



History Teachers' Association of NSW

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The Hon. Verity Firth MP,
Minister for Education and Training
Level 31, Gov. Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

10th March 2009

Dear Minister,

As the peak body representing over 1,200 NSW History teachers, we wish to strongly express our dismay and concern about changes made by the NSW Board of Studies to the examination in both Modern and Ancient History examinations.

During consultation on the proposed examination changes, teachers very strongly rejected the idea of the introducing 10 multiple-choice (objective response) questions for the Core studies in both subjects, as did the NSW History Council and academics. Both syllabuses were recently revised in 2004, and the Core studies were not written to be assessed in this manner. The Core studies involve higher-order source analysis, evaluation of varying perspectives and written responses that rely on the development of argument based on evidence that are best answered in written responses.

Currently both Ancient and Modern History are very popular courses in NSW, chosen by more than 20,000 HSC students. We are concerned the proposed changes to the examination may jeopardise this position.

Teachers need to know the structure of examinations in order to prepare their students. The changes, which will present an unknown combination of question types from year to year, will undermine student confidence in their examination preparation. Hundreds of HSC markers signed a petition in November 2008 that acknowledged that five marks could possibly come from multiple-choice questions. However the Board of Studies has now approved "from 5-10 marks", a move that we believe is unsustainable and flies in the face of best practice in historical teaching and learning.

We urge you to undertake further consideration of this issue and would be happy to meet with you to discuss the implications of these changes.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sleantidge', written in black ink.

President
History Teachers' Association of NSW