing ensured equal sacrifice" according to Walker. It wasn't until Curtin became Prime Minister and the rising threat of the Japanese where Curtin announced "all in" and "austerity". The Wartime Banking regulations were passed in November 1941 to enforce economic cohesion. The Uniform Tax Case, July 1942, gave the Federal Government greater power and the Manpower Directorate Act, March 1942, was a form of industrial conscription for the Government. Sugar and Tea were rationed in 1942, Butter in 1943 and Meat in 1944, as well as the ban of luxury items being produced. From 1941 to 1945 1 million Americans passed through Australia. According to McKernan, the people believed "the might of the United States alone could save Australia", but "By 1943, the Americans had largely outworn their welcome" according to Darian Smith.

Section D

First option

Question chosen	0	6	7	8	9	10
%	2	85	8	4	1	0

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	1	2	4	9	14	18	21	15	9	5	6.3

Second option

Question chosen	0	6	7	8	9	10
%	6	3	47	12	33	0

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	8	2	4	7	9	12	15	16	15	9	4	5.7

Section D asked students to answer two of the five questions listed. Higher-scoring responses addressed the question directly and established a point of view that was argued consistently in a sequential, sustained discussion. All questions demanded an evaluation – a judgment – concerning the importance of a factor or factors in bringing about change. Most responses addressed the factors nominated by the question and then balanced that discussion with the inclusion of other causes. Low-scoring responses tended to provide simple conclusions without any supporting evidence or often ignored the question and wrote generally on the topic.

Question 6 – Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War

This question was the most popular choice of the five questions offered. It asked students to evaluate the degree to which Australian protest groups influenced Australia’s withdrawal from the Vietnam War. Many students argued that protest groups in Australia had considerable influence on the Australian Government’s decision to withdraw. They referred to protest groups such as Save Our Sons, Youth Campaign Against Conscription and the Moratorium movement and asserted that these protests influenced the decision to withdraw Australian troops from Vietnam. Mid-range responses tended to describe the protest movement and conclude that there was an influence based on the increasing size of the protest movement. Other responses referred also to the influence of the television coverage of events such as the Tet Offensive, My Lai massacre and graphic images of casualties. High-scoring responses acknowledged a range of influences and typically referred briefly to protest groups before expanding on the effect of the media coverage and the influence of US Government decisions and Nixon’s policy of ‘Vietnamisation’.

The following excerpt from a high-scoring response is an example of a well-sequenced and relevant evaluation with a clear introduction and two appropriately structured body paragraphs.

Australian protest groups led the anti-war movement in Australia and built a significant base of support throughout the war. However, it was the US withdrawal which initiated Australia’s withdrawal and mounting ALP pressure which also had an effect thus these factors must be considered in addition to protest groups.

Protest groups such as the Moratorium movement, Youth campaign against conscription (YCAC) and the Save our Sons movement (SOS) all achieved significant change. The diversity of these groups also meant that the anti-war movement reached all areas of Australian society in the push for change. YCAC was representative of younger Australians and SOS was predominantly run by suburban mothers. The Moratorium in May 1970 attracted 100 000 people to the streets of Melbourne, highlighting the power of this group. "It was no longer a minority group" (Mirams) and by maintaining "the moral ascendancy" (Pemberton) in the debate, the anti-war movement put significant pressure on the Federal Government who responded by labelling them "political pack-raping bikies". While protest groups put pressure on Governments it is difficult to measure the influence they had in the eventual withdrawal.

The Nixon Administration's policy of 'Vietnamisation' was critical in influencing the Australian Government. Australia followed the US as a withdrawal at this point would have "no implications on its relationship" (Peel). Prime Minister Gordon supported Nixon's decision to withdraw based on "Peace and honour" (Nixon) thus initiating the withdrawal of Australian troops. The US security alliance was arguably at the core of Australia's involvement therefore it is unsurprising that it was so integral in achieving real change.

Question 7 – Aboriginal land rights

Question 7 asked students to measure the extent that significant change was achieved through the Mabo and Wik decisions. Many responses argued convincingly for the importance of both court decisions, often linking Mabo to the Keating Government's *Native Title Act (1993)*. Other responses emphasised the importance of the Wave Hill walk-off or the Tent Embassy. Higher-scoring responses also included some reference to factors that impeded change.

The following paragraph from a high-scoring response established the importance of both Mabo and Wik but also recognised the limitations of the change that occurred.

Both the Mabo (1992) and Wik (1996) decisions greatly advanced the Aboriginal Land Rights movement and enshrined native title in law, abolishing the doctrine of Terra Nullius. Eddie Mabo's claim for Native title on his home of the Mer Island was achieved, as he proved "continuous occupation", as for Keating the "Mabo establishes a fundamental truth and lays the basis for justice." Moreover, Keating used it as a platform for furthering Aboriginal Land Rights, leading to his Native Title Act (1993) which formalised the process and would provide "ungrudging and unambiguous recognition and protection of native title." However, this led to significant backlash, as Hugh Morgan, CEO of Western Mining Corporation warned it "put at risk...the whole legal framework of property rights in Australia" and Alan Jones warned of a "Mabo Land Grab." However, ambiguity arose as Mabo or the Native title Act did not state whether pastoral and mining leases extinguished provenance as 42% of Australian Land was held under leasehold. Thus, Wik (1996) while it declared that pastoral leases did not extinguish native title, it upheld the rights of pastoralists when in conflict. Despite Windshuttle's assertion that "the concept of property did not form part of their culture", Reynolds showed that as early as the 1850's the Imperial Government recognised the importance of Land and property when it deduced that all pastoral leases "should include the continuance of rights to the native which the Wik judgment upheld." However, this for Howard, "pushed the pendulum too far in the Aboriginal direction" and his "10-point plan will return the pendulum to the centre."

Question 8 – Equality for women

This question required students to evaluate the role of activist groups in achieving change in equality for women. Most students discussed the role of the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) in lobbying for equality for women in education, the workforce and equal pay, as well as control over reproductive health and economic rights. Higher-scoring responses discussed the early influences of feminist writers such as Germaine Greer, Anne Summers and Miriam Dixon, who highlighted the discrimination and inequality that stimulated the growth of organisations such as WEL. High-scoring responses also discussed the street protests, rallies and marches of the 1970s and 1980s, which demanded change for women and the development of new university courses on women's

studies, feminist literature and women in history. Many students made specific reference to Merle Thornton and Rosalie Bogner who chained their feet to the rail in the 'men-only' public bar of the Regatta Hotel in Brisbane, or Zelda D'Aprano who chained herself to the Commonwealth Building in Melbourne, drawing attention to the Equal Pay campaign. Low-scoring responses tended to refer only to the achievement of WEL with little reference to the complexity of the demands for change and the degree to which change occurred.

Question 9 – New patterns of immigration

Question 9 required students to measure the extent that humanitarian concerns contributed to debates about new patterns of immigration. High-scoring responses argued that humanitarian concerns did contribute to debates about immigration between 1965 and 2000; however, they also acknowledged that there were other issues that contributed. Many students referred to the establishment of the Immigration Reform Group in 1960 that led to the passing of the *Migration Act* by the Holt Liberal Government in 1966. They argued that humanitarian concerns led to the abolition of the dictation test and the decision that migrants would now be chosen on the basis of their ability and qualifications, rather than race. The Whitlam Government's policies on multiculturalism were also used in support of humanitarian concerns, as well as Malcolm Fraser's decision to allow 3700 Vietnamese 'boat people' to resettle in Australia and the Family Reunion Program adopted in the 1970s. High-scoring responses discussed other concerns that contributed to the debates, including concerns for Australia's reputation and changing relationships with Asia.

Question 10 – A global economy

Question 10 required students to measure the importance of the 1973 oil crisis in drawing Australia into the global economy. There were no responses to this question.