



National Qualifications Framework Levels 1–3, 2008

History

National Moderator's Report

National Moderator’s Report for History

General Guidance for Teachers of Achievement and Unit Standards

The purpose of external moderation is to provide assurance that assessor judgments are at the national standard and are made on the basis of assessment materials that are fair and valid.

All assessment materials are expected to:

- give the learner the opportunity to meet the requirements of the standard
- have an assessment schedule that gives evidence of appropriate learner responses and clear judgments at all levels.

The Ministry of Education contracted subject experts to write assessment resources for achievement standards. These are not pre-moderated. The intention is that they are modified to suit teaching programmes and learner needs. They do not provide “rules” but suggest different ways of assessing to the nationally registered standard.

General Overall Comment

The moderation of over 900 sets of assessment materials and more than 6000 pieces of student evidence has given an improved overview of standards within the subject.

Many of the comments made in this report are a reiteration of those made in previous National Moderator reports. In the interests of improved validity of assessment and consistency of assessor judgements, teachers are encouraged to take careful note of areas for improvement. It is encouraging to note the majority of providers have high standards of compliance with assessment and moderation requirements and the general level and consistency of assessor judgements is satisfactory. NZQA is offering moderation workshops that are aimed at further developing assessor understandings and national consistency - something also encouraged with the introduction of optional feedback on teacher selected samples of student work.

Teachers refer to both the TKI and NZQA websites when developing assessment programmes, for the latest versions of standards and assessment activities. A range of support material is also being made available as it is developed, including annotated exemplars of student evidence, National Moderator’s reports, standards clarifications, newsletters and circulars. As a start, refer to the subject specific resources page: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/resources/history/index.html>.

Positive aspects of the assessment of History include the use by many teachers of the latest versions of assessment activities available on the TKI web site, avoiding the need for extensive changes to assessment materials following the moderation process. Many teachers are making appropriate use of resubmission opportunities for students, allowing credit to be awarded after minor omissions or errors by a student; many teachers are designing templates for student responses that help students with the completion of all requirements. Commonly there is evidence of considerable time and care put in by teachers to ensure clarity, accuracy and validity of assessment materials, and to make well-considered judgements of student evidence. Assessment tasks that provide brief reminders of what has been taught and examples of expected responses help some students considerably, though some teachers also need to be aware of the need to teach required skills before assessment rather than providing lengthy teaching instruction in an assessment task.

Some areas for improvement apply generally across a range of the History Achievement standards. Teachers still need to ensure that assessment tasks are accompanied by an assessment schedule that contains both judgement and evidence statements. A copy of the Achievement standard or of the students' Assessment Information sheet does not suffice.

For the sake of external moderation, and so that students are fully aware of requirements, assessment tasks need to include all assessment conditions. Commonly, spaces provided for this on assessment tasks are left blank when submitted for moderation. For example, the judgement of a student's evaluation may need to take account of whether or not it was completed in test conditions – something that is not always obvious to a moderator.

The achievement criteria of some Achievement standards (for example AS 90209, first achievement criterion) contain criteria that are the same for two or all three of the achievement levels. Teachers sometimes need to take care not to award, for example, Achievement level when there is no difference between that and Merit and Excellence levels. In the example of the first achievement criterion of AS 90209, the only possible judgements are Not Achieved or Excellence.

Some teachers continue to make inaccurate overall judgements for a Standard, because of confusion on the way the three levels of performance are scaffolded to the A, M, and E level. A criterion which appears at all three levels, such as “identify possible sources”, the first criterion for 90209, is an Achieved criterion, and cannot be used to differentiate performance at the M or E level. Where all other criteria are met, for example an adequate response for “identify possible sources” to the Achieved level this does not prevent a student from gaining Excellence (or Merit). Some teachers have taken an A performance here to mean an A level of achievement overall. However, as long as the Achieved criteria are met, as well as those for merit and excellence, then the overall judgement for the Standard must be excellence. In other words, the appearance of “identify possible sources” in the M and E criteria boxes merely indicates that an M or E student must have completed the Achieved criteria *as well as* the higher level criteria to achieve at those levels.

Specific Standards

90209: Carry out an historical investigation

It is pleasing to see that Version 3 of this Achievement standard, with its heightened evaluation requirements, is now commonly being used by teachers. All teachers should use Version 3, and make necessary alterations to existing assessment materials for 2009. As a reminder, most TKI assessment activities have already been updated to assess Version 3 of the Achievement standard.

Some students provide very superficial evidence to meet the requirements of the first achievement criterion to identify possible sources. Teachers may wish to emphasize with students the need to provide some detail to ensure that the national standard is met. Teachers may also wish to consider an alternative to the common practice of requiring students to think of some possible sources and what evidence those sources could contain. Some students have great success when the requirement of the task is instead

to identify specific sources that are relevant and useful. The task requires students to explore promising sources, for example on the internet or a library, and record the details of those selected as useful, with the intention of returning to them later in the research process.

When addressing the requirements of the Achievement standard to select relevant evidence, students need to ensure that they apply their selection process, for example by highlighting, to relevant evidence in interviews and to photographs. Those two items are commonly overlooked.

Teachers need to ensure that when awarding achievement with excellence for the evaluation in this Achievement standard, that students do provide evidence that is ‘detailed’ – the new requirement for Version 3. Common practice by successful students is to discuss the pros and cons of specific sources of evidence they have used. Teachers should also ensure that they are not awarding credit to students who merely describe what they did in the research process. There needs to be an element of judgement, throughout, of the degree of success or failure of methods used or of sources employed. That said, a pleasing feature of student evidence for this Achievement standard, and for AS 90465 and AS 90654 as well, is the overall steady growth in students’ abilities to write valid evaluations. At their best, students prove capable of perceptive and highly analytical comments that are at the heart of what it is to be an historian.

Teachers are also reminded that Explanatory Note 8 of the Achievement standard requires the assessor to provide focusing questions that guide the research. At Level 1 teachers are also permitted to provide some or all of the sources to be used. This assistance may be particularly important when students choose to research a topic for which sources may be difficult to find. Teachers should take care to ensure that students do not begin research on a topic that is, because of scarcity of sources, likely to result in non-achievement.

90210: Communicate historical ideas

A common problem for students with this Standard is the need to communicate key historical ideas that are supported with relevant evidence. Teachers should read the clarification of the requirements of this Achievement standard that will shortly be available on the NZQA web page for History.

Teachers are reminded that Explanatory Note 6 of this Achievement standard requires that a format ‘other than an essay’ is to be used to assess this Achievement standard. Format requirements such as producing a report or a lecture may result in students communicating evidence in a format that is too similar to that of an essay to allow credit for the Standard. Teachers also need to ensure that students are familiar with the format specified. Evidence shows that it cannot be assumed that students will know what is required when asked to produce, for example, a This Is Your Life programme, an obituary, an editorial, even a newspaper front page. Teachers are likely to need to teach such formats before students can begin.

When making judgements, teachers need to ensure that a distinction is being drawn between the requirements of the two achievement criteria. A common problem is for credit to be awarded for, say, a magazine article whose format is at Excellence level but which is insufficient in its communication of key ideas with supporting evidence.

90465: Plan and carry out an historical inquiry

A problem for teachers and students with this Standard is with the first achievement criterion to define an area of historical inquiry. Some explanation of requirements is provided in Explanatory Note 3 of the Achievement standard. Commonly, students write a very brief definition, for example just a place name or a person's name, and thereby risk failure to achieve. To help to overcome this problem, teachers should ensure that for the research Achievement standard at each level they do provide an opportunity for students to discuss their progress – a milestone opportunity. Problems such as failure to define adequately a research topic can be dealt with at that point. Defining a research topic is part of the planning process. It is appropriate to allow a milestone check of planning requirements such as defining the topic or creating a time management plan.

The first achievement criterion also requires students to formulate their own focusing questions. This may also be with teacher assistance (see Explanatory Note 11) and teachers need to ensure that students have formulated well-worded, appropriate questions. Very often students' questions are 'closed', too numerous or unrealistic.

Teachers may also wish to consider employing planning requirements that are referred to in the comments for AS 90209 above. If students' planning (for the second achievement criterion) includes identifying and recording possible sources that could be returned to later, they are also probably going to be in a better position to devise appropriate focusing questions. They should then be less likely to have to alter focusing questions during the research process – an all-too-familiar scenario for some students.

Another consideration around the planning achievement criterion is the requirement for the completion of a time and management plan. Teachers may need to note that Explanatory Note 5 of the Achievement standard requires that the planning includes setting a timeframe. Even though a student completes an excellent identification of possible sources, if s/he does not establish a timeframe (probably contained in a time and management plan) then credit for this achievement criterion may not be awarded. This is another instance where a student can be 'saved' by the milestone opportunity – this could be a realistic opportunity to allow resubmission.

A further aspect of planning that needs comment is the tendency by some students to fail to take planning seriously. Some student evidence is brief and ill-considered – in which case credit should not be awarded. Time and management plans may not be resubmitted after the planning stage. Those students whose plans contain reference to what they did (rather than what they are going to do) are obviously not producing an authentic plan of intent. Nor is it valid to allow resubmission of a time and management plan after the research has been completed.

Assessment tasks that require the completion of a work log (for example, of what occurred, step by step, during the research process) are not addressing the requirement of the Explanatory Note to produce a research timeframe. That is not to say that a log is useless. Students who complete a log as well as a time and management plan could well use the log to assist them in the later writing of the research evaluation, especially if given some instructions concerning what evaluative details they could record in their logs.

The comment made for AS 90209 above concerning locating relevant sources also applies for this Achievement standard (and for AS 90654 as well). Teachers should ensure that students are not setting themselves up for likely failure by establishing a research topic that is probably going to be too hard. Teachers are still allowed at Levels 2 and 3 (see Explanatory Notes) to provide some assistance to students in locating sources.

The third achievement criterion for excellence requires students to select ‘sufficient’ evidence to allow the later communication of comprehensive evidence (see Explanatory Note 9 for details). Relatively few assessment activities moderated in 2008 contained an instruction to students specifying this excellence requirement.

90466: Communicate historical ideas to demonstrate understanding of an historical context

Comments made for AS 90210 above concerning key ideas with supporting evidence and concerning the need for a format other than an essay, are relevant for this Achievement standard as well.

On the whole, student evidence for format/style has been quite impressive. Many students have exhibited strong formatting skills which must have given them a great deal of satisfaction. Care needs to be taken when allowing students to submit their evidence as a slide show (such as using Powerpoint). Such programs are generally useful for communicating the broad picture and main ideas rather than being a platform for the communication of the sort of detail that is appropriate at Level 2 (or, even more so, Level 3). Students and teachers may wish, however, to consider other aspects of such programs which allow, as well as the slides, the recording of extensive notes that can, if necessary, be printed out to meet this requirement.

Teachers may wish to give consideration to the requirement of the third achievement criterion, the use of conventions. A common problem with this requirement is that few of the TKI assessment activities contain the required evidence statement that has to accompany the conventions judgement statement (updated versions will remedy this soon). A second consideration surrounds the use of a bibliography. TKI activities tend to be quite non-specific concerning the completion of a bibliography/reference list (often the task and assessment schedule states that conventions ‘could include’ a bibliography). Teachers could consider (i) requiring source details to be recorded for AS 90465 activities, and those details being employed for the requisite completion of a bibliography for AS 90466 (a bibliography is often much more appropriate where the final communication of evidence occurs), and (ii) a bibliography required for this Achievement standard could be a useful support tool to help teachers to identify possible plagiarism of sources by students.

90468: Examine perspectives and responses of, and demonstrate empathy for, people in an historical setting

The first achievement criterion of this Achievement standard creates a challenge for assessment judgements. Students are required to produce four types of evidence and, depending on the activity, such evidence may need to be provided for three or four different people. To assist teachers to identify the required descriptions, explanations, perspectives and responses, consideration could be given to requiring students to make a prior identification, perhaps in a grid format, of how they will address those

requirements in the main section of their evidence. This method may also help to ensure that students remain focused on the requirements of the first achievement criterion, rather than getting swept away by the need for an authentic role play element, as many students do, and forgetting the content requirements. Those students who frame their questions and responses, or their other types of communication, in a way that clearly addresses the descriptions and explanations of perspectives and responses certainly make the assessor's task much easier.

When producing evidence for the second achievement criterion, students may need some guidance as to how far their authenticity should reach as far as the use of authentic language is concerned. Some students employ 'authentic' language, for example that of troops in Vietnam, to what most would consider to be an unacceptable level in the circumstances of public assessment.

A further problem for students with this Achievement standard concerns those activities (such as the TKI activity concerning the Russian Revolution) where they are allowed some plausible invention of likely personalities (for example, labourers, peasants, soldiers, wealthy landowners). When communicating the thoughts and actions of such people students still need to ensure that they communicate their knowledge and understanding of actual people and events in the historical context. A student could argue that a peasant, for example, would be unlikely to be acquainted with the details of social, economic and political upheaval around him, and therefore it would be inappropriate to communicate such knowledge. But when students create three or four such characters the result can be that the student has no opportunity to communicate the sort of knowledge that is required at Level 2. Task instructions sometimes need to take account of this factor, perhaps by limiting the number of such character inventions. Alternatively, perhaps even peasants could be expected to glean some details of life and activities in the greater Russia through rumour or contact with outsiders. Using such imaginative methods to get an unlikely character to communicate in the necessary depth could help students to gain credit for the second achievement criterion, as well as the first.

Comments made for AS 90210 above concerning the possible need to teach students about the required format may apply to this Achievement standard as well – for example, the nature of a propaganda pamphlet such as that required for a TKI activity about Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnam War. In a similar way, students may need some assistance with tasks such as producing a radio broadcast. Those whose broadcast comes from a tape recorder whose batteries are failing or whose presenters speak in unconvincing monotonous tones will not be helping their case for gaining credit for the second achievement criterion. Some teaching on the matter, and perhaps the provision of necessary technology, may be a solution in some cases.

90654: Plan and carry out independent historical research

The main issues surrounding the use of this Achievement standard concern the three points of difference between this research Standard and those at Levels 1 and 2: at excellence level, the need for significant and perceptive focusing questions, the need to demonstrate the use of initiative in the research process and the need to write an evaluation from the historian's perspective.

To gain credit with excellence most, but not all, focusing questions that the student formulates need to be ‘significant and perceptive’. Explanatory Notes 5 and 6 of the Achievement standard provide clear guidance about these requirements and most TKI activities for this Standard provide good examples of appropriate questions in the assessment schedule.

Nationally, demonstration of student initiative is most commonly seen in students accessing sources that have required effort beyond the easy and the obvious (internet, school library, History Department). Depending on circumstances, that has included use of libraries beyond the school, the use of Index New Zealand, interviews with people not immediately within the acquaintance of the student and visits to historical sites other than as part of a class trip. Other students have demonstrated initiative by contacting people who may be able to provide assistance - embassies or historical writers, for example. A third way of demonstrating initiative has been to access sources of evidence that require some time and effort to use: for example sources that are difficult to decipher, that are written in other languages or that are written at a high academic level and in length. Teachers need to ensure that there is evidence of such initiative and should be cautious about awarding credit at excellence level to a student whose ‘initiative’ has involved writing a couple of emails to sources (e.g. Oxford University History Faculty) from whom there could be little response. Such considerations should form part of the discussions with a student at the first milestone meeting.

Many students at Level 3 are writing excellent evaluations of their research process. To ensure, however, that all students have the best opportunity to gain credit with excellence for their evaluations, teachers should ensure that the evaluation instructions for most TKI activities are clear and unambiguous as to which suggested evaluation topics students should address. Currently, most instructions suggest addressing at least three of the topics provided, without clarifying the need to include the final three topics which are expected to provide evidence written from the historian’s perspective. In that case, suggesting a minimum of three topics may be a little misleading. Alterations to these instructions will soon be available in revised TKI activities.

Comments made for AS 90209 and AS 90465 concerning the need for plenty of detail in planning apply here too. Teachers should ensure planning that is detailed, or comprehensively detailed, contains a depth that is in advance of the minimum standard for Level 2.

Comments made for AS 90465 concerning the need for an area of historical research to be defined are also relevant to this Achievement standard. In addition, when assessing the definition, teachers need to ensure that students are going to research an historical context. Occasionally, students have researched and presented evidence - such as a study on global warming - that is mostly dealing with current issues. The vast majority of evidence researched and communicated needs to be historical before credit can be awarded. These considerations apply also at Levels 1 and 2.

Teachers should also ensure that instructions concerning the recording of source details are clear as to where details should be recorded and whether a bibliography is required to gain credit for this Standard. See comments in regard to this in the section for AS 90466 above.

90655: Communicate and present historical ideas clearly to show understanding of an historical context

The depth at which students need to communicate their evidence sometimes causes problems with this achievement standard. The first achievement criterion requires, at excellence level, a comprehensive range of key ideas, expressed explicitly but succinctly. There must be accurate supporting evidence and perceptive understanding. A balance therefore needs to be struck between how much to write and what is an appropriate depth for the context being communicated. The main problem for students concerns a lack of sufficient evidence to demonstrate understanding, but occasionally there is also the problem of the communication of many pages of writing that moves the student beyond the skill of demonstrating succinctness. Teachers need to remember to refer to the requirements of this achievement criterion when making judgements.

Many students have presented outstanding evidence for the second achievement criterion (format/style) this year. Teachers do sometimes need to ensure that requirements for the use of historical conventions are clear, especially with respect to providing a bibliography.

Unit Standards

A number of schools are using Unit standards. Matters arising from their use include:

- some assessment activities that originate from Ministry of Education sources need to be assessed under test conditions. If those are the stated conditions, the probable reason is that the degree of difficulty is such that their completion as a homework activity, for example, is inappropriate. Teachers therefore need to take careful note of the assessment conditions prescribed on such activities
- it is generally not possible to use an activity that was written to assess an achievement standard (for example AS 90211, Interpret Historical Sources) to assess a unit standard (for example US 5809, Interpret Historical Resources). In most cases the criteria of the two standards are dissimilar
- some unit standards are extremely wide-ranging and their use needs to be the culmination of extensive teaching - the students' evidence needs to be extensive as well. An example is US5842 which assesses Māori-Pakeha relations up to the Treaty of Waitangi, the Treaty of Waitangi and Māori and Pakeha assertions of sovereignty, and the origins and consequences of the New Zealand Wars. As assessment of these criteria requires student analysis of the contexts, it is unlikely that students will be able to meet the Level 3 standard in a single essay written under test conditions in an hour. Teachers may need to consider assessing such Unit standards through a variety of assessment tasks over a period of time
- the standard of student evidence required to gain credits for unit standards is at the same level required to gain credits for achievement standards.