



# EXAMINATIONS HANDBOOK

## Standard Operating Procedure 41

### Core Knowledge syllabus and marking scheme

## Amendments and date of issue

Amendments to this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) can be authorised only by the Chair of the Qualifications Board in consultation with that Board and the Examinations Committee.

This issue is 2025 version 1 and is dated November 2025.

## Register of amendments

Version	Brief description of Amendment	Amendment	Date approved
2025.1	Core Knowledge Syllabus 2025.1 replaces Background Knowledge Syllabus 2020.1	Revised Paper I examination	05.11.2025

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## Core Knowledge Syllabus

### Introduction

This syllabus relates to Core Knowledge of the United Kingdom and forms the foundation upon which detailed regional knowledge can be built and will underpin tourist guiding commentaries.

The terms Britain and British have been used throughout the syllabus as a one-word shorthand for The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Crown Dependencies.

The Content will be assessed through a two-hour exam. The exam will assess the following topics:

- Architecture and Gardens
- The Arts
- Geography
- History
- Life in the United Kingdom today

## Overview, Content and Key Elements

The overview, content and key elements of each topic are described in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Core Knowledge overview, content and key elements

Topic	Overview	Content	To include
Architecture and Gardens	<p>This topic focuses on buildings and gardens in the United Kingdom across different historical periods that are of national significance. Content includes reference to the key features of these gardens and buildings, how they have evolved over time and those that contributed to these changes. Candidates should ensure they understand how and why different aspects of architecture and gardens are of importance to tourists.</p>	<p>Candidates should develop knowledge and understanding of how buildings and gardens evolved through the following time periods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-historic</li> <li>• Roman</li> <li>• Medieval</li> <li>• Tudor</li> <li>• 17<sup>th</sup> Century</li> <li>• 18<sup>th</sup> Century</li> <li>• 19<sup>th</sup> Century</li> <li>• 20<sup>th</sup> Century</li> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup> Century</li> </ul>	<p><b>Buildings and gardens</b> For each period, candidates should apply the following content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different styles and key features associated with each style of buildings and gardens.</li> <li>• Key features of different types of buildings including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Churches</li> <li>▪ Fortified buildings</li> <li>▪ Stately homes</li> <li>▪ Domestic dwellings</li> <li>▪ Industrial buildings and infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Public buildings</li> <li>▪ Garden design and architecture</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Examples of nationally significant architects and garden designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Including examples of buildings and gardens they have designed.</li> <li>▪ How the key features that characterise their designs have led to them making a significant contribution to UK architecture and horticultural design</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>National organisations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National organisations for buildings and gardens, for example, The National Trust</li> <li>• Listed buildings</li> <li>• How they can be used to support a successful tour</li> </ul>

Topic	Overview	Content	To include
The Arts	<p>This topic covers the development of the visual arts, performing arts and literature of the United Kingdom. It also includes reference to interior design and fashion that are of national significance.</p> <p>Candidates should focus on content that relates to key individuals and groups that have made a nationally significant contribution to the development of the Arts. They should understand their importance to visitors and tourism.</p> <p>Candidates should be able apply their knowledge and understanding of historical developments to the Arts.</p>	<p>Candidates should develop knowledge and understanding of how:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual Arts (paintings and sculpture)</li> <li>• Literature (novels, poetry and festivals)</li> <li>• Performing Arts (theatre, music, TV and Film, Festivals)</li> <li>• Design (interior design, fashion)</li> </ul> <p>have evolved through different time periods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Medieval</li> <li>▪ Tudor</li> <li>▪ 17th Century</li> <li>▪ 18th Century</li> <li>▪ 19th Century</li> <li>▪ 20th Century.</li> <li>▪ 21st Century</li> </ul>	<p><b>Painting and Sculpture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nationally significant artists from the United Kingdom for each period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Their period of work</li> <li>▪ Examples and relevance of their works</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Literature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Novelists, poets and playwrights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Significant authors from the United Kingdom for each period</li> <li>▪ Their period of work (key dates)</li> <li>▪ Examples and relevance of their works</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Performing arts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theatre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evolution of the theatre</li> <li>▪ Key features of different types of theatre</li> <li>▪ Key features of different theatrical genres</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Music: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nationally significant composers and artists from the United Kingdom (including groups / bands / orchestras) from each period, examples of the relevance of their works.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Screen tourism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nationally significant actors from the United Kingdom - their periods of work, examples of work, awards achieved</li> <li>▪ Nationally significant TV programmes and films</li> <li>▪ Filming locations and studios</li> <li>▪ What is the BBC and how it functions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Arts festivals of national significance</li> </ul>

Topic	Overview	Content	To include
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Locations</li> <li>▪ Key features (including genre)</li> </ul> <p>Furniture and Interior Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key features of styles from each period</li> <li>• Nationally significant designers from each period and their relevance</li> </ul>
<b>Geography</b>	<p>This topic focuses on physical geography including the conservation of the environment. It also includes natural plants and the wildlife of the United Kingdom. It also includes the infrastructure of the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Content should relate to examples that are of national significance and their contribution to the United Kingdom as a tourist destination.</p>	<p>Candidates should develop knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical geography (geology, physical features, map interpretation)</li> <li>• Conservation (national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty, sites of specific scientific interest)</li> <li>• Plants and wildlife (trees, hedgerows, plants, flowers, animals, birds, reptiles)</li> <li>• Infrastructure (transport, energy and utilities, housing)</li> </ul>	<p>Physical geography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Key features of these four main rock types (granite, chalk, sandstone, limestone) and where they can be found</li> <li>▪ Effects of these rock types on landscape, soil, local building materials, industry, farming practices, population</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Natural landscape and coastal features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Examples of national significance, their key features and locations.</li> <li>▪ How these features have influenced agriculture, industry, the development of rural and urban environments and settlements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Conservation</p>

Topic	Overview	Content	To include
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Parks, National Landscapes, National Nature Reserves, Marine Conservation Zones, UNESCO Global Geoparks, Dark Sky and SSIs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Examples of each and their characteristics</li> <li>▪ Purpose</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Potential positive and negative impacts of tourism and how tourists can contribute to minimising the negative impacts and emphasising the positive impacts.</li> </ul> <p>Plants and wildlife</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trees, plants, flowers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Examples of those most commonly found in typical urban, coastal and rural environments</li> <li>▪ How they affect land use including tourism</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Examples of those most commonly found in urban, rural and coastal environments</li> <li>▪ Examples of protected species</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Agriculture</p> <p>Examples of the most common crops and livestock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Main types of farms, their key characteristics and typical locations of each type.</li> <li>▪ Farm diversification</li> <li>▪ Environmental impact</li> </ul> <p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Different modes of public transport and how they are funded.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Topic	Overview	Content	To include
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transport networks and their effects on commercial and leisure activity</li> <li>▪ Roads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Different classifications and their key features</li> <li>○ Speed limits in mph and kph</li> <li>○ Charges and methods of funding including tolls, vehicle excise duty, fuel duty, congestion charges, Ultra Low Emission Zones (ULEZ)</li> <li>○ Legal requirements when driving</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Cyclists and pedestrians <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cycle lanes</li> <li>○ Pedestrianised areas</li> <li>○ Multiple use</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Energy and utilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilities provided to households and businesses</li> <li>• Public and private ownership of utilities</li> <li>• Sources of energy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fossil, renewable and nuclear</li> <li>▪ Characteristics, environmental impact and locations of each source of energy</li> <li>▪ Implications for land use</li> <li>▪ Domestic energy sources</li> <li>▪ Economic impact of changing energy sources</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different types of property ownership and their characteristics</li> <li>• Models of social housing (council, housing association, shared ownership)</li> </ul>

Topic	Overview	Content	To include
History	<p>This topic focuses on the historical development of England, setting events in time and context.</p> <p>The content explores significant events, reforms and developments and how they contribute to the United Kingdom as a tourist destination.</p> <p>Candidates must apply their knowledge and understanding of historical developments to the Arts, Architecture and Gardens, Physical Geography and Life in the United Kingdom.</p>	<p>Candidates should develop knowledge and understanding of history through different time periods which is relevant for guiding tourists and associated sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prehistoric</li> <li>• Roman</li> <li>• Anglo Saxon</li> <li>• Norman</li> <li>• Plantagenet</li> <li>• Tudor</li> <li>• Stuart</li> <li>• Georgian</li> <li>• Victorian</li> <li>• Edwardian</li> <li>• 20th Century.</li> <li>• 21st Century</li> </ul>	<p>For each period, candidates should apply the following content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The dates associated with the period of time</li> <li>• Monarchy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monarchs</li> <li>▪ Period of their reigns</li> <li>▪ Importance in history</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Significant conflicts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Where they took place</li> <li>▪ What happened</li> <li>▪ Who was involved</li> <li>▪ Why they are remembered in history</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The British Empire: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Which parts of the world were colonised</li> <li>▪ The Slave Trade and Abolition</li> <li>▪ The legacy of empire and slavery</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Significant social, political and economic reforms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dates</li> <li>▪ Key features of the reforms</li> <li>▪ Why the reforms occurred</li> <li>▪ Why they were of significance</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Significant technological, industrial and scientific developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Key features of and locations of developments</li> <li>▪ Biographical details of key people involved</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Topic	Overview	Content	To include
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Why they were of significance</li> <li>• Significant religious developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What changed and why</li> <li>▪ Dates</li> <li>▪ Key people</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Language development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Key influences of the development of the English language</li> <li>▪ Examples of words derived from the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons, the Vikings, the Normans and British Empire.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Candidates must apply their knowledge and understanding of historical developments to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architecture and Gardens</li> <li>• The Arts</li> <li>• Geography</li> <li>• Life in The United Kingdom</li> </ul>
<b>Life in the United Kingdom today</b>	<p>This topic focuses on how people in the United Kingdom live and what influences their lives today. It includes a range of sub-topics from government and the Royal Family to sport and food.</p>	<p>Candidates should develop knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government</li> <li>• Legal System</li> <li>• Monarchy</li> <li>• Demographics</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• The Economy</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Sport</li> <li>• Food and drink</li> </ul>	<p><b>Government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure, function and powers of the House of Commons and House of Lords</li> <li>• Role of the monarch</li> <li>• Electoral system for House of Commons</li> <li>• Appointment system for House of Lords including Bishops and Peers.</li> <li>• Devolved Parliaments for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Names and locations</li> <li>▪ Key functions and powers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Topic	Overview	Content	To include
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of principal government ministries</li> <li>• Structure of local government</li> </ul> <p>Legal system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hierarchy of Courts</li> <li>• Role of each Court</li> <li>• Role of key personnel involved</li> <li>• Understand the key legal provisions relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Equality</li> <li>▪ Health and safety</li> <li>▪ Data protection</li> <li>▪ Key legal minimum ages</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Police Service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Role and powers</li> <li>▪ Different types of officers</li> <li>▪ Weapons carried</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The Royal Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ruling monarch and descendants</li> <li>• Titles</li> <li>• Order of succession</li> <li>• Major royal ceremonies and annual appearances</li> <li>• Official and private residences of the monarch</li> <li>• Financing of the Royal family</li> <li>• Royal Warrants and examples</li> <li>• The Royal Coat of Arms</li> <li>• The honours system</li> <li>• The peerage</li> <li>• The Commonwealth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Role and purpose</li> <li>▪ Number of members and examples</li> <li>▪ Examples of members from different</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Topic	Overview	Content	To include
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name of the Secretary General.</li> <li>▪ Examples of countries where the UK monarch is head of state</li> </ul> <p><b>The Armed Forces</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different services</li> <li>• Approximate numbers</li> <li>• Secret service agencies</li> <li>• NATO</li> </ul> <p><b>Demographics</b></p> <p>Statistics based on 2021 Census</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximate populations of the countries that make up the United Kingdom: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overall profile of the United Kingdom's population</li> <li>▪ Major ethnic groups</li> <li>▪ Principal religions and their subgroups (<i>based on 2021 census</i>)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difference between the state and private systems</li> <li>• Proportions of children educated by the state, privately and at home</li> <li>• Overall structure of state education system including ages of compulsory education</li> <li>• National examinations</li> <li>• Forms of post 16 education</li> <li>• Post 18 forms of education and training</li> <li>• Universities – application and funding</li> </ul> <p><b>Economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The national living wage for those aged 21 and over</li> <li>• Value Added Tax (VAT)</li> </ul>

Topic	Overview	Content	To include
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Current rates</li> <li>▪ Examples of exemptions</li> <li>• Current rates income tax and National Insurance (NI)</li> <li>• The role of the Bank of England</li> <li>• The role of HMRC (His Majesty's Revenue and Customs)</li> <li>• Key industry sectors in the UK: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Principal locations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Not for profit sector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Examples of organisation of national significance that are 'not for profit'</li> <li>▪ Role of the Charity Commission</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The rate of the full State Basic Pension and the rate of the full State Pension.</li> </ul> <p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Health Service (NHS): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The role of the different primary care and emergency providers.</li> <li>▪ When and by whom was the NHS founded</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Sport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The United Kingdom's sporting calendar, including information about major competitions, venues and month / season when they occur including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Football</li> <li>▪ Rugby Union/League</li> <li>▪ Horse racing</li> <li>▪ Tennis</li> <li>▪ Motorsport</li> <li>▪ Golf</li> <li>▪ Cricket</li> <li>▪ Rowing</li> <li>▪ Cycling</li> <li>▪ Athletics</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Topic	Overview	Content	To include
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examples of country sports</li> </ul> <p>Food and drink</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examples of well-known national and regional food and drink</li> <li>Examples of products with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) or Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status</li> </ul>

There are things that will not be examined in the Core Knowledge but should be included in Course Providers training and should be checked by accreditation that this has been included:

- Map reading skills
- Planning public transport journeys
- Demonstrate an awareness of how legislation can affect the UK tourism industry (e.g. Coach Drivers' Hours, Equality Act 2010 [disability discrimination], health & safety [e.g. seat belts].

This syllabus relates to Core Knowledge of Britain and forms the foundation upon which detailed regional knowledge can be built and will underpin tourist guiding commentaries.

The syllabus document sets out the content to be learned. The content will be assessed through a two-hour exam.

The syllabus content has been organised around five topic areas:

- Architecture and Gardens
- The Arts
- Geography

- History
- Life in Britain

For each topic area, there is a list of content. For the first four topic areas: Architecture and Gardens, The Arts, Geography and History, this doesn't include specific examples. However, the content indicates that the examples that are selected for study or used in candidates written answers must be of national significance.

The Life in Britain section of the syllabus asks for more specific knowledge. This is reflected in the type of question that is asked in this section of the examination paper which only tests factual recall of knowledge.

**The Core Knowledge Syllabus should be reviewed every 3 years.**

## Written Examination

The written examination will last **two** hours.

Candidates are required to answer **every** question on the examination paper.

There will be five sections in the examination paper, one for each of the syllabus topics.

Each section will be worth **20 marks** with the exception of the history question which will be worth **40 marks**.

Each section will be divided up into varying number of questions. The minimum and maximum number of questions possible for each section is outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2:** The minimum and maximum number of questions possible for each section

	<b>Architecture &amp; Gardens</b>	<b>The Arts</b>	<b>Geography</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>Life in Britain</b>
Minimum number of questions	3	3	3	5	10
Maximum number of questions	6	6	6	8	20

## **Assessment Objectives and Marks**

Candidates will be tested on three assessment objectives.

### ***AO1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding***

This will involve candidates recalling specific facts.

There may be short answer questions worth 1-2 marks, normally requiring one or two words as answers.

There may be questions such as label diagrams, filling in charts or identifying relevant information from an image.

Typical command verbs used for AO1 questions include: what, when, state, give, label, name, identify, list, match.

AO1 marks will also be awarded for recalling specific facts in the extended response questions.

### ***AO2 Apply knowledge and understanding to different situations and contexts***

This will involve candidates being provided with specific contexts or situations through a brief scenario or case study. Candidates will be required to respond in relation to the specific situation or context in the question in order to access the full range of marks.

Standalone AO2 questions will be worth four or six marks.

Questions must have a context or short scenario that require candidates to select and apply their knowledge to that context or scenario

These questions require a small number of sentences or bullet points in the response. Questions may be structured (e.g. requiring a specific number of examples in the response) or unstructured and open. In this case candidates should look at the total number of marks available, a question worth four marks requires 2-3 developed examples/points, a question worth six marks 3-4.

Typical command verbs for AO2 questions include: describe, explain.

**AO3 Analyse and evaluate information and issues.**

This involves candidates being provided with complex information or a complex issue. The information or issue is analysed and content is selected that can be used to suggest a resolution to the issue or problem. In the synoptic history question marks will also be awarded for making connections to other topic areas.

Questions must have information that candidates need to analyse or interpret such as a case study, scenario, or image.

AO3 marks are only awarded in the extended response question.

Typical command verbs for AO3 questions include: justify, discuss, analyse, evaluate.

**Marks**

The possible marks awarded for each assessment objective are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Marks awarded for each assessment objective

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Architecture and gardens</b>	<b>The arts</b>	<b>Geography</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>Life in Britain</b>
<b>AO1</b>	25-48	3-6	3-6	3-6	6-10	15-20
<b>AO2</b>	55-71	9-14	9-14	9-14	18-24	0-5
<b>AO3</b>	18-22	3-4	3-4	3-4	9-10	0
<b>Total</b>	120	20	20	20	40	20

Each section (except Life in Britain) should include an extended response question. Marks available and distribution of marks for extended response questions to AOs are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Marks available and distribution of marks for extended response questions

<b>Total marks</b>	<b>AO1</b>	<b>AO2</b>	<b>AO3</b>
9	3	3	3
10	2	4	4
12	4	4	4
16 (synoptic History only)	4	6	6

### **Synoptic Questions**

The synoptic question asks candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding of historical developments to:

- Architecture and Gardens
- The Arts
- Geography
- Life in Britain.

Requirements for each topic are as follows:

### **Architecture and Gardens**

- 20 Marks
- There must be a minimum of three questions.
- There should be a least one question on buildings and one on gardens.
- There must be one extended response question.

### **The Arts**

- 20 marks
- There must be a minimum of three questions.
- Questions in this section should cover at least three different sub-topics.
- There must be one extended response question.

### **Geography**

- 20 marks
- There must be a minimum of three questions.
- Questions in this section should cover at least three different sub-topics.
- There must be one extended response question.

### **History**

- 40 marks
- There must be a minimum of five questions.

- Questions in this section must cover at least four periods.
- There must be at least two extended response questions – one must be synoptic.

**Life in Britain**

- 20 marks
- There must be at least one question from each sub-topic.