



## Course Report 2015

Subject	History
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

## **Section 1: Comments on the Assessment**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

The new Higher question paper has three sections: Section 1 — Historical Study: Scottish; Section 2 — Historical Study: British; and Section 3 — Historical Study: European and World. Each section is worth 20 marks.

In Section 1 there are now only four sources for three questions: How fully ... (9 marks); Compare the views ... (5 marks); Evaluate the usefulness ... (6 marks). Section 2 and Section 3 require candidates to answer one extended response (essay) from each section. There was no obvious evidence to suggest that candidates found difficulty in completing the question paper in 2 hours 20 minutes. Most candidates appeared to use the time effectively. Some chose to complete the extended responses first. However, many other candidates followed the order of the question paper as presented. Candidates should continue to answer the question paper in the order that allows them to best demonstrate their own particular strengths.

The arrangements for setting the paper remain consistent with the Higher paper since 2011. However, it should be noted, in Section 1 (Historical Study: Scottish) only three out of the four issues from the mandatory content will be sampled. These will be the same issues and question stems in each of the five parts, but the sampling will vary each year. In Section 2 (Historical Study: British) and Section 3 (Historical Study: European and World), we will continue to sample any three of the six issues. These will be the same issues in each part, but the sampling will vary each year.

The question paper follows a sequential order from questions 1–57. This was exemplified in the Exemplar Question Paper published December 2014.

### **Component 2: Assignment**

The Higher Assignment performed as intended. Most candidates submitted what could be considered their best work — most centres built on the good practice already established by Higher History Extended Essay. However, some candidates did not perform well because they either did not select an issue that was appropriate, or the question stem did not provide a basis for analysis/evaluation. The principles established by the Higher Extended Essay Plan were applied to the new Higher Assignment Resource Sheet by most centres.

## **Section 2: Comments on candidate performance**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

The majority of candidates performed well. Feedback from centres suggests the question paper performed as intended.

The only question stem causing any real difficulty in the question paper was the ‘Evaluate the usefulness ...’ question. However, many candidates used the source content and their own recalled knowledge successfully. Markers commented on candidates having some difficulty using evaluation in the extended response questions.

### **Component 2: Assignment**

The Assignment allowed candidates to improve their overall grade by providing an example of their best work. Most markers commented on the quality of the Assignment, although in some cases there was a lack of evaluation. However, it should be noted that this is

considered a higher-order skill and some candidates will find it difficult to access the marks. Most candidates performed well in referencing from sources, clearly a skill built on from National 5.

Some candidates did not perform well in the Assignment and this was, in the main, due to poor use of the Resource Sheet. The Resource Sheet is intended to be used in a similar way to the original Extended Essay Plan, eg issues, a summary of knowledge points, references (quotes). Markers commented on a number of over-complex Resource Sheets which did not appear to support the Assignment.

## **Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

Most candidates knew how to answer 'How fully ...' questions correctly. This provides candidates the opportunity to access developed knowledge points from the relevant illustrative areas appropriate to the issue.

Most candidates performed well in the extended response questions. In most cases, candidates provided a historical context and a conclusion. The issues/factors were covered with detailed and relevant knowledge, supported by comments which addressed the individual issue/factor.

### **Component 2: Assignment**

Most candidates selected an appropriate question, relevant to their area of study, and provided detailed and relevant knowledge. Candidates successfully followed the requirements for placing the issue in its historical context (introduction) and a balanced conclusion. Good use of referencing provided additional support to existing analysis and/or evaluation. The most effective answers used 'To what extent ...', using an isolated factor in the question, or 'How important ...', selecting a historical event/figure/issue and the extent to which it was a success or failure.

Most candidates used the Resource Sheet as required. The most effective use was from candidates who used the single A4 sheet as a prompt to write what is essentially an extended essay worth 30 marks. Candidates were, in the main, well supported by their centre.

## **Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

Candidates had most difficulty with the 'Evaluate the usefulness...' question. Higher focuses on the candidate's ability to evaluate the origin and possible purpose of the source. This remains the most challenging element of the evaluation question. Candidates should support this aspect of the source, eg author, type of source, purpose or timing with evaluative comments. We do not expect 'The author is very useful ...' but rather a detailed comment explaining why it is useful.

Many candidates had some difficulty with 'How fully ...' questions by failing to provide a clear overall judgement in the answer.

Some candidates had difficulty with 'Compare the views ...' questions and did not compare the sources in detail. At Higher candidates are expected to use illustrative areas from the source for each comparison mark.

Candidates had few difficulties with the extended responses. Although pre-prepared answers often weakened a response, eg in Question 26 some candidates had difficulty answering the correct issue 5, but instead answered issue 4.

Many candidates were unable to access the full range of marks regarding analysis/evaluation. Candidates were able to make an isolated comment on an individual factor, but failed to analyse the factor in terms of the question. Similarly, there were some isolated evaluative comments but few which allowed the candidate to build a line of argument.

## **Component 2: Assignment**

Some candidates had difficulty accessing the full range of marks available because they selected an inappropriate question (eg descriptive). This resulted in a significant loss of analysis/evaluation marks.

## **Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

Centres should ensure that candidates provide a judgement to answer the 'How fully ...' question, eg 'The source partly explains ...'. Source points used should be supported by relevant recall or an explanation linked to the question. Candidates can only achieve a maximum of 2 marks in this type of question if there is no judgement made.

Centres should ensure that candidates compare the sources in detail to answer the 'Compare the views of ...' question. A direct comparison between the sources should quote the sources fully and explain in detail why they agree/disagree. There are no marks for 'ghost' comparisons, eg 'Source B says "..." but Source C does not mention this'.

Centres should ensure that candidates access the full range of marks to answer 'Evaluate the usefulness ...' questions. The question paper marking instructions provide an exemplar answer.

Centres should encourage all candidates to read the extended response questions carefully to avoid answering the wrong question/issue. Candidates must answer the question as it appears in the question paper, not what they would prefer to write about or a pre-prepared answer.

Centres should note that all areas of the syllabus can, and will, be sampled. In Section 1 (Historical Study: Scottish) any three from four issues will be examined. The question types can be asked in any order. They will remain the same across the five Scottish topics. In Section 2 (Historical Study: British), and Section 3 (Historical Study: European and World), any three from six issues will be examined. It is essential that candidates are prepared for a minimum of four issues in each Section studied.

### **Component 2: Assignment**

Centres should ensure that candidates do not self-penalise with an inappropriate choice of question. Suggested question stems include 'To what extent ...' or 'How important was ...' as candidates can use analysis/evaluation in responses.

Resource Sheets are not marked but they are used by markers for guidance in assessing the Assignment.

When using information from sources, candidates should refer to at least two different sources. This may come from the same author but they must come from two different

sources (eg text books). Those who used four different authors/sources exemplified best practice. Information from sources should not be used as recall/statistics/picture sources. References used to support analysis/evaluation exemplified best practice. Centres should ensure that all relevant supporting documentation is sent in for candidates (eg the Assignment — name/question/pages numbered, flyleaf signed with marking sheet overleaf, and the completed Resource Sheet.)

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	0
Number of resulted entries in 2015	7375

## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 90				
A	33.4%	33.4%	2464	64
B	31.6%	65.0%	2332	55
C	19.0%	84.0%	1400	47
D	5.4%	89.4%	396	43
No award	10.6%	-	783	0

Overall the course assessment proved to be less demanding than intended. Grade Boundaries were raised accordingly. The C grade boundary was raised by 2 marks and the A grade boundary was raised by 1 mark. The upper A grade boundary remained unchanged.

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.