

Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship History 2023

Performance standard 93403

General commentary

Candidates in the Scholarship History examination displayed an ability to write with clarity, discuss and evaluate a range of historical narratives, analyse different historical relationships, and demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding of an important period in our history.

This examination format has been in place for the last three years and there is clear evidence that many teachers and candidates are now familiar with its demands. The three questions all required candidates to respond clearly to the question, and, by using the source material and their own knowledge and understanding, to construct a substantiated argument. Candidates were familiar with the phraseology of the questions, beginning with “To what extent ...”. This gave them the opportunity to qualify their response to the question, demonstrating the complexities of an event, or a concept or relationship.

While each question expected candidates to construct an argument, there were particular historical skills and knowledge that were assessed. Question One tasked the candidates with demonstrating their understanding of how historical narratives may differ over time and how a range of historians may differ in their interpretation. The source material was also evaluated, allowing candidates to demonstrate their ability to decide on the reliability and / or usefulness of the material. Candidates were expected to do more than make a simple judgement based on where and when the text was published, or argue possible bias on the part of the historian. One of the sources in the 2023 exam was an extract written by Eric Hobsbawm (a Marxist historian), but it was too simplistic to just note this to argue that this source was biased. Perceptive candidates were able to demonstrate that Hobsbawm was not limited by ideology but offered a nuanced criticism of Marx and his materialist conception of history.

As the evaluation of source material was assessed in Question One, there was no need for candidates to attempt to evaluate the material in Question Two. What was required was an understanding of how historical relationships help historians understand the complexity of events and issues. Candidates needed to be able to identify the particular historical relationship, explain the relationship between the two elements, and then develop the way this relationship adds to our understanding of the historical context. The general scapegoating / persecution of those in Hollywood suspected of having communist sympathies was reflected in the targeting of two individuals and the forcing of one, Charlie Chaplin, into exile. In identifying a specific example, candidates were able to explain the impact of McCarthyism on Hollywood and then were able to discuss how other specific groups of people were targeted: intellectuals, people perceived as belonging to an ‘East Coast’ elite, and homosexuals. A perceptive candidate would have been able to conclude that populist movements, in focusing on one group, can quickly extend and refocus that resentment or societal fear onto other groups perceived as being ‘the other’.

While Question Two assessed particular skills, Question Three focused on demonstrating authentic knowledge and understanding of an Aotearoa New Zealand historical context. Candidates who had a sound understanding of the period 1950 to 1954 were able to write convincingly about the ways in which a fear of communism helped shape our domestic and foreign policy, and to also recognise some of the other issues that were of importance at home and abroad. Successful candidates used the source material as a starting point in their discussions, rather than allowing it to limit their response. The familiar phraseology of the question, “To what extent ...”, allowed candidates to discuss the importance of national security in a post-war period, and the moral, political, and cultural issues that were emerging at this time. Candidates who were able to discuss the growing urbanisation of Māori, continuing issues over land, and concerns about the influence of ‘foreign’ elements suspected of corrupting the young, were rewarded. Communism, as many noted, was a real concern but not to the exclusion of other issues.

The Scholarship History examination is challenging and demanding, but a clear understanding of the purpose of each question should ensure that candidates are able to meet these demands.

Report on performance standard

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with **Outstanding Performance** commonly:

- wrote thorough and convincing responses with substantiated arguments that used the sources effectively to demonstrate a very high level of understanding of historical narratives and historical skills
- provided sophisticated judgements about historical narratives for Question One
- demonstrated a high level of knowledge about the historical theme and the period of history, particularly in their response to Question Three
- demonstrated an ability to develop a clear and substantiated argument and expand upon ideas in the source material
- moved beyond mere identification of historical relationships evident in the source material for Question Two and accurately developed an argument that linked a generic historical relationship to specific components of the source material, directly addressing the requirements of the question.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- wrote responses in which clarity and concision were sustained
- analysed and applied historical narratives both in Question One and from their own knowledge
- identified and explained historical relationships in the sources in Question Two and used them to develop an argument
- developed a convincing and concise response to Question Three that reflected an informed understanding of 1950s New Zealand and an ability to integrate key relevant ideas from the source material.

Candidates who were **not awarded Scholarship** commonly:

- wrote brief or superficial responses that showed little or no understanding of historical narratives or how to use them to support an argument in Question One
- wrote responses that showed little or no understanding of historical relationships and how to use them to develop an argument in Question Two
- did not identify both elements of a historical relationship

- did not answer the question or did not recognise what the question was asking
- showed no informed knowledge of Aotearoa New Zealand in the years 1950 to 1954 in Question Three
- did not explain how the historical narratives or the historical relationships answered the question.