



Department  
for Education

**Consultation Response Form**

**Consultation closing date: 16 April 2013**  
**Your comments must reach us by that date.**

# **Reform of the National Curriculum in England**

## **Consultation Response Form**

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Reason for confidentiality:

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If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Public Communications Unit by e-mail: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's ['Contact Us'](#) page.

Please tick one category that best describes you as a respondent

<input type="checkbox"/> Primary School	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary School	<input type="checkbox"/> Special School
<input type="checkbox"/> Organisation representing school teachers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subject Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent
<input type="checkbox"/> Young Person	<input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Further Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Academy	<input type="checkbox"/> Employer/Business Sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority
<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

We represent a core membership of nearly 6000 schools, teachers and academics with a further 2000 branch associates. Nineteen thousand history teachers (both primary and secondary) academic historians and history enthusiasts are registered with our website to receive news and notifications. In writing this response we have consulted widely amongst our core members and affiliates and have contacted schools and teachers not affiliated. We held five public meetings for teachers and educators across England during March 2013 and spoken to around 460 individuals. Through our online forums we collected detailed views from further 100 individuals. Our Survey of secondary schools represents the views of 545 individual teachers from state maintained comprehensives through to independent schools who all currently teach history at Key Stage 3. Around half of the total responses were from teachers in schools that will be technically exempt from following the National Curriculum, highlighting the strength of feeling within the history teaching community that these draft proposals have created. Our primary survey data represents the views of just over 250 primary schools (the survey is still open at the time of writing). We wish to make it clear that this response expresses the views of these teachers of history.

Are you answering this consultation in response to particular subjects? Please tick all those that apply.

English

mathematics

science

art & design

citizenship

computing

design & technology

geography

X

history

languages

music

physical education

Not applicable

## 1 Do you have any comments on the proposed aims for the National Curriculum as a whole as set out in the framework document?

### Comments:

There are firstly some structural, wording and organisational issues to address. There seems to be some confusion or blurring of lines between Section 2 and Section 3. Section 2 clearly seems to set out some of the overarching “aims” of the curriculum (see 2.1) whereas 3.2 does not appear to be an aim. 3.1 makes value judgements rather than an overarching aim. We would suggest more time and care be given to looking at these whole curriculum concerns.

Section 2.1 expresses the clear and important aim that the curriculum should be broad and balanced. The two bullet points of Section 2.1 also cover vital overarching aims of balanced and thoughtful curriculum. This Section should be moved to Section 3.

The wording of aim 3.1 is sensitive and open to debate. There is disagreement over what constitutes the essential core knowledge that every child should know as well as what the best that has been thought and said is.

Aim 3.2 is not an aim, but rather an expression of a desire that teachers should teach beyond this prescribed core. We welcome the notion of a National Curriculum as a **minimum** entitlement allowing schools to adapt the curriculum to best meet the specific needs of their own pupils and to teach beyond the content set out. The implications of this statement are that the prescribed curriculum should be sufficiently limited to give teachers the necessary freedom to do this. As our comments on the history curriculum will make clear, the sheer volume of prescribed knowledge will make it impossible for teachers to go beyond the core or to produce “exciting and stimulating” lessons.

The aims of the draft National Curriculum place a greater emphasis on knowledge than previous incarnations of the history National Curriculum. The Historical Association is fully supportive of the status of knowledge in the curriculum. In other respects, the draft aims could be seen as limiting and suggesting learners are merely passive receivers of knowledge (seen in 3.1) We do not object in principle to a curriculum that sets out a small core of knowledge as an entitlement for all children in all schools. It is implied here however, that there is a core of knowledge that every child should know in order to be considered educated. Simply being able to regurgitate learned “facts” does not make for a well- educated citizen. While it is right to give knowledge proper place, and the Historical Association supports this, history education, for example, is not just a process by which facts are delivered to students. It is also a discipline in which students become aware of how historical accounts are constructed, the evidence upon which they are based, the motivations of those who construct accounts and the validity of those accounts in differing contexts. It is a discipline in which students make judgements and defend them with evidence. Mathematics is described as a discipline within its purpose of study. It is important that the overall aims of the curriculum allude to subject discipline as well as to knowledge. This issue can be solved relatively easily by referring to “knowledge and understanding” rather than knowledge alone.

The continued emphasis on literacy and numeracy in the primary phase, whilst important, should also acknowledge the contribution of other subjects to the development of these core skills in an effort to rebalance a broad primary curriculum that has been skewed since the introduction of the literary hour in 1998 and the

deregulation of the broader curriculum.

**2 Do you agree that instead of detailed subject-level aims we should free teachers to shape their own curriculum aims based on the content in the programmes of study?**

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

Subject level aims must be retained. If we are to follow a common National Curriculum, it is reasonable to expect that there should be common subject level aims. Additionally, the limitations and inadequacies of the history curriculum in particular mean that clear aims are essential. It is absolutely necessary that in particular the last 4 subject level aims for history are retained and reflected in the programme of study. These express the value of history as a discipline and must remain if teachers are to plan, teach and assess history effectively.

We should also remember in the case of history that the vast majority of primary teachers are not subject specialists. Historical Association research into primary schools from 2010-12 indicates that 40% of teachers had never received any training to teach history in their initial teacher training or beyond. Those that have received any training are likely only to have received only a minimal time allocation for history that their course allows. Very few undergraduate teacher training programmes in primary education operate a history specialism. In the words of one primary practitioner for example “without clear aims, I wouldn’t know where to begin.”

### **Aims and purpose statements**

The purpose of study for history quite rightly points out that as well as providing a secure base of knowledge in a chronological framework, history should equip students to think critically, weigh evidence and reach judgements. This is something that the Historical Association fully supports; however, it fails to acknowledge history as a discipline. When the purpose of study is viewed in the context of the heavy content load of the history programmes of study, it becomes less achievable and certainly will not go any way to helping students to “understand the challenges of our own time.”

Overall, the tone of the history purpose statement is dry and uninspiring. While previous incarnations of the history National Curriculum also had their flaws, it was clear that history was a subject that could fire curiosity and be inspirational. This is severely lacking in the draft purpose statement. In contrast the draft purpose statement for mathematics calls it a “foundation for understanding the world” and that this curriculum will inspire a “sense of enjoyment and curiosity about the subject.” Additionally, the

purpose statement for geography indicates that it will “inspire a curiosity and fascination about the world”. The motivation and enthusiasm seems to be curiously absent from history.

While slightly more secondary teachers (20%) agreed with the draft aims, the majority were concerned about the Anglo-centric emphasis of the first aim that does not acknowledge the influence of other countries on Britain; the lack of interest in the history of any other peoples in their own right, and the ahistorical notion of there being one single coherent story.

*“I fear it is teaching of a glorious British past”... “The aims are the best thing about this document, but the first 3 bullets in particular contain some loaded interpretive language that is at odds with the statement of purpose which offers a high quality history education that equips pupils to think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments and develop perspective and judgement.”*

-The first 3 bullet points in the aims do not reflect history as a discipline, nor do they represent accurate or current historical thinking. To say that the British people shaped this nation is misleading and suggests that the British people have always been here as a distinct group; this is inaccurate. Many of the issues, events and people that have shaped the history of Britain are more grounded in an international perspective. It is also misleading to place emphasis solely on how Britain shaped the world.

The first bullet point of the aims asks students to know and understand the story of these Islands. This indicates a more inclusive approach towards Scotland, Wales and Ireland, which is to be welcomed, although this is not well reflected in the content. It should also be pointed out that these Islands have many stories to them, not just one as indicated in the draft. It is regrettable that concepts which clarify the importance of cultural, ethnic and social diversity in previous versions of the national curriculum have been removed.

The notion of a single coherent narrative from the Stone Age to the Enlightenment and civilised democracy as indicated by the aims seems to imply a particular (Whig) view. A particular view of history should not form the basis or aim of the National Curriculum. Surely the job of the National Curriculum should equip students with the narrative and knowledge of the people, places and events and the differing interpretations and controversies that they inspire as well as equip them with the critical skills to be able to decide for themselves which interpretation is the most convincing.

The phrase “follies of mankind” is helpful in the sense that it points out that history is not just one long story of human progress, but the word follies itself suggests whimsical errors which when applied to some of the events that students will study, may prove unhelpful. This phrase might be replaced. A possible replacement might be “some of the achievements and mistakes made by past societies.”

**3 Do you have any comments on the content set out in the draft programmes of study?**

Comments:

**The content will not achieve its stated aims.**

Eighty-six per cent of respondents to the Historical Association secondary survey did not believe that the content of the curriculum would help to achieve the stated aims. This included 100% of grammar and 78% of independent school respondents as well as 87% of new academies and free school respondents. Ninety-one per cent of respondents to our primary survey did not feel that the content outlined would achieve the stated aims.

As outlined in a separate comment below, teaching in sequence alone will not aid chronological understanding. The overall aims of the National Curriculum state that this history curriculum, as part of the whole, should provide an essential core of knowledge around which teachers are given the freedom to design interesting and stimulating lessons. As Kenneth Baker has said, It is not the job of government to define what content is taught and precise content examples should be entrusted to teachers to define based on the needs of their students. This curriculum does not offer teachers freedom; in fact it constrains them more than ever. The sheer volume of prescribed content that teachers are expected to get through will also mean that there is no time to go beyond this core or be innovative and creative. Instead, it could lead to a dumbing down of both teaching standards and the quality of learning. There will be little time for primary teachers to give context to the chronological sequence of events and little time for the development of young people's understanding of the discipline of history and capacity to use historical knowledge in the ways set out within the aims at any key stage. Several respondents to the Historical Association secondary survey have alluded to this in their comments a small number of which are sampled here: *"The proposed whistle-stop tour does not allow subjects to be covered in any amount of depth"...* *"Students will come out of history lessons with a limited amount of knowledge but they will not understand any of it"...* *"History teachers need to inspire students, but the proposed curriculum leaves very little time to do this"...* *"The aims of the National Curriculum are admirable. The proposed history curriculum however, seems exempt from these aims...Rather than freedom, it brings prescription. Rather than professionalism, it brings dogma. Rather than expertise, it brings misconception"*

When an extensive list of content was prescribed in the very first version of the National Curriculum, it soon proved unworkable. The principle job of the Dearing Review was to reduce the level of prescription. **We recommend that this level of prescribed content is reviewed and that a more flexible approach is adopted.**

The aims of the consultation as it was launched and as defined in 1.1 of the consultation document indicate the desire to create a rigorous curriculum that offers essential knowledge and gives teachers greater freedom to help students realise their potential. As laid out here, this history curriculum clearly does not do this. The level of prescribed content acts as a constraint to lower standards rather than representing greater rigour. The Historical Association welcomes the emphasis and interest placed upon history, although we **recommend a working group of historians and teachers is set up to work with government to ensure a curriculum that meets its aims and drives standards up.**



**The prescribed content as set out in the draft curriculum for history does not match or feel coherent with other subjects.** History is far more heavily prescribed than other subjects. Ninety-six per cent of respondents to the Historical Association secondary survey were unhappy with the level of prescribed content of the draft history curriculum. This included 92% of independent and 97% of new academy/free school respondents, all of whom are technically exempt from following the curriculum proposals, and who are therefore likely to ignore a level of prescription that they regard as so inappropriate. Ninety-eight per cent of respondents to our primary survey felt the same.

In English, the only stipulated writer is Shakespeare. In Geography, broad regions are specified, leaving teachers to choose locations. In languages, there are no specified vocabulary lists. However, history has an extensive canon of core knowledge specified that makes it conspicuous. In our original submission to the review, the Historical Association recommended a broad outline within which a small compulsory core should be stipulated, leaving teachers freedom and flexibility to add further content appropriate to their students' needs. If other subjects can be trusted to make their own content decisions within a broader framework, why is this not the case for history? Respondents to Historical Association surveys and contributors within the face to face forums and online polls overwhelmingly stated that the draft curriculum for history was overly prescriptive:

*"There is far too much content"... "The new curriculum is too prescriptive"... "With 64 prescribed units of study at Key Stage 3, I can see us having to sweep through history with approximately one unit per week..." "My main concern is that many key strains will be taught at Key Stage 2, when timetabling and specialist history teaching are certain to be a problem"... "The prescription of content is not appropriate when schools are so different, with different contexts and catchment."*

**Inconsistent content for age range across the curriculum.** In places, the content defined is inconsistently applied across subjects. At Key Stage 1, students are expected to learn about the concept of Parliament, yet students are not introduced to the word in English vocabulary lists until year 5/6. Similarly, the word government also appears in year 5/6 lists and yet children are expected to have met these words and concepts through history in Key Stage 1. **We recommend that a holistic review of the draft curriculum is undertaken to get rid of inconsistencies and barriers to learning.** As outlined in question 4, there are also inconsistencies in content within the history curriculum. It appears odd to find basic concepts relating to the passing of time alongside far more complex concepts such as democracy and parliament in Key Stage 1 which represents a huge inconsistency in the level of challenge required. Concepts such as democracy and parliament are best built up over time.

**The content defined is inconsistent.** Within such a body of prescribed material in which there is the compulsion to study specific individuals such as Elizabeth I, Gladstone, Disraeli, Chamberlain and Salisbury, Warwick the Kingmaker etc, it seems that there are personalities conspicuous by their absence, for example Queen Victoria, or Charles I, or Oliver Cromwell for example. The point to make here is not to add to an already heavily prescribed list of content, nor to open up unhelpful debates about what

should and should not be on the list but to point out the inconsistent nature of the content that has been defined and the arguments that become inevitable when any list is prescribed in such specific detail.

**The content is dry and uninspiring.** The draft curriculum is heavily politically and diplomatically biased at the expense of other social, cultural, and economic aspects of history. Many respondents to the Historical Association primary and secondary surveys commented on the nature of the content, a sample of those comments is outlined here: *“The curriculum at key stage 3 does not look inspiring and this may have a significant impact on the numbers choosing history beyond the age of 14”... “Much of the key stage 3 content is barren and limited”... “I really believe in making history academically demanding, but it should also inspire interest and frankly, lots of the content will appear dull to the average 13 year old”... “‘1066 and All That’ was written for a reason. History was boring! Interweaving the strands of social, economic and political history can paint a more vivid picture of the past into which dates and events can be given a context. This is not the way!”... “I am worried that the new curriculum will put young children off the subject for life, which would be a shame as they are naturally very excited by it.”*

**The Curriculum is Anglo-Centric.** The aims of the history curriculum refer to “these islands” and yet the curriculum itself portrays a heavily Anglo-centric bias with Ireland, Scotland and Wales tending to be referred to either in situations of conflict or when they have been put down by England. Respondents to our surveys indicated that the curriculum was imbalanced:

*“The proposed curriculum focuses heavily on British political and diplomatic history”... “(The Curriculum is)Anglo-centric and dry”... “The proposed curriculum takes a rather celebratory approach to British history”... “The Anglo-centric nature raises serious concerns”... “This is a very Anglo-centric curriculum and surely it is time for us to be thinking globally”... “There is too much focus on an Anglo-centric perspective of history at the expense of gaining an understanding of any world developments.”*

**There is a distinct lack of world history.** A serious omission of this curriculum is the lack of any real opportunity to study any area of world history for its own sake. Ninety-one per cent of respondents to our secondary survey felt that this history curriculum would not prepare students for the increasingly globalised society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and 87% of respondents to our primary survey felt that the proportion of European and world history was inappropriate.

The only opportunities to study another country in its own right appear to be the study of Ancient Greece and Rome in Key Stage 2. Other than this; the only occasions in which students are introduced to other countries are when Britain has an impact on them (usually a triumphal one). While British history is understandably the mainstay of a curriculum in this country, if we are to encourage the development of citizens able to compete on a global scale and in a global market, we need greater understanding of the history, heritage and customs of other cultures, rather than less as this curriculum offers and as respondents to our surveys clearly point out:

*“In a global world, a global perspective is required. By only ever looking at Britain, we*

*risk creating a generation of students who cannot fully understand our position in history or Britain's role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century... "The over-emphasis on British history will skew students' understanding of global historical developments"*

**Some of the most popular content has been dropped.** The biggest market for learning outside the classroom at heritage sites or historic buildings and museums is by far in the primary sector. Cutting popular primary topics, for example the Victorians and Britain since 1930, will result in large numbers of museums or heritage sites losing their highly successful education programmes altogether, or being forced into radical redesigns, costing money that many simply do not have. Primary schools are generally well resourced for teaching both the Victorians and Britain since 1930. These two periods offer a wealth of artefacts and local buildings or sites that offer children hands on experience, as well, in the case of Britain since 1930, as being able to involve the oral histories of members of their families and local communities. They can introduce children to more recent aspects of social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity including linkages with local history studies. All of this will now be lost. Many primary teachers have also lamented the fact that under these proposals, they will no longer be able to teach Ancient Egypt, a hugely inspiring and popular topic with young children.

### **Difficulties of language**

There are a number of queries concerning the language of the content as set out in the document. Since the naming of events inevitably reflects the contentious nature of the process of historical interpretation, considerable care needs to be taken in choosing the most appropriate terminology. Historians no longer refer to "The Indian Mutiny" other than with the acceptance that to call it such represents a biased interpretation. This terminology could be seen by many to demean an important part of the struggle for independence. The term "Glorious Revolution" is also contentious and ignores Catholic views of the event. This should be avoided in a curriculum. The phrases "Enlightenment" and "Renaissance" in England sound odd because they are part of a much wider movement that is not restricted to England. Indeed, Adam Smith who was actually Scottish is listed as part of the English enlightenment.

### **The strictly chronological approach is unworkable.**

Seventy-two per cent of respondents to our secondary survey felt that the chronological sequencing of events as laid out in the draft proposal would not aid the development of chronological understanding in young people and 84% of respondents to our primary survey felt the same. In order for children to properly grasp chronology, they need to make links between time periods, look at specific periods from a number of different angles, they need to gain a sense of the period, appreciate the factors and forces affecting different periods and driving events, they need to be able to trace development over time and similarities and differences across periods, only then are they able to build up a detailed and meaningful map of the past, not just by knowing for example that the Magna Carta was signed in 1215. Without constant reinforcement and mapping

through timelines, the child has no sense of time or differences over time. The most effective way of developing a secure chronological understanding has long been a matter of debate. Firstly, it should be noted that there is a difference between chronological frameworks and chronological understanding. The Historical Association is supportive of the need to develop a coherent chronological understanding in the minds of our children; however, research shows that simply teaching events in sequence is not sufficient to achieve this aim. [http://www.history.org.uk/resources\\_resource\\_102\\_8.html](http://www.history.org.uk/resources_resource_102_8.html) Further research evidence (see A. Hodkinson in *Educational Research*, Vol 46, No.2) shows that children are more capable of operating a chronological framework at a younger age than perhaps is at present accepted if special teaching methods involving constant reinforcement, presentation of events from time present to time past and the use of timelines as well as discussion of vocabulary among other things are consistently used. This enables students to remember more. However, the sheer lack of training of primary teachers in this important concept of historical understanding, let alone in the pedagogy of history as a whole alongside the sheer weight of content will not make this possible. If teachers are to effectively develop a chronological framework among students then training and curriculum time are needed. Furthermore, this operation of a secure chronological framework should not be confused with understanding. A child's sense of period and understanding of the complexities of people and events and their causes, consequences, significance, as well as their understanding of the evidence that tells us about them will develop over time. Chronological understanding is more than an understanding of time and the order in which events are placed. As with the development of a chronological framework, good teachers will be able to fill in these gaps, yet the fact that many primary teachers are not subject specialists and the sheer level of content they are expected to teach will make giving time to filling these holes very difficult. Ofsted in their 2011 report *History for All* did point towards episodic learning at primary level, but this will not be solved by teaching in sequence alone; a chronological framework needs effective reinforcement and chronological understanding needs building. Many teachers' notions of the development of chronological frameworks and understanding are subjective and are not embedded in the latest research available. **We recommend that if teachers are to properly develop a chronological framework in students (something that is entirely achievable to expect students to carry to secondary education) then they must be properly trained to deliver this concept.** There is a clear need for CPD in this area. In addition to this, there are also logistic problems relating to the teaching of history in sequence. About a third of primary schools are set in rural locations and as smaller schools, operate mixed age classes. To teach in sequence to a class of mixed age children will be virtually impossible. If both of these problems make the emergence of a chronological framework difficult at primary level, the job at secondary becomes all the more difficult. There is a clear training issue for primary teachers. Since those in mixed age schools will have to present periods out of sequence for at least some students, they need to learn much more through training and CPD about how to present effective overviews and outline 'maps' of the past and how to contextualise particular periods and help students to see where they fit within the overview. The chronological cut off point between key stages is also unhelpful. As previously outlined, students' understanding of people and events will be affected by the age at

which they study it. Therefore it is likely that through these proposals, students' grasp of the complexities earlier periods of history will be underdeveloped.

Respondents to primary and secondary Historical Association surveys indicated very clearly that simple teaching in chronological order will not solve the current issues surrounding chronological understanding nor the episodic learning that Ofsted talk of. In fact, what will emerge will still be episodic, just in sequence. Our respondents comments quite clearly point to the need to re-think how a chronological map of the past can be built in the minds of students:

*"Studying thousands of years of history at primary school will not help students gain a grasp of chronology as they will cover it in far too little detail"... "Key Stage 3 is mostly modern history and therefore does not allow for some issues to be studied in depth from different angles or at a higher level, for example religion."... "Fifteen years of teaching has taught me that merely teaching content chronologically is not the best way to teach chronology...students will retain little of value over such a timeframe. Furthermore, by condemning pre-1700 to the primary sector, huge swathes of history are likely to be taught at rudimentary level only"... "It is wrong to assume that the only way young people will develop a secure sense of chronology is to teach history in a rigid chronological format".... "The idea that using a strict chronological framework means children will grasp chronology is naïve" "The way in which the curriculum focuses on chronology is unwise. It will only help prepare students for the history round in pub quizzes in the future. Chronology is important as an overview and for context, but should not dictate the delivery of the curriculum."*

A chronological overview in Key Stage 2 covering aspects of early to modern history, setting out the key features of different periods, and enabling children to make connections across periods and developments over time would enable a framework to emerge and lay the foundations for chronological understanding, allowing teachers in secondary schools to build on this and create greater depth of knowledge and understanding of the past and understanding of perspectives. This could also signal the end of problems of episodic learning at primary as identified by Ofsted (*Ofsted History for All 2011*) and eliminate the problems relating to the heritage sector and underdevelopment of knowledge of early periods of history as outlined above.

### **The chronological transition between key stages**

A major flaw in this curriculum is the fact that all history before 1700 has now been placed into the primary curriculum. This means that children will be taught all of their history up to 1700 by non-specialist teachers. This has issues for rigour and standards as discussed in question 4. We strongly recommend as outlined above that this strictly linear chronological approach is reconsidered.

**4 Does the content set out in the draft programmes of study represent a sufficiently ambitious level of challenge for pupils at each key stage?**

Sufficiently ambitious

Not sufficiently ambitious

Not sure

Comments:

**Content and Time Allocation**

The content set out represents an ambitious level of challenge for teacher and student alike in the sense that there is a vast amount of content to get through, but with no greater curriculum time allocation specified. This begs the question as to how secure the learning will be. To repeat the words of one teacher “*students will come out of history lessons with a limited amount of knowledge but they will not understand any of it*”. History should receive a minimum time allocation of one hour per week at primary and two hours per week at secondary level.

**The Curriculum will be “dumbed down”**

There is a real anxiety among teachers that this curriculum will lead to lower standards. This is because there will be little time to teach beyond the prescribed core and the rote learning of events and people. Knowledge is extremely important in itself, this is not to be argued with; however of equal importance is how knowledge is applied. This curriculum will lead to a generation of students who are able to regurgitate factual knowledge, but without understanding it or being able to apply it. Teachers’ comments highlighted this as a very serious concern. Teachers felt that this curriculum would lower standards rather than raise them: “*There is nothing of students creating their own arguments or assessing the validity of interpretations*”... “*I do not see how (this curriculum) allows for an understanding of the complexities of our British identities*”... “*How does this prepare global citizens?*”... “*It is a dramatic shake-up of key stage 1-3 coverage for no clear gains*”... “*More content in the same time means superficial coverage and thus students remembering and understanding even less than before!*”... “*So much for rigour*”.

**There is little to link the content prescribed with progression**

There has been little attempt made in the attainment target to define what it means to get better at history and therefore the content stands as a bland list of names and events with no clear indication as to what level of challenge might be expected and when. The pre-ambule to Key Stages 1 and 2, although making welcome reference to local history, does nothing to help define progression and in fact could be seen as dumbing down as it requires little more than chronological sequencing of knowledge, which is an underestimation of what children can do by Year 6. A Year 3 class recently observed by the Historical Association were debating whether or not Boudicca had been right to rebel taking into account the evidence that they had evaluated. There is little opportunity in the pre-ambule to Key Stages 1 and 2 for children to engage with the concepts that are indicated in the last 4 aims of the draft curriculum, which they are far more capable of doing than this document accepts. Children in Key Stages 1 and 2 are capable of making simple historical judgments based upon evidence and of examining

cause and consequence among other things. Merely prescribing the events about which they need to know without elaborating the kinds of understanding that they need to demonstrate will lower standards. Again, this is not the case for other subject areas. In Key Stage 2 sciences, children are building investigations and carrying out enquiries, in English, they are drawing inferences. This is a clear mismatch of expectations and represents a decline for standards in history. The lack of a valid attempt to define progression is strongest at, Key Stage 2, given that it represents four years of a student's life. It would seem according to this document that there is no greater challenge to learning about the Stone age in Year 3 for example, to the Glorious Revolution in Year 6.

The Key Stage 3 pre-ambles give some clues in the sense that students are expected to be making connections, analysing trends, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of different types of sources etc, but again, no clear indication is given of what it means to get better at history, or indeed the expectations of the level at which students should be doing these things. Without any serious thought given to the nature of progression in history, it is difficult to see how this curriculum can represent a challenge other than in the form of the sheer weight of content specified.

**The lack of coherence and suitability across the curriculum will lower standards.**

There are questions raised over the suitability of some of the content at each stage as well as the overall coherence. Sometimes it appears that this is out of step with expectations of students in other subject areas and out of step with child development at particular ages.

In addition to the example of the concept of parliament already mentioned previously in this response, in the history curriculum in Key Stage 1, William Harvey is listed as a scientist who may be used as a significant individual, yet he does not appear on the science curriculum until Year 5. We can take another example from the Key Stage 2 curriculum. In history, students will learn about ancient Greece and Rome as well as pre-historic Britain from the Stone age. This will start from Year 3, and yet it is not until Year 4 on the mathematics curriculum that children are introduced to the concept of counting backwards from zero and using negative numbers, and the word 'ancient' does not appear on English word lists until Years 5 and 6. This will make for interesting conceptual understanding in Year 3 history and this lack of understanding of child development and lack of curricular coherence will depress standards unless a more holistic approach is taken.

There are also imbalances within the history curriculum itself to be taken into account. This is particularly evident in Key Stage 1 where a clear misjudgement of how children learn has been made. Children of this age start with their own experiences and work outwards from this point. This is why the topics of toys and family history work so well. It is also a good starting point for developing the conceptual understanding of old and new, the passing of time and the creation of basic timelines. It seems therefore odd, that there is no real mechanism in the Key Stage 1 curriculum for children to learn about the basic concepts relating to the passing of time such as before and after and then and now. It also appears odd that these basic principles relating to the passing of time appear alongside much more challenging concepts as parliament, democracy, monarchy and civilisation. Bearing in mind where some of these concepts are placed in

other subjects, and taking into account the nature of child development, it seems that these concepts in Key Stage 1 represent a complete misunderstanding of children and child development between the ages of 5 and 7. It is also interesting to note that the current National Curriculum requires children at Key Stage 1 to be able to identify differences between different ways of life at different times which is actually more challenging than being able to “develop an awareness of the past and the ways in which it is similar to and different from the present” as suggested in the draft proposals. Although this statement is entirely appropriate, it represents lower standards of expectation than the previous curriculum.

**The distribution of events across the key stages will lead to lower standards of historical knowledge.**

As well as the curriculum representing a lack of challenge in places, it also represents too great a challenge in others. In addition to overly challenging concepts in Key Stage 1, there are also issues in Key Stage 2. The result of moving content from the Key Stage 3 curriculum into the Key Stage 2 curriculum will be that students and non-specialist primary teachers will be expected to tackle complex history, which can only result in superficial understanding at best. The Crusades and the Wars of the Roses stand out as examples of this. The Crusades particularly, occurring further down the chronological sweep and therefore possibly likely to be tackled by 8 year olds. While the emphasis on chronological understanding is welcome, this division is not helpful to teachers or students. As previously indicated, a possible recommendation might be instead to look at two arcs, one sweeping across Key Stages 1 and 2, offering the overview and development over time, cause and consequence, a sense of period and a second arc at Key Stage 3 offering the chance to gain depth of understanding of different aspects, influences and events, perspectives and analysis.



## 5 Do you have any comments on the proposed wording of the attainment targets?

Comments:

The draft attainment target is poorly thought out and worded and offers little indication of what it means to get better at history, nor what is expected of students. The vague wording means that one has to turn to the pre-amble to each key stage instead for any kind of guidance. There is no definition given of what is meant by skills, matters or processes or the differences between them. The fact that this attainment target statement remains the same across all subjects and all key stages confuses the issue further. Eighty-two per cent of respondents to our primary survey did not feel that the wording of the attainment target was appropriate.

The pre-amble to each key stage offers some notions but as already stated, only the pre-amble to Key Stage 3 offers some level of help as to the expectations of students and alludes to history as a discipline. Key Stages 1 and 2 offer little guidance as to what it means to get better at history and in fact in places could be seen to represent regression.

While it is true that some teachers have found the current Attainment Target level descriptors difficult to interpret and they have been misused in some schools, the new and much shorter attainment target provides even less clarity. Schools are rightly required to demonstrate pupil progress and in the absence of clear guidance, they are likely to resort to other methods of defining progression in history. This will lead to an increase in the variations of standards across different schools which is what the current attainment target was designed to address. The Historical Association recommends a more manageable set of assessment criteria; a much clearer subject specific attainment target than the one proposed in the new curriculum, or age- related benchmark statements setting out what pupils are expected to know and understand in history by the ages of 7, 11, 14. . This would ensure rigour and that standards are maintained consistently across all schools. These would be used to define national standards in history and establish a coherent progression framework to transcend the key stages. The Historical Association has already carried out preparatory work and research in this area.

**6 Do you agree that the draft programmes of study provide for effective progression between the key stages?**

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments: As discussed in question 5, there is insufficient attention paid to assessment and progression within the history programmes of study and the preambles to each are inconsistent. This makes it difficult to comment at length on the level of challenge and progression that this curriculum represents. Plans for the attainment target or statements related to progression should have been published for consultation alongside the draft National Curriculum documents.

As demonstrated in previous questions, the allocation of complex content to non-specialist teachers at Key Stage 2, the level of prescription, the lowering of expectations of what students can achieve and the logistic problems of teaching in sequence in many primary schools will lead to superficial coverage which will serve to drive down standards across all key stages.

**7 Do you agree that we should change the subject information and communication technology to computing, to reflect the content of the new programmes of study?**

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments: As the Historical Association we do not wish to comment in great depth; however, computing is a separate entity from ICT and a rigorous branch of mathematics which should be recognised.

**8 Does the new National Curriculum embody an expectation of higher standards for all children?**

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

As we have already outlined above and as the evidence of our consultation shows, the history programme of study lowers expectations through its more limited focus on content specification.

Without any clear guidance of expectations it is difficult to know how inclusive of all students any higher standards might be.

**9 What impact - either positive or negative - will our proposals have on the 'protected characteristic' groups?**

Comments:

The white, Anglo-centric, male, political bias of the history curriculum will leave many behind. The attempts at the inclusion of female or other diverse British histories are tokenistic. An example of this can clearly be seen in relation to Black British history. There is a long history of Black people in Britain. Records show that Black people have lived in Britain since at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with further evidence of Black troops living in Britain during the Roman period. However, the first time Black history in Britain is really treated in the content is through Windrush. As this occurs in the chronological order at Key Stage 3, this seriously limits what primary schools are able to do. It also provides students with a skewed perception. In fact, immigration itself is poorly dealt with, being limited to the early settlers, Windrush and East African Asians.

The choice of suggested individuals for study at Key Stage 1 is not inclusive and further through the document we find that the only two women who must be studied in Key Stage 2 are Mary I and Elizabeth I. At Key Stage 3, while a welcome attempt to look at the changing role of women beyond the suffragettes is made, this forms only a tiny part of a much larger, politically biased and therefore white, male, top down curriculum. These tokenistic attempts do not really tell the stories of Britain.

There is already a socio-economic link between aspiration, ethnicity, opportunity and achievement. To suggest through omission that these histories are less important in the shaping of Britain will only serve to cement current divides, prejudices and inequalities.

The political nature of the history curriculum and its organisation into bullet points makes these inequalities stark to the eye and unfortunately creates the impression that those people or groups of people who do not appear on the list do not matter.

The impact as such is difficult at present to quantify, but may well be represented in future by the gender and nature of students taking GCSE and A-Level history. Teachers need to be given greater freedom to shape the curriculum to suit the needs of their locality and intake alongside a small framework for core National Curriculum history that supports concepts of diversity in Britain and the importance of global history in its own right. Without this, the impact on children of all ethnicities and faiths will be negative, bearing in mind the recommendations of the Lawrence Enquiry for the National Curriculum.

**10 To what extent will the new National Curriculum make clear to parents what their children should be learning at each stage of their education?**

Comments:

The content is clearly prescribed so parents will, if they are concerned to consult the National Curriculum documents have a good idea of what content they can expect their child to learn and when. What they will not know is how they should be learning or the level of expectation of that learning. They will have no idea how their child is supposed to apply the content or what it means to make progress, which is what most parents are concerned with.

This issue will be compounded if subject aims are removed and teachers and schools are defining their own aims and progression statements based around the content as there will be marked differences between schools. In addition there will also be academies that choose not to follow the National Curriculum which will be different again.

### **11 What key factors will affect schools' ability to implement the new National Curriculum successfully from September 2014?**

Comments:

There are several factors that will affect schools' ability to implement the new National Curriculum successfully in September 2014:

- Curriculum leaders and subject coordinators will need adequate training and time to prepare in terms of curriculum mapping and planning schemes of work. 81% of respondents to the Historical Association secondary survey were concerned about the amount of time needed to implement these changes and this figure rose in academies and comprehensives. 89% of respondents to our primary survey felt that implementation in 2014 did not allow enough time to prepare.
- There will be a huge demand for all teachers in all subjects for CPD.
- Teacher training providers will presumably need to be training teachers to deliver the new curriculum from September 2013, which will prove difficult in the current timescale.
- Schools will need adequate time to prepare for any new accountability measures and for a new Ofsted framework taking in the new curriculum.
- There are several anniversaries coming up in 2014 and 2015, World War I, Magna Carta, Agincourt and Waterloo. Schools will be ill-prepared to commemorate these anniversaries in the throes of such change without adequate planning and resourcing.
- If subject aims were to be removed in favour of schools devising their own, this will be a massive task, particularly at primary level when every subject will need to be tackled by all staff.
- 91% and 90% respectively of respondents to Historical Association primary and secondary schools surveys felt that they were not well resourced to deliver the

new history curriculum. At secondary level, this included 77% of independent schools, while the figure rose to 96% in academies. In addition to this, 83% of secondary schools indicated that funding for resources was an issue and this rose to 92% in academies and comprehensives. Respondents gave comments such as:

*“Where are the resources to teach this? Who will pay for schools to throw out our existing resources and buy new ones?”... “I am concerned by the lack of current resources and the cost both in terms of time and money to implement”.. “There is no consideration about the money it will cost to resource a new curriculum”...*

*“There are no resources at primary or secondary, let alone finances to implement.”* Time and funding must be allowed for schools to re-resource.

- There will be a huge impact upon teacher training at both primary and secondary level for which there needs to be adequate time to prepare. Now that more and more training is taking place in schools, there will also be less opportunity for universities to plug the gap, and schools may well be overwhelmed.
- For primary teachers, changes will take place in all subjects at the same time, this creates an overwhelming workload. In 2014, schools will also be dealing with changes to Special Educational Needs. In secondary schools, these changes will be coming in at the same time as schools are trying to prepare for changes to GCSE and A-Level courses. This too will have a damaging effect on workload and could be piling up problems. 95% of respondents to our secondary survey were worried about workload implications.
- If this change is to take place in 2014 for all subjects in all key stages, rather than as part of a phased approach then there will be a whole school generation of students left with gaping holes in their knowledge. To use the history curriculum as an example, the child who starts year 7 in 2014 will, under these proposals, be taught post-1707 history, having been taught the current primary National Curriculum history and so on through the years that these measures will affect. Children only receive one chance to go through the education system, and in an age of austerity when schools will be least likely to be able to offer extra resources or enrichment opportunities, it seems unethical to damage the education of a whole school generation in this way.
- Getting this curriculum right depends upon the goodwill of teachers who will have to plan for and deliver it. Our evidence suggests that the manner in which this review has been conducted and the nature of the draft curriculum published is likely to cause a loss of goodwill on the part of teachers. Only 3% of respondents to our primary survey were looking forward to teaching the new curriculum. 96% of respondents to the Historical Association secondary survey felt that they had not been listened to, regardless of whether the school they were in was obliged to follow the National Curriculum. In addition, 92% were not looking forward to teaching this curriculum. This included 81% of independent school and 100% of grammar school respondents. Even teachers in schools that do not have to follow this curriculum appear unenthusiastic about it with 89% of those who are technically exempt from following it indicating that they were not looking forward to this curriculum. Furthermore, 82% of grammar, 81% of independent and 73% of new academies and free school respondents indicated that they may not

follow this curriculum closely. Only 10% of respondents in schools who will be obliged to follow the new National Curriculum indicated that their schools were likely to follow the new curriculum closely.

*“I am questioning my choice of profession due to these proposed changes”...*

*“Workload implications are beyond frightening. This is the first document I have seen that has made me question being a history teacher”... “I refuse to let all the good work of recent years be scrapped”... “I have never taken part in a strike over pay, pensions or terms and conditions. I feel that the impact of this new curriculum will be so catastrophic for the subject that I would be prepared to strike over it. OFSTED agree that History is a subject that is consistently taught well. Why are the views of history teachers at all levels being ignored?”*

## **12 Who is best placed to support schools and/or develop resources that schools will need to teach the new National Curriculum?**

### **Comments:**

Subject associations are perfectly placed to support schools to teach the new curriculum assuming that there is the funding to produce materials and deliver CPD. The Historical Association very effectively supported the roll-out of the last history curriculum at whole school, subject leader and classroom level through a contract with CfBT and we continue to be able to support history in all 3 contexts through our extensive online packages and bespoke face to face CPD consultancy. The Historical Association has the ability to reach large numbers of history experts, teachers and education specialists in a short space of time. We have proved this through the sheer level of consultation work we have undertaken concerning this draft curriculum. We currently reach over 19,000 teachers and educators. We also have over 50 active local branches and we are an extremely broad church with members in many areas of history, heritage and academia as well as general enthusiasts.

We do not seek to propose or present a singular view, but views based on consultation and while there is disagreement, there is also more room for agreement on what constitutes good history than might be assumed. The Historical Association, like no other body representing history can make the link between history teachers and academic historians and our publications and online presence make the latest historical scholarship accessible to teachers.

The proposed changes pose a real challenge for publishers in developing new textbooks and other resources. It is also possible that quality may be compromised by the race to publish resources in time for September 2014. In any case, new textbooks alone will not provide teachers with the support they are going to need.

Heritage groups may also be well placed to offer some tailored support for schools although the level of education specialists in the heritage sector has been adversely affected by recent budget cuts.

**13 Do you agree that we should amend the legislation to disapply the National Curriculum programmes of study, attainment targets and statutory assessment arrangements, as set out in section 12 of the consultation document?**

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

It becomes difficult to disapply a curriculum when you do not know what is going to replace it. According to these consultation documents, an announcement about the final shape of the new National Curriculum can be expected in the autumn. The delay of this announcement to the Autumn will make it impossible for schools to prepare ahead of time to plan or trial new schemes of work or resources with a full years' lead in. The disapplication of the current programmes of study at this stage will therefore do nothing to help schools to prepare. The proposed curriculum represents a huge change that will see schools re-planning, re-writing and re-resourcing. This will take place on top of their usual workload regardless of whether or not the current curriculum is disapplied. In Addition, the disapplication of the current curriculum requirements could see schools concentrating on getting "core" subjects right at the expense of the foundation subjects.

**14 Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the proposals in this consultation?**



Comments:

**Important notes to be considered that are not covered by this consultation:**

Below are additional comments not raised by the consultation elsewhere.

- a.) The lack of detailed consultation throughout this process and the opaque nature behind the drafting of the latest proposals which are radically different to earlier drafts seen by the Historical Association is a matter of concern that must be addressed in the phase of revisions and review following this consultation.
- b.) At no time in the pre-publication consultation process were teachers, subject associations, academics and history education specialists brought together to give their expert opinions on what and how history should be taught as part of a drafting process. Instead we were asked to comment on a draft that was already prepared and which was then not published. It cannot be right that the history curriculum, perhaps more politically sensitive in terms of curriculum reform, has been written and presented for public consultation without any serious input from history experts and education specialists. This situation must be remedied. There is more room for agreement on what good school history looks like than might be perceived and the Historical Association is well placed to gather views of a wide range of people.
- c.) The Historical Association supports the drive to establish a coherent chronological framework in the minds of young people, however, we are saddened by the government's decision not to make history compulsory to 16, leaving an immense task and content gallop for those teaching history from 5-14.

**15 Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (e.g. the number and type of questions, whether it was easy to find, understand, complete etc.)**

Comments: No comment

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply X

E-mail address for acknowledgement: melaniej@history.org.uk

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

X   
Yes

No

All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and consult with those who are affected
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy; and
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

Responses should be completed on-line or emailed to the relevant consultation email box. However, if you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted,

please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: [carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 16 April 2013

Send by post to:

Consultation Unit,  
Area 1c,  
Castle View House,  
East Lane,  
Runcorn,  
Cheshire,  
WA7 2GJ.

Send by e-mail to: [NationalCurriculum.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:NationalCurriculum.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk)