

# Historical Association Survey of History in Secondary Schools in England 2024

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## Executive Summary

### Nature of the survey

This report details the results of an online survey of history teachers conducted by the Historical Association at the end of the academic year 2024. Responses were received from 497 teachers in England, working in 436 different contexts, including 352 state-funded, non-selective schools (comprehensives, academies or free schools), 22 grammar schools, 43 independent schools, 15 sixth form/FE colleges and four special schools. Most respondents (80%) were experienced teachers with at least five years' experience. The vast majority (91%) described themselves as White, so views of those from a Black or Asian British background or from other minority groups is limited.

### Views of the current National Curriculum (Key Stage 3)

Schools generally reported that they followed the National Curriculum (44% of schools 'firmly' and another 43% 'loosely'), with only 12% claiming that their current Key Stage 3 curriculum was not explicitly based on the National Curriculum.

Respondents' favourite features of the current National Curriculum tended to relate to its chronological breadth and its inclusion of British history, alongside the study of both local and international history. Its flexibility was also highly valued as was its relationship to the academic discipline, reflected through the second-order concepts used to frame historical questions.

When asked what aspects of the current National Curriculum respondents would most like to change, the most frequent suggestions related to curriculum content, with proposals to make certain topics (such as the history of the British Empire and the transatlantic trade in enslaved peoples) compulsory, and calls for more inclusion of wider world history and/or of more diverse topics. This emphasis on greater diversity was reflected in the changes that schools reported having made in the past three years, with 85% of respondents claiming to have made at least 'moderate' if not considerable changes of that kind. The most common issues to which schools themselves had chosen to devote more attention were: the British Empire; the transatlantic trade in enslaved people, women, Black and Asian British people and migration to Britain. The most commonly cited reason for making changes was a general need to make the curriculum more diverse and representative of the past and teachers reported that they had been supported in their curriculum development by the availability of relevant resources and of external support and inspiration.

The request to make certain topics compulsory contrasted somewhat with the second most common request for change to the National Curriculum, which was for greater flexibility. The third most frequent proposal was for greater clarity in relation to disciplinary understandings of the subject and around assessment processes and benchmarks.

### Views of the current history GCSE

The features of the current GCSE national criteria (and of their interpretation within exam specifications) that respondents would most like to change are the current level of content – perceived as too onerous by 79% of respondents – along with the requirement for inclusion of five distinct

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elements (a thematic study; a study of the historic environment; a British depth study; a non-British depth study; and a wider world depth study), which was opposed by 58% of respondents. The rush to cover content was seen as a major challenge, which tended to lead to superficial understanding rather than secure mastery of the material and impeded the development of disciplinary ways of thinking.

When invited to look beyond the national criteria to the nature of the assessment process itself, respondents expressed considerable frustration with the array of different question stems that were used and the confusing way in which many questions were asked.

Among the current features that history teachers would like to retain were the inclusion of both British *and* non-British history; (supported by 93% of schools). Despite calls to reduce the number of distinct units to be included, three quarters of teachers (77%) recognised the value of teaching history on three different scales (depth, period, and thematic): and almost as many (76%) wanted to retain the principle of teaching history from at least three different periods (medieval, early modern & modern).

When asked specifically whether they would welcome changes to make the content of history GCSEs more diverse, the vast majority of respondents welcomed the suggestion, with particularly strong approval for the inclusion of more women (80% agreement) and more Black and Asian British history (78% agreement). At least two thirds of respondents also welcomed the idea of ensuring that more working-class people, those with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ people were more fully included within the curriculum. Respondents were more ambivalent about the inclusion of a focus on climate or environmental history within the GCSE curriculum: although 36% of respondents approved the idea, a similar proportion (38%) opposed it, while 26% felt ambivalent about the suggestion.

### **History teachers' views of students' use of Generative AI**

Although only 5% of respondents believed that use of GenAI was *widespread*, even among their A-level students, the proportion of teachers who believed that at least a few students were experimenting with GenAI in relation to routine tasks (presumably homework tasks) was 45% even at Key Stage 3, rising to 54% at A-level.

Teachers were divided in their views as to how exam boards should respond to the scope for students to use GenAI completing their non-examined assessment tasks (NEA or coursework). While 46% of respondents supported the idea of explicitly teaching students to use AI responsibly, only 24% of respondents thought that such use should be permitted at any stage in the research or analysis or drafting of work submitted for assessment. Indeed, some 40% supported the idea of ending all coursework elements and relying solely on examinations undertaken in controlled conditions. Yet there was also strong opposition to this idea, with the removal of NEA from A-level rejected by 54% of respondents. As a way of managing the threat, 50% agreed with the principle of including an oral assessment as part of the examination process, as a way of checking on students' own knowledge and understanding of the work submitted and of the processes by which it had been constructed

### **The extent of specialist history teaching**

Only a small majority (58%) of schools confidently reported that all history lessons were taught by subject specialists, and in 21% of schools this had only been achieved by increasing history teachers' workload. More than a fifth of schools (22%) had non-specialists regularly teaching some history lessons for learners in the 11-14 age range, while in a further 5% of schools, those taking on the teaching were Teaching Assistants or cover supervisors (i.e. that they were not fully qualified teachers in *any* subject). Schools' need to manage their budgets by employing fewer staff also meant that almost half (47%) of the respondents' schools asked history teachers to take on a *regular*, timetabled

commitment to another subject, while in 26% of the schools history teachers had been asked to step in to cover a long-term absence (such as maternity leave) in another subject.

### **Engagement in history-specific professional development**

Among the 426 respondents who reported on their participation in various forms of history-specific professional development, online attendance (reported by 62% of respondents) was more than twice as common as participation in an in-person event (reported by only 28%). While only 40% of respondents had attended some kind of history-specific training during the school day, 76% had given up their own time to take part in some kind of history-specific professional development. Even if the training took place in their own time, most teachers did not have to pay for such training themselves: while 20% of respondents reported paying for the history-specific professional development activity themselves, more than twice as many reported that their school had paid for such events (43%). The most frequent providers of such development activity were the exam boards (with 53% reporting attendance at some kind of exam board event), followed by the Historical Association (45%) – with the participation in school or trust-led events (at 30%) and in events run by museums or commercial companies roughly equal (at 30%) each.

### **Curriculum decision making and lesson planning**

Curricular decisions appear to be made overwhelmingly at department level, which was the case for at least 81% of schools at all key stages. In only 8% of schools, at both Key Stage 3 and GCSE level, had leaders at the level of a multi-academy trust assumed responsibility for curriculum decisions. Lesson planning and the selection or creation of teaching resources was also seen as a departmental responsibility by around 90% of schools at all key stages. This responsibility was usually shared by subject teachers within the department, generally working collaboratively to produce shared schemes and resources, but for 17% of schools at Key Stage 3 and 23% at GCSE this responsibility was assumed by the subject leader(s). Some 6% of schools reported that they had no centralised or shared planning at all (although this proportion was higher at A-level – usually because some units were only taught by one teacher). An even smaller proportion of schools – 3% at Key Stage 3 and 2% at GCSE – report that their history teachers are required to teach from plans and resource developed centrally by the trust.

## Section 1: Nature of the survey

The survey was run online by the Historical Association from late June 2024 until the start of the new term in September. The number of individual responses to the survey totalled 547. Having filtered the results to focus purely on respondents from people who were teaching in schools in England, the number of responses to work with was 497. These responses were analysed when looking at personal opinions. In some cases, responses were received from more than one teacher working in the same school, which meant that it was necessary to remove the additional responses in relation to questions seeking to understand policies or practices at a department or whole-school level (e.g. in relation to the curriculum). In selecting which responses to use, the decision was taken to retain those given by the subject leader. Where there was no subject leader response, we chose to use the most complete set of responses. This meant there were 436 sets of responses for this aspect of the analysis.

Of the 436 school responses, 352 were classified as comprehensives/academies/free schools. Responses were also received from 22 grammar schools, 43 independent schools, 15 sixth form/FE colleges and four special schools. Around 80% of the total number of individual respondents had been teaching for five years or more. The vast majority (91% per cent of the total) identified as White. The next largest category was 'prefer not to say' totalling 3% of responses. We therefore acknowledge that the views of those from a Black or Asian British background or from other minority groups is limited.

## Section 2: Views of the current National Curriculum (Key Stage 3)

### *2.1 The extent to which schools currently follow the National Curriculum*

In total there were 383 responses from schools that reported on the extent to which they currently follow the National Curriculum in their own schools, with 44% claiming to follow it firmly, another 43% claiming to follow it loosely and 12% claiming that their current Key Stage 3 curriculum was not explicitly based on the National Curriculum.

### *2.2 What teachers most like about the current National Curriculum*

There were 229 individual teachers who answered this free-response question, allowing them to specify up to three features of the curriculum that they particularly liked. Fourteen responses were discounted as they were either irrelevant or offered no useful answer. This left 215 usable free responses.

As Table 1 illustrates, responses related to aspects of the **substantive content** within the curriculum was the most common overall category, with 268 comments related to this. Of these, the most appreciated aspect of the curriculum was its chronological breadth (the range of time periods that it spanned). Beyond this, 43 respondents noted particular content with approval, most commonly, the Holocaust, which was referenced 31 times. The chronological framing of the curriculum (the fact that it was essentially presented in chronological order) was also largely welcomed. Thereafter, the emphasis on British history, and the inclusion both of a local element and of a wider world topic were all mentioned with approval.

After reference to some aspect of substantive content, the **flexibility** of the curriculum was the second largest category of response, with 92 respondents (approximately one third of the free-text responses) making some reference to this quality. The vast majority (75 respondents) simply endorsed the broad principle of flexibility. Far fewer references were made specifically to the scope to adapt the curriculum to the student demographic or to suit teachers' expertise.

The disciplinary nature of the curriculum was noted by about one fifth of the respondents (53 altogether). References to ‘skills’ were rather ambiguous, but a reasonable number of respondents specified the importance of second-order concepts, substantive concepts and the attention paid within the curriculum to how the subject worked in terms of the use of sources as evidence and the generation of historical interpretations.

*Table 1: Aspects of the current National Curriculum most appreciated by respondents*

1.	<b>Content</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Breadth of the time periods included (51)</li> <li>- Inclusion of specified topics (most notably the Holocaust) (43)</li> <li>- Chronological framing of the curriculum (43)</li> <li>- Focus on British history (28)</li> <li>- Inclusion of a local study (27)</li> <li>- Inclusion of wider world history (22)</li> <li>- Content range (refers to diversity within a period or range of content within a period (14)</li> <li>- Themes in history (e.g. political) (7)</li> <li>- Scale of history (i.e. breadth and depth, global, national) (5)</li> </ul>	268
2.	<b>Flexibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Content was flexible/not too prescriptive/freedom to choose (75)</li> <li>- Could adapt to student demographic (11)</li> <li>- Could adapt to teacher expertise (2)</li> <li>- Could adapt to school context (2)</li> <li>- Could generate own enquiry questions (2)</li> </ul>	92
3.	<b>Attention to the discipline of history</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explicit reference to the second-order concepts (17)</li> <li>- Explicit reference to skills (11)</li> <li>- Explicit reference to substantive concepts (10)</li> <li>- Explicit reference to historiography/recognition of multiple interpretations /use of sources (9)</li> <li>- General reference to disciplinary thinking (7)</li> </ul>	53

### **2.3 What teachers most want to change about the current National Curriculum**

There were 199 individuals who responded to this question. Fourteen responses were irrelevant or offered no useful statement, meaning there were 185 responses that were analysed.

Specifying areas of content that are not currently explicit requirements in the current National Curriculum was a common request, such as the history of the British Empire and the transatlantic trade in enslaved peoples. In many cases there was a call for wider world history, with many expressing a concern that the current curriculum had too great an emphasis on British history. Generally, there was a call for the teaching of the history of more diverse topics, with many respondents naming specific groups. A number of respondents suggested that inclusion of certain topics should become an explicit requirement, which is interesting to note, given the fact that a third of the earlier free-text responses had welcomed the flexibility offered by the National Curriculum. In total there were 36 comments requesting that a particular topic was made compulsory.

There were a number of comments asking for the curriculum to be made even more flexible. Given the existing flexibility in the curriculum, it is interesting to see that some teachers still see the current

curriculum as restrictive, but this possibly indicates that teachers are grappling with the breadth that is suggested by the curriculum as it stands and a desire to examine some areas in more depth.

There were some requests for further clarification, for example around the disciplinary understanding of the subject and around assessment processes and benchmarks. A few comments were linked to highlighting the contribution of history to generic ‘thinking skills’. Ten participants felt that no change was required as there was already enough scope and flexibility for teachers. Changes to the primary curriculum and a request for a larger time allocation were the next most common issues (although the issue of time allocation is likely to be an internal school issue).

Table 2: Aspects that respondents would most like to change within the current National Curriculum

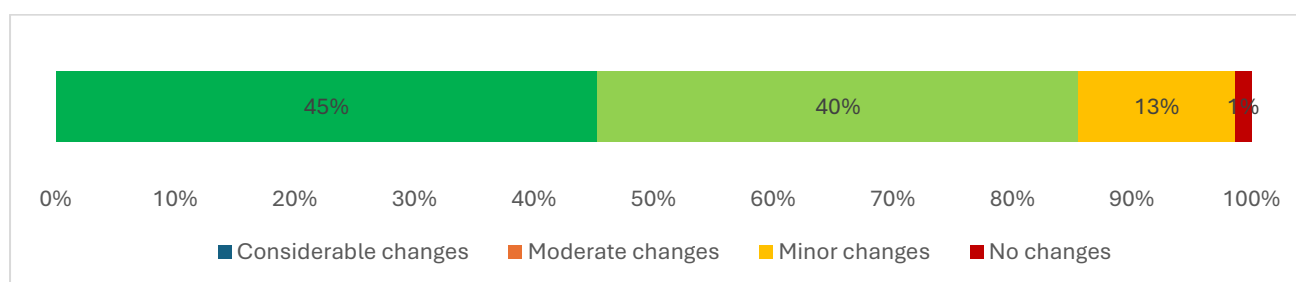
1.	<b>Content</b> <i>Note: This list only includes content specifications made by at least 5 respondents. In some cases, respondents indicated they thought a topic should be compulsory – this is shown by a second figure in <b>bold in brackets</b>.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Request for wider world history (42) <b>(1)</b></li> <li>- Generic comment about more diverse people (36) <b>(7)</b></li> <li>- Specific reference to women’s history (28) <b>(5)</b></li> <li>- Specific reference to working class history (14)</li> <li>- Specific reference to LGBTQ+ history (13) <b>1)</b></li> <li>- Specific reference to climate/environmental history (11)</li> <li>- Specific reference to the British Empire (10) <b>(8)</b></li> <li>- Specific reference to the transatlantic Trade in Enslaved Peoples (9) <b>(9)</b></li> <li>- Specific reference to contact pre-1066 (9)</li> <li>- Specific reference to the history of people with disabilities (7)</li> <li>- Specific reference to late C20th/C21st history (7)</li> <li>- Specific reference to the inclusion of Scottish, Welsh and Irish history (6)</li> <li>- Specific reference to more social history (6)</li> </ul>	240
2.	<b>Flexibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would welcome more flexibility in choice of content (12)</li> <li>- Would like to adapt content selection to needs of the student body (9)</li> <li>- Would like the overall amount of content in the National Curriculum to be reduced (7)</li> </ul>	28
3.	<b>Attention to the discipline of history</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General reference to including ‘skills’ or critical thinking (8)</li> <li>- Explicit reference to the second-order concepts and need for further guidance (4)</li> <li>- Explicit reference to historiography/recognition of multiple interpretations /use of sources (3)</li> <li>- Explicit reference to naming specific substantive concepts (1)</li> </ul>	16
4.	<b>Assessment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Request for more specific guidance on age-level expectations/common approaches to assessment (13)</li> </ul>	13
5.	<b>No change needed</b> (10)	10
6.	<b>Primary curriculum</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Change to the primary curriculum to avoid overlap with secondary curriculum (6)</li> </ul> Need to set higher expectations for primary history curriculum (3)	9
7.	<b>Curriculum time to be increased</b> (7)	7

## 2.4 The extent to which history teachers have already sought to include certain topics or more diverse approaches in their own Key Stage 3 curriculum

The previous HA survey in 2021 revealed that a high proportion of teachers (83% of respondents) had made some recent changes to their curriculum, either to address perceived gaps in teaching about Britain's imperial past and and/or to include better representation of the diversity of the past.

In 2024, responses were received from 380 individual schools to a similar question asking about the extent to which their history departments had made (further) curriculum changes in the past 3 years. A similarly high proportion (85%) reported having made considerable or moderate changes, with just 1% claiming to have made no changes at all of that kind.

*Figure 1: The extent to which teachers claim to have made changes to their Key Stage 3 curriculum in the last 3 years to include more diverse histories*



The kinds of topics to which respondents reported having paid more attention over the course of the last 3 years are set out in Table 3. It was evident that departments were making multiple changes to their curriculum. Out of the 380 responses, only 10 schools identified that they had only changed one single aspect of their curriculum, suggesting that there has been a fundamental review of the curriculum, interestingly without any policy initiatives instigating this extent of change.

*Table 3: The curriculum topics to which respondents reported having paid more attention*

Topic or aspect of experience in the past	Proportion of 380 respondents reporting a greater focus on this topic/experience
The British Empire	79%
The transatlantic trade in enslaved people	75%
Women	67%
Black and Asian British people	63%
Migration to Britain	63%
The history of a non-European society in its own terms	56%
Lower/working class people	38%
LGBTQ+	34%
People with disabilities	17%

Respondents were asked to give specific examples of the changes they had made to their curriculum and/or the reasons for these changes. In total, 138 schools provided a response to this question. There were 31 references to teaching about the British Empire, with the most common elements being either a focus on India, or the legacy of Empire, or the contribution of imperial soldiers in the two world wars. The teaching of a non-European society was the next most frequently referenced topic, noted by 28 respondents. Among these non-European societies, the most common choice was a focus on African

kingdoms, followed by the Mughals and Islamic civilisation. There were 26 specific references to the teaching of Black British and Asian history, with many teachers naming Black Tudors or modern civil rights as the main focus. Twenty-two responses were about migration, most frequently migration to Britain since the 1960s. There were 20 responses related to the transatlantic trade in enslaved peoples, with specific examples cited relating to the resistance of enslaved peoples and their role in abolition. Although several examples were given related, respectively, to teaching about women, the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities and lower/working class people, there was less commonality in the areas taught in relation to these types of people other than emphases on the extension of the franchise and the struggle for civil rights.

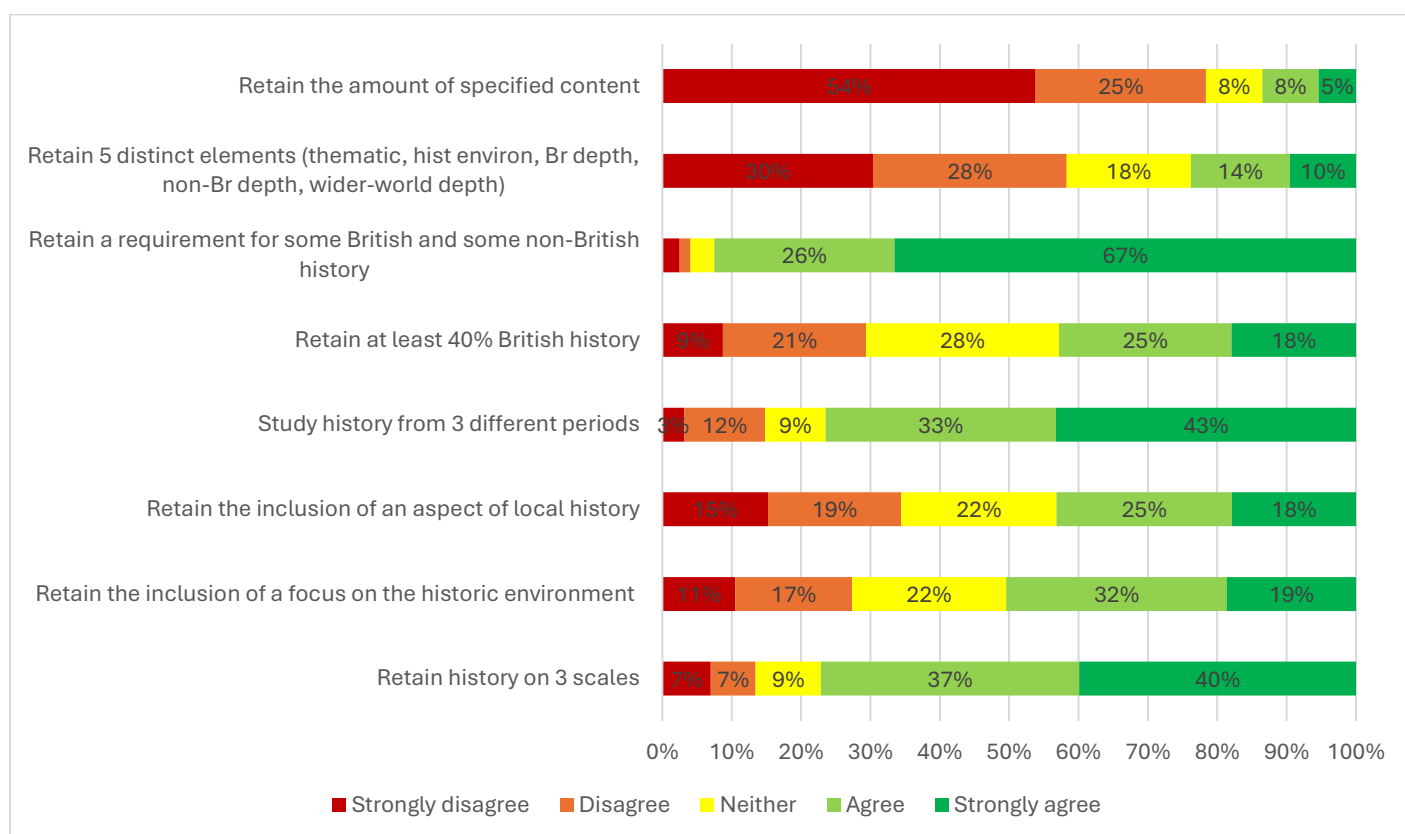
There were far fewer responses that offered any explanation for the changes made. The most commonly cited reason for making changes, reported by 30 respondents, was a general need to make the curriculum more diverse and representative of the past. The next most commonly cited reason, mentioned by 10 respondents, was the greater availability of resources or the existence of external support/inspiration. Five responses noted a need to address unhelpful mis/preconceptions held by students. Beyond these themes, the reasons given for changes were very individualistic.

### Section 3: Views of the current GCSE specifications

#### 3.1 Levels of satisfaction with specific features of the current GCSE specifications

Respondents were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the retention of **particular elements** required by current GCSEs (most of them specified in the current national criteria that all specifications must meet). A summary of their responses is set out in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Levels of satisfaction with different elements of the national GCSE criteria for history





It is clear from this data that the features that a clear majority of respondents want to **change** are:

- The current level of content: 79% of respondents disagreed with the suggestion that the level of content should be preserved as it was.
- The number of distinct elements required to be included in a GCSE specification: 58% of respondents disagreed with the suggestion that all GCSEs should be required to include the five distinct elements currently required (a thematic study; a study of the historic environment; a British depth study; a non-British depth study; and a wider world depth study)

The features that a majority of respondents most want to **retain** are:

- The inclusion of both British and non-British history: 93% agreed with the retention of this requirement (although less than half of respondents agreed that the proportion of British history should be as high as 40%)
- History taught on three scales (depth, period, and thematic): 77% agreed with the retention of a requirement to include history taught on three different timescales.
- History from at least three different periods (medieval, early modern & modern): 76% agreed with the retention of this requirement.

### **3.2 What teachers most want to *change* in relation to the current GCSEs**

A free-response question asking teachers what they would most want to change about the current GCSEs was answered by 381 respondents, and the results are shown in Table 4.

The clearest concern was about the sheer amount of content that the history GCSE covered. Teachers frequently commented that there was significantly more content in the history specification compared to other subjects, so the main priority was to make the content load more manageable. There were 284 comments purely about reducing content, with 69 additional comments asking for the removal of one of the units, while 12 called for reductions *within* specific units. Several teachers asked for a model similar to that adopted in the transition period immediately after the Covid pandemic when schools were permitted to ‘drop’ a unit.

The other main type of request related to the content of the specifications was for greater diversity, with 23 respondents wanting women to feature more prominently within the specified content, 11 wanting wider world history, and eight naming very specific topics that they would like to be included.

The way that material was examined was a cause of considerable frustration, especially focused on the array of different question stems that were used and the confusing way in which many questions were asked. This issue was highlighted by 80 respondents. Some reported that there were over ten different question stems, each of which required a particular style of response, so not only did students have to learn the substantive content, they also had to learn how to respond to particular questions.

Another examining issue – that linked assessment to the issue of content overload – was the concern raised by 29 respondents that so little of students’ subject knowledge and understanding could ever actually be examined. A number of respondents also wished to see the use of alternative assessment models, such as coursework, or the use of more lower tariff questions. Sixteen teachers called for fewer exam papers, while a further 11 noted their dislike of the way that entirely separate units were combined in quite lengthy exam papers.

Table 4: The most common types of change requested to the GCSE national criteria for history

1.	<b>Content</b> <b>Note:</b> This list only includes content comments made by at least 5 respondents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reference to content reduction - 284</li> <li>- Specific reference to removing a unit – 69</li> <li>- Inclusion of more diverse content within units (e.g. specific reference to named women) - 23</li> <li>- Specific reference to reducing content within a period/theme – 12</li> <li>- Inclusion of more wider world history - 11</li> <li>- Suggestions for alternative content - 8</li> <li>- Enabling connections between unity (e.g. a depth study within a period study) - 7</li> <li>- Reduction of compulsory British history requirement - 7</li> <li>- Greater choice of topics - 5</li> </ul>	435
2.	<b>Examination</b> <b>Note:</b> This list only includes content comments made by at least 5 respondents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complaint about question types (e.g. multiple array of stem questions used, confusing stem questions) - 80</li> <li>- Narrow range of content covered in exam questions relative to what needs to be learnt - 29</li> <li>- Exam is more of a memory test - 29</li> <li>- Changes to assessment system (e.g. return of coursework/controlled assessment) -17</li> <li>- Use of lower tariff questions – 17</li> <li>- Fewer exam papers - 16</li> <li>- Exam papers to focus on one unit (not to combine two units of study) – 11</li> <li>- Inappropriate/poorly constructed content – 6</li> <li>- More time in the exam – 5</li> </ul>	219
3.	Impact of <b>time challenges</b> – 77	77
4.	Impact on <b>students</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students being overwhelmed by content/put off history – 45</li> <li>- Comment about students (especially lower attaining ones) struggling - 26</li> </ul>	71

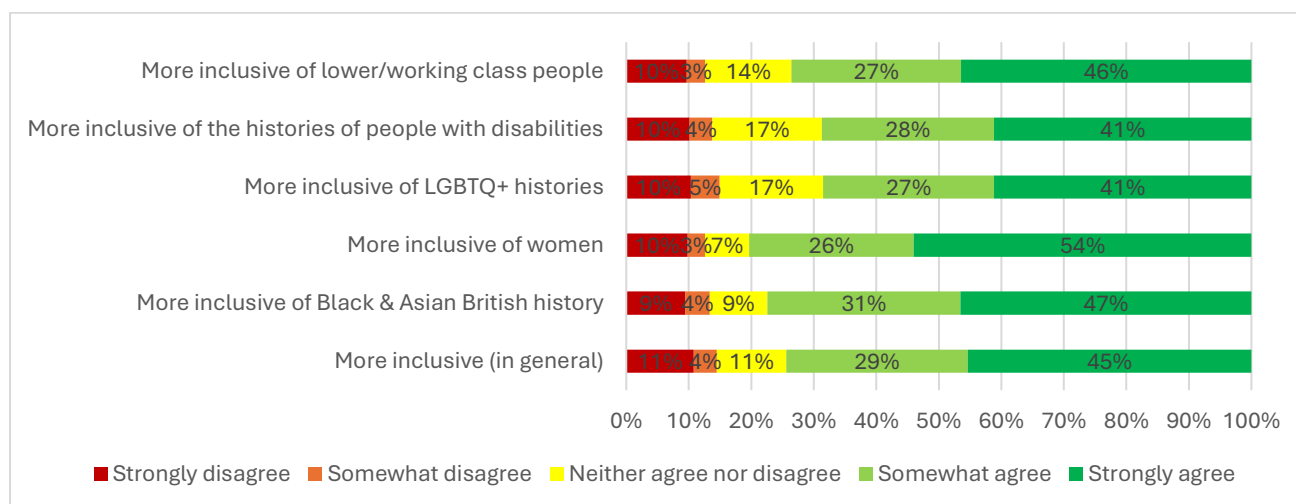
The third most common focus of complaint was effectively a re-statement of the content overload issue, expressed in terms of the time pressures experienced in trying to cram it all into the available teaching time. Seventy-seven teachers highlighted the rush to cover content as a major challenge, which could only be achieved at the detriment of studying aspects of the past in sufficient depth and/or the development of disciplinary ways of thinking. Generally, the concern was that the need to cover a vast amount of tightly specified content led to students having a superficial understanding rather than secure mastery of the material that they were being taught.

Several teachers were also worried about the impact of this time pressure on students. Forty-five teachers said that students were overwhelmed by the content requirements, which had a direct negative influence on their enjoyment of the subject. Several of these teachers also noted that there was a growing knock-on effect that affected GCSE options themselves (with students wary of choosing the subject) and then extended into A level, with fewer students choosing to continue with the subject. A further 26 teachers also specifically noted the impact of the content overload on lower-attaining students, who found the course excessively challenging due to the volume of content and/or the reading level required to engage with the examination papers.

### 3.3 The extent to which respondents would welcome specific changes to make GCSE specifications more inclusive

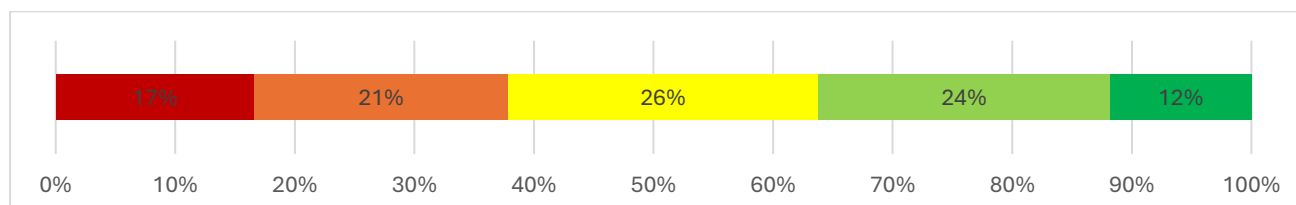
In light of findings from the 2021 HA survey, which indicated a high level of dissatisfaction about the lack of inclusion or effective representation within current GCSE specifications, respondents were explicitly asked to indicate the extent to which they would welcome changes to make future GCSE units more inclusive of various groups. Most of these questions were answered by 435 respondents, although some of them omitted the rather vague query about a ‘more inclusive’ approach ‘in general’ which was only answered by 379 individual teachers. As Figure 2 illustrates, the vast majority of the teachers who answered each question expressed support for greater inclusion, with particularly strong approval for the inclusion of more women (80% agreement) and more Black and Asian British history (78% agreement). In relation to every suggested category (working class people, those with disabilities, LGBTQ+, women and Black and Asian British history), at least two thirds of respondents approved the idea of ensuring that they were more fully included within the curriculum.

Figure 2: The extent to which respondents would welcome changes to make GCSE more inclusive



In 2024 one other specific question was asked about the level of approval for a specific kind of change to the GCSE curriculum: the inclusion of a focus on climate or environmental history. This question was answered by 439 teachers and elicited a rather less enthusiastic response. Although 36% of respondents approved the idea, a similar proportion (38%) opposed it, while 26% felt ambivalent about the suggestion.

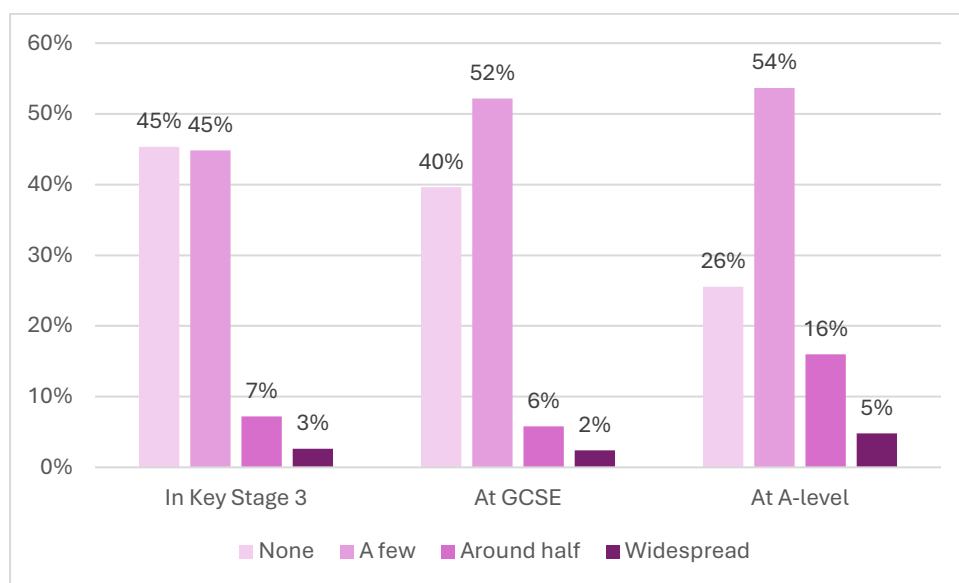
Figure 3: The extent to which respondents would welcome the inclusion of climate/environmental history at GCSE



## Section 4: History teachers' views of students' use of Generative AI

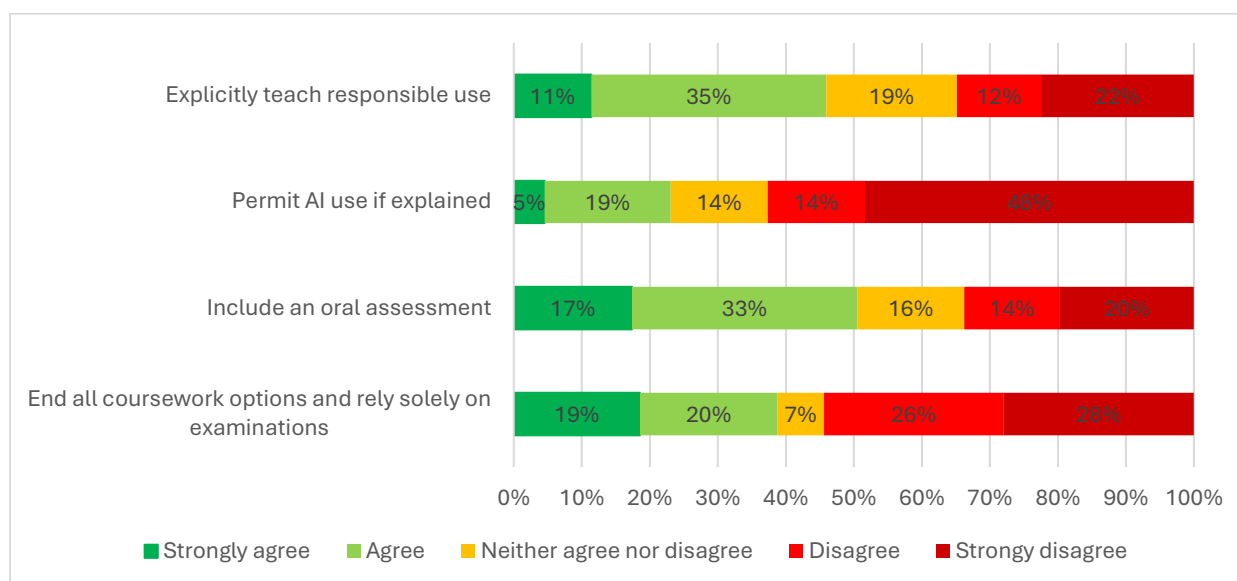
All respondents were asked about the extent to which they believed students of different ages were already making use of Generative AI to tackle tasks set in history. As Figure 4 illustrates, teachers believed that greater use was being made of GenAI by older students, with the proportion assuming that *none* of their students was using GenAI dropping from 45% in relation to Key Stage 3 students to 26% in relation to A-level students. Although only 5% of respondents believed that use of GenAI was *widespread*, even among their A-level students, the proportion of teachers who believed that at least a few students were experimenting with GenAI in relation to routine tasks (presumably homework tasks) was 45% even at Key Stage 3, rising to 54% at A-level.

Figure 4: Teachers' assumptions about the proportion of their students (in different key stages) who were already making use of Generative AI in tackling history tasks



Respondents who taught A-level were asked specifically about how they thought examination boards should respond to the prospect of students making use of AI in their non-examined assessment tasks (NEA, or coursework). As Figure 5 reveals, views were quite divided with no clear consensus. While there was some support for explicitly teaching students to use AI responsibly – with 46% of 307 respondents welcoming that suggestion – only 24% of respondents thought that such use should be permitted at any stage in the research or analysis or drafting of work submitted for assessment. There was similarly moderate support (i.e. 50% agreement) for the principle of including an oral assessment as part of the examination process, in part as a way of checking on students' own knowledge and understanding of the work submitted and of the processes by which it had been constructed. Around 40% of teachers regarded the issue of AI use as so intractable that they supported the idea of ending all coursework elements and relying solely on examinations undertaken in controlled conditions. The removal of the non-examined assessment within A-level was, however, also strongly opposed, with 54% of respondents rejecting that suggestion.

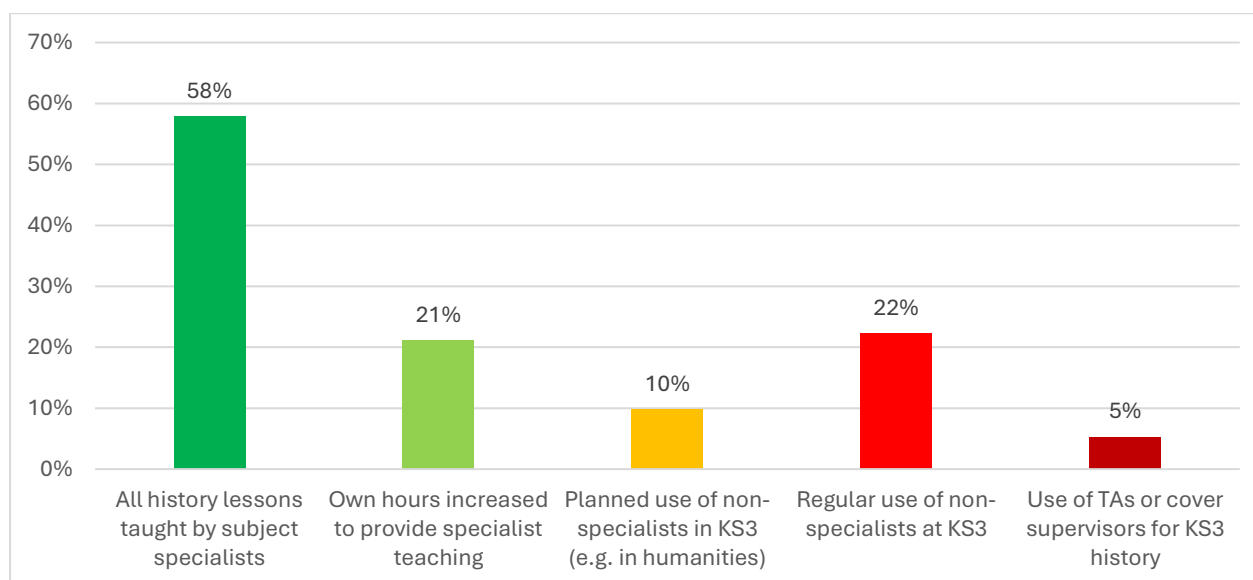
Figure 5: A-level teachers' views of possible responses to student A1 use



## Section 5: History staffing

Survey respondents were asked to describe the current situation in relation to history staffing in their school, looking both at the extent of any gaps in the provision of specialist history teaching at different key stages and at the extent to which teachers had been asked to increase their teaching hours in order to provide this specialist teaching.

Figure 6: The extent to which history was being taught by specialist history teachers

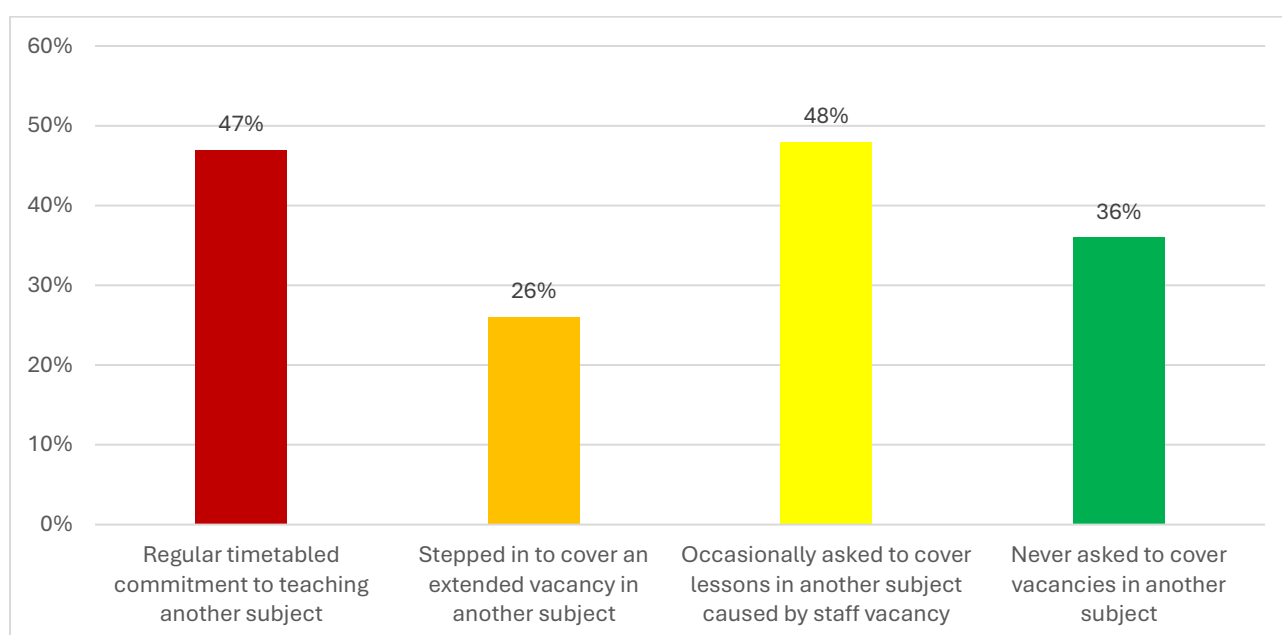


Responses were received from 399 schools and are summarised in Figure 6. Among these schools, a small majority (58%) confidently reported that all history lessons were taught by subject specialists – but in 84 schools (some 21% of all schools), this had been achieved only by increasing the teaching hours of the history staff. Some 10% of the schools reported that having some history lessons taught by non-specialists was a routine expectation across humanities subjects, rather than being a particular

response to teacher shortages. Overall, more a fifth of schools (22%) reported that non-specialists were regularly teaching some history lessons for learners in the 11-14 age range, while in a further 5% of schools, those taking on the teaching were Teaching Assistants or cover supervisors (i.e. they were not fully qualified teachers in *any* subject).

The survey also explored the extent to which history teachers were being asked to teach outside their own subject specialism. Figure 7 summarises these results and shows that almost half (47%) of the respondents' schools asked history teachers to take on a *regular*, timetabled commitment to another subject.<sup>3</sup> In a quarter of schools (26%), history teachers had been asked to step in to cover a long-term absence (such as maternity leave) in another subject. Given the pressure on schools that these requests imply, it was not surprising that almost half of those responding (48%) also reported occasional requests to cover lessons in other subjects.

*Figure 7: The proportion of schools reported to be asking history teachers to teach outside their subject specialism because of recruitment difficulties.*



## Section 6: Engagement in history-specific professional development

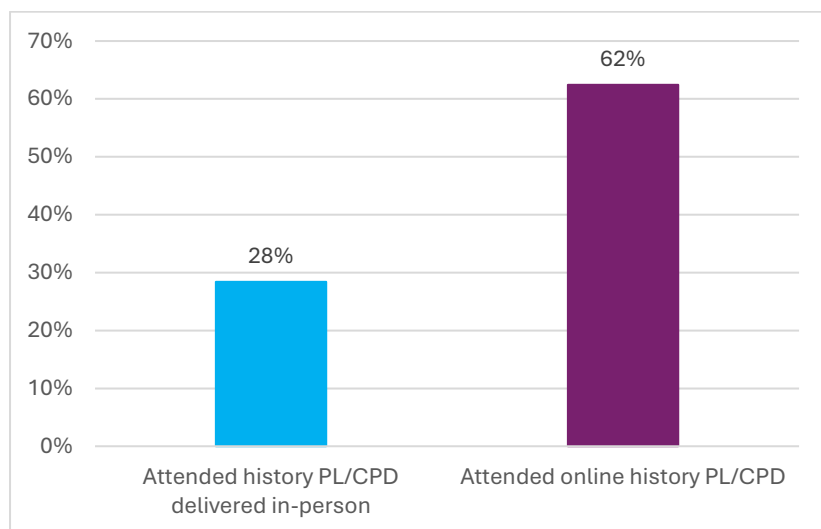
All respondents were also asked about any formal opportunities for professional learning (PL) or continuing professional development (CPD)<sup>4</sup> that they had attended during the past academic year (i.e. during 2023-24). Questions focused on the format and timing of the training, the body that provided it and who paid the costs for it, with 426 respondents giving some indication of the nature of their experience, although not all of them commented on every dimension.

<sup>3</sup> It should be acknowledged that this question did not allow schools to discriminate between additional subjects that teachers were keen to teach (such as A-level politics, for which a history qualification is seen as valuable) and others for which they might feel less well equipped.

<sup>4</sup> The survey used both terms 'Professional Learning' (PL) and 'Continuing Professional Development' (CPD) combined as a way of capturing all possible relevant instances, but did not seek to define or distinguish between them.

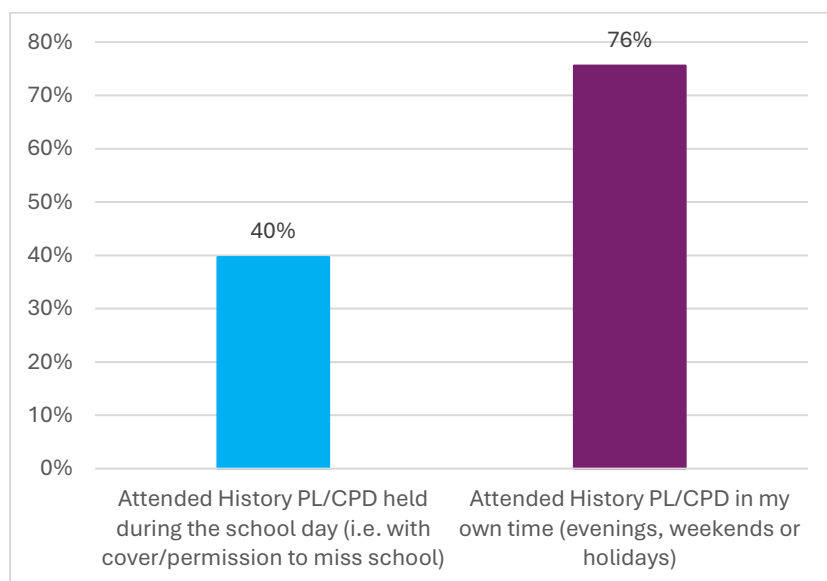
Among those who reported the format of the PL/CPD that they had attended, online attendance was more than twice as common as participation in an in-person event. Figure 8 shows that 62% reported that they had participated in some kind of online learning, while only 28% reported having attended an in-person event of some kind.

*Figure 8: The proportion of respondents who reported having attended PL/CPD online and/or in person during the course of the academic year 2023-24*



As Figure 9 reveals, participation in history-specific PL/CPD tended to happen much more often in teachers' own time than during the course of the school day. While 40% of respondents had attended some kind of history-specific training in school-time, almost twice as many (76%) had given up their own time to take part in some kind of history-specific professional development

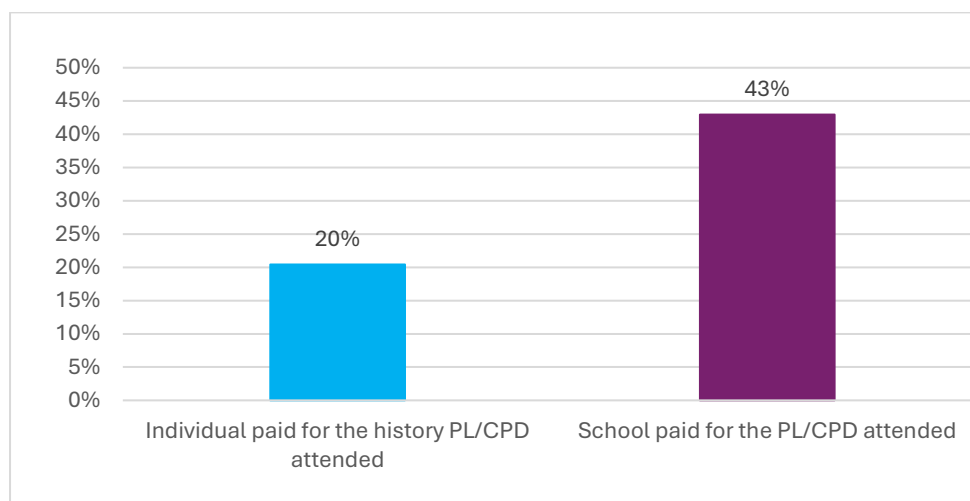
*Figure 9: The proportion of respondents who reported having attended PL/CPD during the course of the school day and/or in their own time during the course of the academic year 2023-24.*



Although respondents appeared willing to give up their own time to participate in such events, they were less likely to have to pay for it themselves. Figure 10 shows that only 20% of respondents reported that they had had to pay for one or more of the professional development activities in which they had

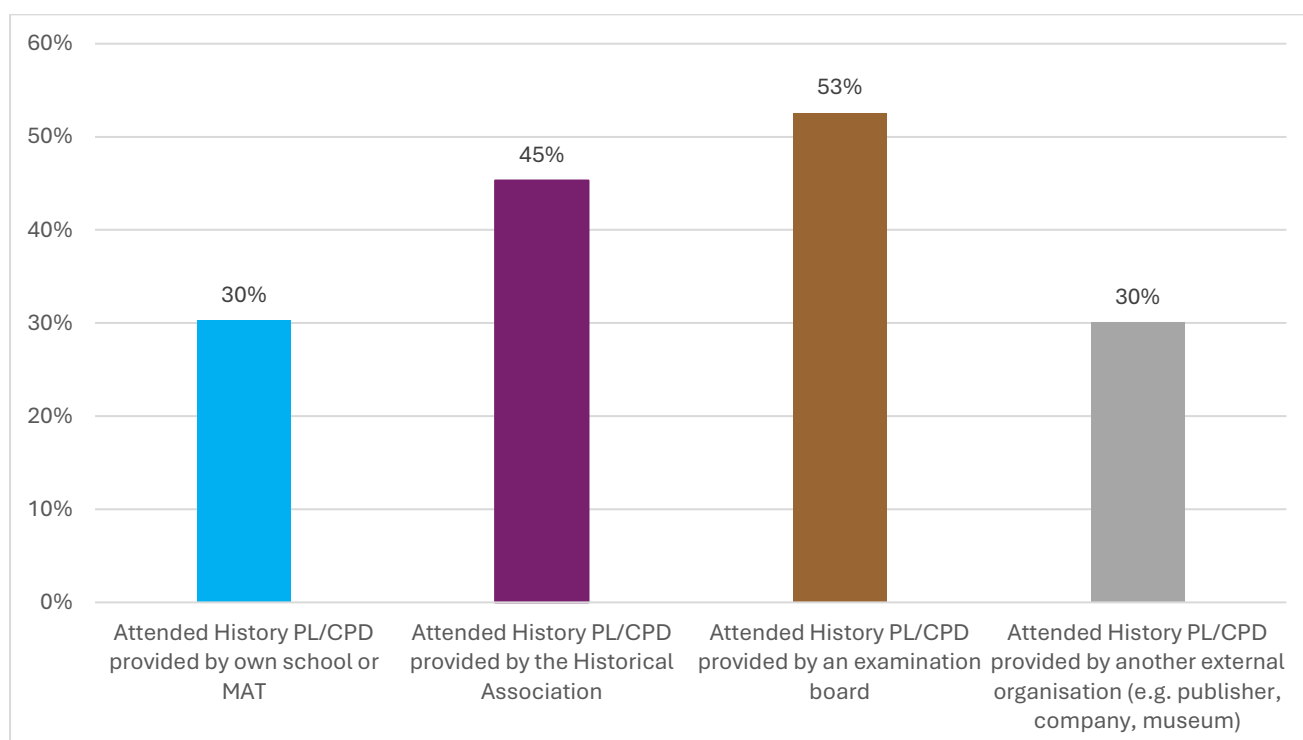
participated, whereas more than twice as many reported that their school had paid for such events (43%). Obviously not all respondents gave an indication of who had paid the costs.

*Figure 10: The proportion of respondents who reported that they and/or their school had paid the costs of the PL/CPD in which they had participated during the previous academic year (2023-24)*



As Figure 11 shows, over half of the respondents (53%) had attended training provided by one of the examination boards. Some 45% had attended events run by the Historical Association (a proportion which may obviously reflect the fact that this survey was conducted by the HA). A range of other external providers (museums, publishers and other private companies) had run events attended by 30% of respondents, while 30% had also participated in PL/CPD provided by their own school or multi-academy trust.

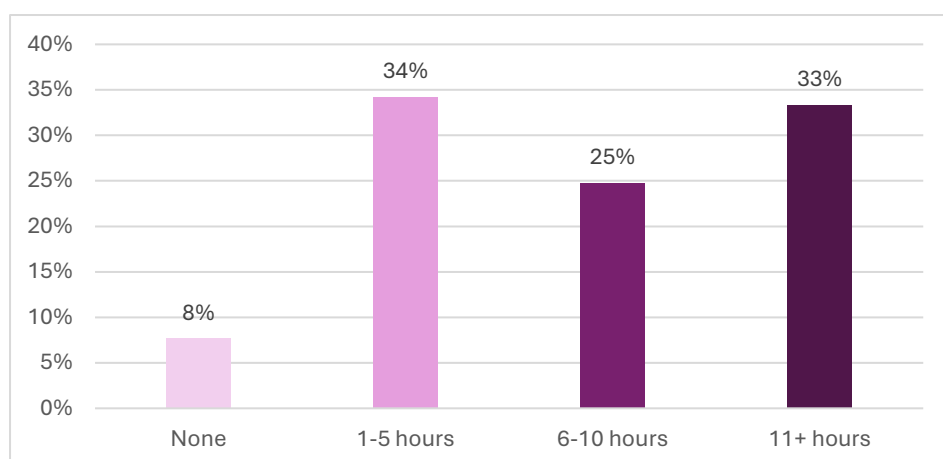
*Figure 11: The proportion of respondents who reported having attended history-specific PL/CPD offered by different providers during the previous academic year (2023-24)*





In order to contextualise this data, we asked respondents to give an indication as to how much PL/CPD of all kinds (not just that with a subject-specific focus) they had participated in over the course of the previous academic year. The answers given by 456 respondents reveal a wide range of levels of participation, from the 8% who reported that they had not taken part in any such activity, to the 33% who reported having taken part in at least 11 hours of professional development. As Figure 12 reveals, almost half of all respondents had participated in at least 6 hours of PL/CPD.

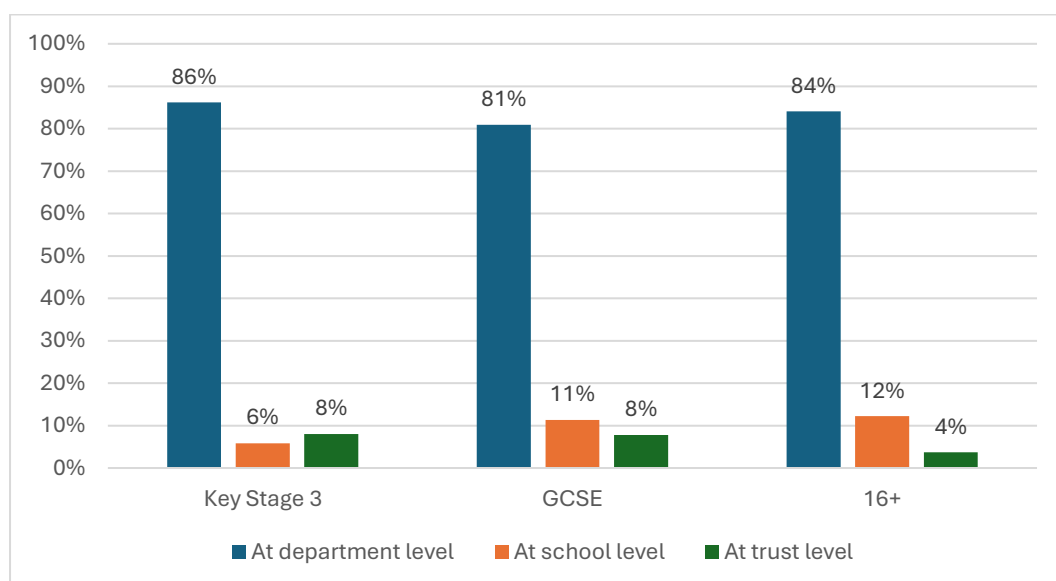
*Figure 12: The number of hours of PL/CPD (of all kinds) in which respondents had participated during the previous academic year (2023-24)*



## Section 7: Curriculum decision making and lesson planning

The final section of the survey explored the level at which decisions were made in relation to curriculum planning, including the question of who was involved in planning lessons (and in selecting or designing the resources used by the teacher and students).

*Figure 13: The levels at which curriculum decisions were made in respondents' schools.*



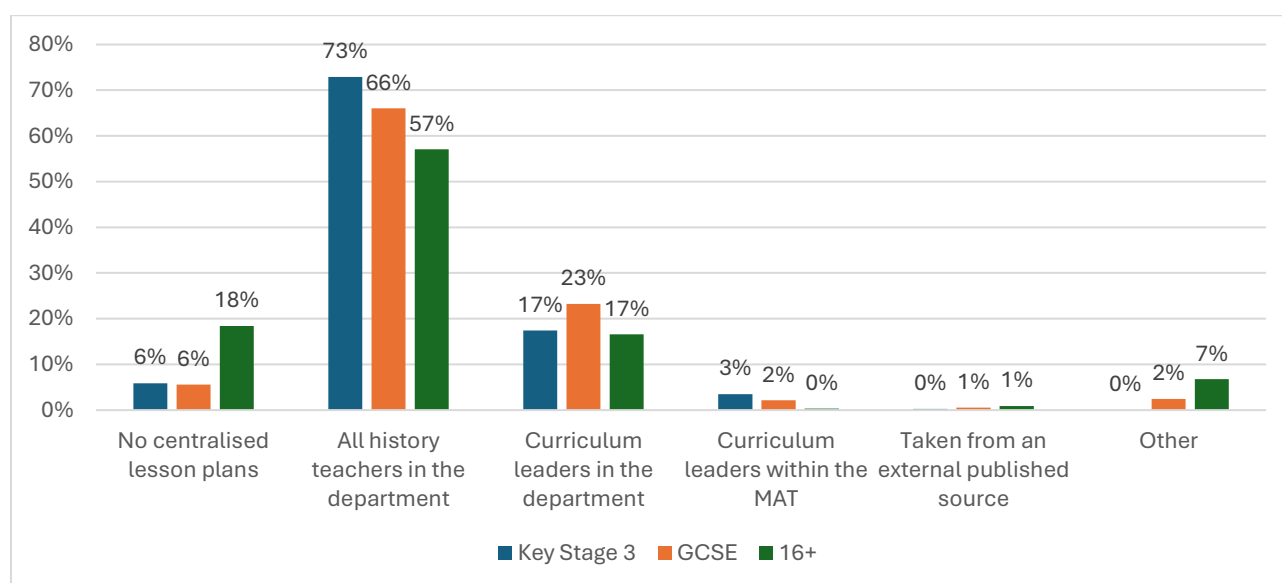
The question of the level at which curricular decisions were made was answered by 376 schools in relation to Key Stage 3, by 372 schools in relation to GCSE and by 270 schools in relation to the post-16

curriculum. As Figure 13 shows, curricular decisions appear to be made overwhelmingly at department level, which was the case for 84% of schools that responded at Key Stage 3 and post-16, and for 81% of those at GCSE. Senior managers were reported to exert the key influence in a small number of cases (6%) at Key Stage 3 and a slightly larger proportion (11-12%) at GCSE and A-level. In 8% of schools, at both Key Stage 3 and GCSE level, leaders within the multi-academy trusts to which the schools belonged were responsible for curriculum decisions (which at GCSE level will usually include the choice of exam board and, sometimes, the particular units selected for teaching).

Figure 14 presents schools' responses to the question of who was responsible for planning at the level of individual lessons. Again, this was overwhelmingly seen as a departmental responsibility at all key stages. Within Key Stage 3, 90% of schools expected departments to produce their own plans and resources, with all history teachers playing a role in 73% of schools, and subject leads assuming the responsibility in 17% of schools. In just 6% of schools were teachers expected to work entirely independently on this task, with no centralised lesson plans (from any source) provided. The proportions were similar at GCSE – with 89% of schools expecting lesson plans to be designed within the department, although at this level, slightly more schools (23%) expect subject leaders to take on this task. The 3% of responses at Key Stage 3 and the 2% at GCSE which indicated that teachers were expected to teach from plans and resource developed centrally by the trust, represent 13 and 8 schools respectively.

It is notable that at A-level, rather more schools (18%) reported a lack of centralised resources, leaving the responsibility in the hands of individual teachers, but this probably reflects the fact that in many schools only one teacher would have been teaching any particular unit. Among the 7% of schools that responded 'other' to the question of who created individual lesson plans at A-level, the explanation usually referred either to units for which only one teacher was responsible or pointed to some degree of flexibility within a centralised approach. Other than one school noting that the trust chose the exam board but left the choice of units to the school, there were no reports of centralised A-level lesson planning at the level of the trust.

*Figure 14: Responsibility for the creation of lesson plans*



In reporting the pattern of responsibility at their school, 43 respondents chose to offer further explanation or offer their own reflections on this approach. In most cases they took the opportunity to explain the process by which planning tasks were allocated – e.g. by each teacher taking responsibility

for a particular year group, or by pairing more and less experienced teachers to work together in developing a new scheme of work. In some cases, respondents noted particular constraints which they felt gave them little option but to provide centralised resources to be used by their colleagues with little adaptation. These constraints included lack of time, but also a lack of capacity within the department, sometimes because members were senior leaders with other responsibilities but sometimes because other teachers refused to take on the task or lacked the ability to do so:

*As I am the main teacher of History it largely falls to me as I have other teachers (non-specialists) teaching history so they cannot contribute to design. And my other specialist history teacher is first and foremost Head of RS and PSE therefore they have their own curriculum design to consider.*

*As Head of History, I have largely been responsible for the KS4 resourcing and also the half of the KS5 that I create, due to department lack of experience and/or refusal to actually help.*

*Only a minority of the faculty's teachers are capable of actually writing schemes of learning – the others don't seem to have the skills to put together a coherent series of lessons – [though] they are all trained subject specialists and vary in age/gender/experience as do the ones that write effective ones.*

In several cases (where history colleagues were clearly capable of curricular decision making and lesson planning), respondents explained the ways in which their trust exercised oversight over their decisions through a formal system of review, even if the actual process of designing the lesson was left to departments:

*Decisions must be passed by Line managers who consult the directors and CEO before they are permitted*

In some cases where a trust took certain centralised decisions in terms of the curriculum, schools were permitted a degree of flexibility to adapt the materials or to design a small number of their own enquiries:

*At Key Stage 3 we have a broad curriculum set out at academy trust level, but it gives individual departments in each school options to pick what they want to teach from that or how much depth they may choose to go into.*

In another case, a multi-academy trust provided some tailored schemes of work as exemplars, but did not mandate them at all:

*We do not have a prescribed curriculum that all schools follow. That being said, there are enquiries that are planned centrally by the consultant team for specific sites, and these are shared more widely to schools to choose to use and adapt for their contexts. We find this helps strike a balance*

In contrast, however, a small number of respondents wrote with alarm or dismay about a centralised curriculum or about plans and resources introduced at trust level that their department would be expected to follow:

*We are being forced to cover all content from our MAT from next year, but we do not think their lessons represent good history (no Enquiry Questions, unclear second-*

*order concepts, very repetitive lessons) so we will likely adapt our existing resources to cover their spec.*

*Booklet based topics. Booklets are centrally developed; the school can have some input but very limited.*

Several respondents in schools that had not been required to adopt a common curriculum or centralised resources, wrote approvingly of the scope that they had to collaborate with one another on the process of planning. They clearly regarded the scope that they had to control the curriculum and to make their own planning decisions as important and worth celebrating:

*We love planning together.*

*It should be up to the department.*

*We are fortunate to continue to have control over our curriculum and pedagogy and have a school that empowers and values us in this regard.*

Looking across the full range of these comments, what stands out is the sheer variability in practice and the competing pressures on schools which may lead to the adoption of measures intended to address one kind of problem (such as a shortage of specialist teachers) that may potentially give rise to others (a lack of professional autonomy or the scope to respond to a specific context). While it is clear that certain school departments and trust leaders feel that they have no option but to provide centralised lesson plans and resources in order to guarantee the quality of teaching and learning (especially where history teaching is being conducted by non-specialists), there are also teachers who bitterly resent the loss of curriculum control and the capacity to plan collaboratively, in discussion with other teachers and in response to their students. In those in departments and trusts that seem to have found a middle ground between two extremes teachers generally seem to welcome a level of support and guidance, which may include exemplar materials, but which also gives them the scope to act as professionals in collaborating within one another in response to their own context:

*Since joining the MAT two years ago, we have Heads of Department/Faculty meetings that include the subject leaders in the secondary schools. [The MAT] does not dictate to us, and respects that we can design our own Improvement Plans. Thus, discussions happen – but the decision-making is within the department here. Our Head of Department is very collegiate, and we design our curriculum as a team. Then we all create schemes and resources and share them.*