



GCSE MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

HISTORY

COMPONENT 2: PERIOD STUDY

2C. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE USSR, 1924–1991

C100U30-1

About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

GCSE HISTORY – COMPONENT 2: PERIOD STUDY
2C. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE USSR, 1924–1991
SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

Instructions for examiners of GCSE History when applying the mark scheme

Positive marking

It should be remembered that learners are writing under examination conditions and credit should be given for what the learner writes, rather than adopting the approach of penalising him/her for any omissions. It should be possible for a very good response to achieve full marks and a very poor one to achieve zero marks. Marks should not be deducted for a less than perfect answer if it satisfies the criteria of the mark scheme.

GCSE History mark schemes are presented in a common format as shown below.

This section indicates the assessment objective(s) targeted in the question				
Mark allocation:	AO1(a)	AO2	AO3 (a)	AO4
5	5			

Question: e.g. **Describe the Arms Race between the USSR and the USA between 1945 and 1991.** [5]

This is the question and its mark tariff.

Band descriptors and mark allocations

	AO1(a) 5 marks	
BAND 3	Demonstrates detailed knowledge of the issue set within the appropriate historical context.	4-5
BAND 2	Demonstrates some knowledge of the issue set.	2-3
BAND 1	Demonstrates weak, generalised knowledge of the issue set.	1

Use 0 for incorrect or irrelevant answers.

This section contains the band descriptors which explain the principles that must be applied when marking each question. The examiner must apply this when applying the marking scheme to the response. The descriptor for the band provides a description of the performance level for that band. The band descriptor is aligned with the Assessment Objective(s) targeted in the question.

Indicative content

This content is not prescriptive, and candidates are not expected to refer to all the material identified below.

- *The use of atomic bombs on Japan saw the world enter the nuclear age and, with the USSR's production of nuclear weapons, both superpowers entered an arms race during the Cold War.*
- *In 1952, President Truman authorised the production of hydrogen bombs and the Soviet Union tested its first thermonuclear device in 1953.*
- *Expansion of the Soviet nuclear programme throughout the 1950s with the aim of developing bigger and more powerful bombs such as the Tsar Bomba, in 1961; in contrast, the USA produced smaller, more effective nuclear weapons that could be deployed on its Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles.*
- *In 1957 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1 which brought the USA in range of Soviet weapons.*
- *The expansion of military forces and the dangerous game of brinkmanship by both sides was to lead to confrontation during the Cuban Missile Crisis.*
- *By the beginning of the 1960s, it was calculated that both powers had created enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world (Mutually Assured Destruction or MAD).*



This section contains indicative content (see below under banded mark schemes Stage 2). It may be that the indicative content will be amended at the examiner's conference after actual scripts have been read. The indicative content is not prescriptive and includes some of the points a candidate might include in their response.

Banded mark schemes

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor for the band provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains marks. Examiners should first read and annotate a learner's answer to pick out the evidence that is being assessed in that question. Once the annotation is complete, the mark scheme can be applied. This is done as a two-stage process.

Banded mark schemes Stage 1 – Deciding on the band

When deciding on a band, the answer should be viewed holistically. Beginning at the lowest band, examiners should look at the learner's answer and check whether it matches the descriptor for that band. Examiners should look at the descriptor for that band and see if it matches the qualities shown in the learner's answer. If the descriptor at the lowest band is satisfied, examiners should move up to the next band and repeat this process for each band until the descriptor matches the answer.

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the learner's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance, if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content. Examiners should not seek to mark learners down as a result of small omissions in minor areas of an answer.

Banded mark schemes Stage 2 – Deciding on the mark

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During the examiner training meeting immediately prior to the commencement of marking, detailed advice from the Principal Examiner on the qualities of each mark band will be given along with examples of pre-marked work. When marking, examiners can use these examples to decide whether a learner's response is of a superior, inferior or comparable standard to the example. Examiners are reminded of the need to revisit the answer as they apply the mark scheme in order to confirm that the band and the mark allocated is appropriate to the response provided.

Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. Indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a learner need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.

Where a response is not creditworthy, either because it contains nothing of any significance to the mark scheme or no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

Question 1

Mark allocation:	AO1 (a)	AO2	AO3	AO4
5	5			

Question: **Describe the Arms Race between the USSR and the USA between 1945 and 1991.** [5]

Band descriptors and mark allocations

	AO1(a) 5 marks	
BAND 3	Demonstrates detailed and accurate knowledge of the issue set within the appropriate historical context.	4-5
BAND 2	Demonstrates some knowledge of the issue set.	2-3
BAND 1	Demonstrates limited knowledge of the issue set.	1

Use 0 for incorrect or irrelevant answers.

Indicative content

- *The use of atomic bombs on Japan saw the world enter the nuclear age and, with the USSR's production of nuclear weapons, both superpowers entered an arms race during the Cold War.*
- *In 1952, President Truman authorised the production of hydrogen bombs and the Soviet Union tested its first thermonuclear device in 1953.*
- *Expansion of the Soviet nuclear programme throughout the 1950s with the aim of developing bigger and more powerful bombs such as the Tsar Bomba, in 1961; in contrast, the USA produced smaller, more effective nuclear weapons that could be deployed on its Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles.*
- *In 1957 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1 which brought the USA in range of Soviet weapons.*
- *The expansion of military forces and the dangerous game of brinkmanship by both sides was to lead to confrontation during the Cuban Missile Crisis.*
- *By the beginning of the 1960s, it was calculated that both powers had created enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world (Mutually Assured Destruction or MAD).*

Question 2

Mark allocation:	AO1 (a+b)	AO2	AO3	AO4
6	2	4		

Question: **How far did Stalin's Five Year Plans change the economy of the USSR between 1928 and 1953?** [6]

Band descriptors and mark allocations

	AO1(a+b) 2 marks		AO2 4 marks		
			BAND 3	Fully analyses the nature and extent of change while arriving at a well-supported judgement on the issue set within the appropriate historical context.	3-4
BAND 2	Demonstrates detailed knowledge and understanding of the key features in the question.	2	BAND 2	Begins to analyse the extent of change while arriving at a partial judgement.	2
BAND 1	Demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the key features in the question.	1	BAND 1	Provides limited analysis of the extent of change.	1

Use 0 for incorrect or irrelevant answers.

Indicative content

This content is not prescriptive, and candidates are not expected to refer to all the material identified below. Some of the issues to consider are:

- *Introduction of the Five Year Plans in 1928.*
- *Gosplan; production targets and quotas; across all aspects of industry.*
- *First plan focused on heavy industry with coal and steel production set to double, pig-iron production to quadruple and electricity supplies to raise by six times.*
- *More realistic second plan: with a move to increase production of consumer goods – though this changed back to heavy industry with the likelihood of war.*
- *Impact of the plans on economic growth with the USSR becoming the world's second largest industrial power; massive towns and industrial centres developed, transport links improved.*
- *Investment in education and training; emergence of a professional class; increased opportunities for women.*
- *Unbalanced economy with too much emphasis on industry against agriculture; shortages of skilled workers.*
- *Living standards were poor.*

Question 3

<i>Mark allocation:</i>	<i>AO1 (a+b)</i>	<i>AO2</i>	<i>AO3</i>	<i>AO4</i>
9	3	6		

Question: **The USSR was changed by the policies of Gorbachev, such as:**

- perestroika
- glasnost
- democratisation

**Arrange the policies in order of their significance in changing the USSR.
Explain your choices. [9]**

Band descriptors and mark allocations

	AO1(a+b) 3 marks		AO2 6 marks	
BAND 3	Demonstrates detailed knowledge and understanding of the features mentioned.	3	Fully explains the significance of the factors in the question. There will be a clear, well-supported justification of the relative significance of the factors set within the appropriate historical context.	5 -6
BAND 2	Demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the features mentioned.	2	Begins to explain the significance of the factors. There will be some justification of the relative significance of the factors.	3-4
BAND 1	Demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of the features mentioned.	1	Limited explanation of the significance of the factors. There will be little attempt to justify the relative significance of the factors.	1-2

Use 0 for incorrect or irrelevant answers.

Indicative content

This content is not prescriptive, and candidates are not expected to refer to all the material identified below. Examiners should note that the order of significance suggested by candidates will vary. Marks should be awarded for the quality of justification provided by candidates. Some of the issues to consider are:

- *Perestroika: Gorbachev set out to tackle the USSR's political, economic and social problems; his policy of "perestroika" or economic restructuring ended the strict state ownership of industry and encouraged private enterprise; In reality, this created a Semi-mixed economy which brought chaos and confusion, contributing to his unpopularity; too little, too late; increases in inflation, scarcity of goods.*
- *Glasnost: the policy of "glasnost" or openness within and outside the USSR would be achieved by relaxing control and censorship and reducing the power of the KGB and its eventual abolition; control over the media and the arts was relaxed and dissidents released from prisons and hospitals; the Orthodox Church was allowed to practise; western ideas and influences were allowed to flood into the USSR; glasnost and perestroika highlighted major weaknesses of the USSR in terms of its composition of many nationalities which would eventually result in its collapse.*
- *Democratization: the political system was reorganised and free, contested elections were introduced in 1990; workers were allowed more freedom and could set up co-operatives; many people hoped that his policies would represent a quick fix and protested at the slow pace of change. Many were uncomfortable with their newfound freedom having been controlled for so long and they had no experience of democracy.*

Question 4

Mark allocation:	AO1 (a+b)	AO2	AO3	AO4
8	3	5		

Question: **Explain why the ‘Cult of Stalin’ was important in maintaining Stalin’s power over the USSR between 1924 and 1953.** [8]

Band descriptors and mark allocations

	AO1(a+b) 3 marks		AO2 5 marks	
BAND 3	Demonstrates detailed knowledge and understanding of the key features in the question.	3	Fully explains the issue with clear focus set within the appropriate historical context.	4-5
BAND 2	Demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the key features in the question.	2	Partially explains the issue within the appropriate historical context.	2-3
BAND 1	Demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of the key features in the question.	1	Limited explanation of the issue.	1

Use 0 for incorrect or irrelevant answers.

Indicative content

This content is not prescriptive, and candidates are not expected to refer to all the material identified below. Some of the issues to consider are:

- *The creation of the cult of Stalin portrayed Stalin as the loyal devotee of Lenin and his natural heir and his depiction as “The Great Continuer of Lenin’s Ideas”.*
- *Stalin was portrayed as a caring family figure with the purpose of bonding him to the people.*
- *Use of propaganda glorified him through paintings, posters, statues and literature; the use of titles such as “Uncle Joe” and “Man of Steel”.*
- *Films commissioned by the government to portray Stalin in a positive light; the impression created by parades and shows of strength.*
- *Use of the radio; propaganda centred on children; the worship of Stalin at the expense of organised religion.*
- *Victory in the Second World War which portrayed him as the “Man of Steel” who had saved the nation.*

Question 5

<i>Mark allocation:</i>	<i>AO1 (a+b)</i>	<i>AO2</i>	<i>AO3</i>	<i>AO4</i>
12	4	8		

Question: **How important was de-Stalinisation in the development of the USSR after 1953?** [12]

Band descriptors and mark allocations

	AO1(a+b) 4 marks		AO2 8 marks	
BAND 4	Demonstrates accurate and detailed knowledge and understanding of the key features in the question.	4	Fully analyses and evaluates the importance of the key issue against other factors. There will be a reasoned and well supported judgement set within the appropriate historical context.	7-8
BAND 3	Demonstrates detailed knowledge and understanding of the key features in the question.	3	Analyses and evaluates the key issue against other factors. There will be a clear attempt to arrive at a judgement with support.	5-6
BAND 2	Demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the key features in the question.	2	Begins to analyse and evaluate the key issue against other factors. An unsupported judgement of the issue is provided.	3-4
BAND 1	Demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of the key features in the question.	1	Limited attempt to analyse and evaluate the key issue against other factors.	1-2

Use 0 for incorrect or irrelevant answers.

Indicative content

This content is not prescriptive, and candidates are not expected to refer to all the material identified below. Some of the issues to consider are:

- *On assuming power, Khrushchev realised that he could not make any real impact as leader unless he could find ways of undermining Stalin's achievements which was to lead to the introduction of the policy of de-Stalinisation.*
- *The importance of de-Stalinisation was to create the conditions for change, and to move away from Stalin's ideas, and absolve Khrushchev and other leaders from their involvement with Stalin, to justify the introduction of more progressive political and economic policies into the USSR and to seek peaceful co-existence with the West.*
- *At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party in 1956, Khrushchev launched a venomous attack, denouncing Stalin's cult of personality and his use of terror; he ridiculed Stalin's image as a war hero, pointing to his incompetence as a strategist.*
- *De-Stalinisation aimed to end the use of terror and an estimated eight million prisoners were released from the gulags.*
- *The judicial system was partially reformed, and the powers of the secret police were reduced.*
- *Statues and portraits of Stalin were removed as part of the destruction of the "cult of Stalin" and censorship was relaxed.*
- *Soviet citizens were allowed more freedom of movement inside the USSR and abroad and limits on cultural and sporting exchanges were relaxed.*
- *Khrushchev attempted to address social problems that had developed as a result of the central planning of the Stalinist system, including wage increases with a resultant rise in living standards.*
- *In order to fully analyse and explain the importance of de-Stalinisation, answers may also briefly consider a range of other factors such as industrial change and agricultural reform, the Brezhnev years and leadership changes between 1982-85.*