



Ms B Cartlidge
President
History Teachers' Association of NSW
PO Box 219
ANNANDALE NSW 2038

4064
4129

Dear Ms Cartlidge

I refer to your letter regarding changes to the HSC examination specifications in Ancient History and Modern History from 2010. In particular, you express concern at the introduction of objective response questions to Section I in each examination.

The Board of Studies recognises that the discipline of history values the fluent communication of historical knowledge and understanding, and the development of sustained, logical and well-structured arguments based on evidence from primary and secondary sources. The HSC examinations in Ancient History and Modern History will continue to emphasise and value these skills.

The Office of the Board of Studies has advised me that there are to be no changes to the question types for 85 of the available 100 marks of each examination. Sections II, III and IV are unchanged. In Section I the current practice of including a 10 mark question designed to assess higher order source interpretation and analysis will be maintained. The remaining 15 marks in Section I will continue to include short-answer questions that require students to use sources and their own knowledge, and from 2010 will also include source-based objective response questions to the value of between 5 and 10 marks.

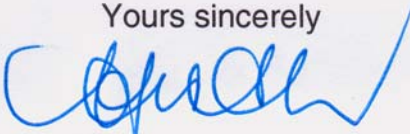
The decision to allow the number of objective response questions to vary, rather than specifying a set number, was made to allow examination committees flexibility in designing the questions for the core study. Each year the committee's selection of sources will guide their determination of the balance between objective response and short-answer questions to be included in Section I.

During Term 2 2009, the Board of Studies will provide sample material illustrating types of questions that may be asked in Section I of both these examinations from 2010. The material will be published on the Board's website: www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au

In making these changes to the HSC examination specifications, the Board is concerned foremost with the effectiveness of the HSC examinations. The high standards for which the NSW HSC is renowned will be maintained.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely



Verity Firth MP
Minister for Education and Training

18 MAY 2009