



## Course Report 2015

Subject	History
Level	National 5

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**

Some candidates had difficulty providing adequate recalled knowledge in their KU responses. Lack of adequate recalled knowledge was also an issue in SH3 responses to some extent, but the question most candidates had real difficulty with was SH1 (*Evaluate the usefulness...*). Although the Specimen Question Paper, 2014 Question Paper and Understanding Standards Events provided much more guidance for centres, many candidates found this type of question demanding.

There is clear evidence that the increased time allocation (from 1.5 hours to 1.75 hours) for this assessment did allow candidates adequate time to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

The arrangements for item writing (setting) ensured that a good range of the syllabus was covered in each of the three sections of the question paper — a maximum of three out of four issues of mandatory content is sampled in each context. Item analysis has shown that there were some contexts that have been studied by very few candidates.

### **Component 2: Assignment**

The Assignment performed as intended, allowing most candidates to access an added value component that could improve their overall grade.

The N5 History Assignment expects candidates to select an appropriate issue and write an extended response under controlled conditions within a continuous period of one hour, and most candidates again took this opportunity to showcase their best work (most centres built on the good practice established in 2014).

However, some candidates did not perform well because they did not select an issue that was appropriate. Many markers again reported instances of poor or almost illegible handwriting — made worse by the use of pencil rather than pen. Some centres still did not supply resource sheets with candidate responses, but the space for candidates to enter their question has made a difference — it is obviously very challenging for a marker to attempt to mark an Assignment without a clear question to guide them.

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

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

The majority of candidates were entered at the correct level — 2015 saw cohorts from S5/6 as well as S4 attempting the exam for the first time. Feedback from centres and markers indicates that the N5 examination paper was considered to be demanding but reasonably fair and provided enough opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Most markers again commented on the lack of recalled knowledge and/or the correct answer technique (process) in particular types of question — see section 4.

## **Component 2: Assignment**

The Assignment allowed candidates who selected an appropriate question to increase their overall grade considerably. It is suggested that centres should therefore consider likely performance in the Assignment before submitting estimates in future years.

Some candidates again did not perform well in this component, mainly because they selected an inappropriate question and/or made poor use of their resource sheet.

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

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

Most candidates knew how to answer KU1 (Describe...) questions correctly. This was again by far the most accessible KU question for candidates, who were well rewarded for good historical knowledge.

Most candidates also knew how to answer SH2 (Compare the views of sources...) questions correctly. This was again by far the most accessible SH question for candidates, who benefitted greatly from being awarded marks for making an overall comparison as well as simple and developed comparisons in this type of question.

### **Component 2: Assignment**

Most candidates again selected an appropriate question, and provided adequate knowledge and good organisation in their responses. Topics selected, in most cases, allowed candidates enough scope to research successfully and submit their best work.

Most candidates also used the resource sheet sensibly, and looked on it as a prompt to write what is essentially an essay for 20 marks. Clearly these candidates were supported appropriately by their teachers.

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

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

Most candidates again had difficulty with SH1 (Evaluate the usefulness...) questions, although there was a slight improvement in the standard overall. An evaluative comment is required for each aspect of the source, and most candidates found this quite challenging. It is not enough for candidates to write 'The source says [x] which is useful' when trying to achieve a mark for content, for example. Instead candidates should use the phrases '...this is useful because...' or 'this is less useful because...' and supply a good reason to support

their evaluation of each aspect of the source (see exemplification in Marking Instructions). The minimum we would expect to award a content mark is ‘The source says [x] which is useful because it is accurate’, although the ideal is that candidates also provide some historical context that relates their knowledge to the question actually being asked: ‘The source says [x] which is useful because it was the case that...’

Many candidates also had difficulty with SH3 (How fully...) questions, and were penalised for their lack of recalled knowledge. Candidates can only achieve a maximum of 2 marks in this type of question if there is no recall and/or judgement in their answer. Moreover, there are distracters in the sources for this type of question, so candidates must not presume that every piece of presented evidence is relevant — they should only select the appropriate points from the source.

Some candidates again had difficulty with KU2 (Explain the reasons why...) questions because they did not supply reasons in their answers, only facts, which, although acceptable in KU1 questions, can only achieve minimal credit in KU2 questions. Candidates must carry out the correct answer technique or process (supplying genuine reasons) in this type of question to be successful.

## **Component 2: Assignment**

Some candidates had difficulty accessing the full range of available marks because they selected an inappropriate question (eg Describe... or Why...?). This meant that evaluation marks could not really be awarded and the overall mark awarded for the conclusion had to be low. Even when an appropriate question was selected, some candidates did not address the issue they had set themselves, only providing a descriptive or narrative response instead of trying to explain and evaluate consistently.

Many candidates attempted questions that were too ambitious — they tried to cover five or more factors and did not attempt a conclusion. Since there were six marks available for conclusions, this was therefore quite damaging.

Some candidates again did not make use of any references in their response, so could not be awarded either of the two marks available for this. References must be integrated within the actual response (and not just listed at the end) and should ideally be used to support a line of argument.

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

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

Centres should ensure that candidates are fully prepared to answer SH1 questions (*Evaluate the usefulness...*) correctly — an evaluative comment is required for each different aspect of the source (see exemplification in Marking Instructions and on *Understanding Standards* website).

Centres should ensure that candidates are prepared to answer KU2 questions (*Explain the reasons why...*) correctly — these answers require reasons and not just facts (see exemplification in Marking Instructions and on *Understanding Standards* website). This is particularly important as there is a KU2 question in every section of the N5 examination. Many candidates do provide accurate historical knowledge in their KU2 answers, but this is not enough on its own — this knowledge must be used to answer the question asked.

Centres should liaise with Invigilators to ensure that incorrect and/or multiple contexts are not attempted. The introduction of the checklist inside the answer booklet used by candidates seems to have helped with this.

Centres should encourage candidates to use only black or blue ink to ensure greater legibility.

Where candidate scripts are being typed, please use a large enough size of font and double spacing to allow markers enough room to use correction codes and annotate marks.

Candidates should be encouraged to read all questions and instructions carefully to avoid misinterpretation and/or irrelevance — candidates must do what the question actually asks and not what they would prefer to write about.

Candidates should be discouraged from attempting sections out of sequence as this can be to their overall disadvantage.

Centres should note that all areas of the syllabus can and will be sampled. It is also worth pointing out that the Course Assessment Specification has been amended for some contexts (to provide greater clarity around the mandatory content/illustrative areas), and this will affect future examinations.

## **Component 2: Assignment**

The approach to marking the Assignment will change in 2015–16. Fewer marks will be awarded for conclusions, introductions will now be credited, and candidates will be expected to cover at least three factors in their response (instead of just two as at present).

Centres should ensure that candidates do not self-penalise with an inappropriate choice of question. Ideally questions should be KU3 in style (eg How important...? or To what extent...?) so that candidates have an appropriate issue to evaluate overall.

Centres should ensure that candidates are prepared to provide adequate balance within their responses, by trying to provide balance within a factor and a relative judgement in their conclusion in particular (see exemplification in Marking Instructions and sample responses on *Understanding Standards* website).

Centres should, however, ensure that candidates do not attempt questions that are over-ambitious (eg by trying to cover too many factors).

Sources must be referred to clearly and directly within the actual response — a list of sources at the end of the response is not acceptable.

Resource sheets are not marked, but they are referred to by markers (see sample plans on Understanding Standards website). Centres should ensure that candidates do not just copy from the resource sheet (or extended text from it). Candidates will not be able to access the full range of marks available if they do this.

Centres must ensure that all the relevant documentation is sent in for candidates (eg resource sheet, flyleaf/marking sheet, candidate response) and that these items are the most up-to-date versions. Centres should also check that each document has been correctly and fully completed (eg with question included) before sending to SQA.

Centres should encourage candidates to use only black or blue ink to ensure greater legibility.

It would be helpful if candidates were asked to number the pages of their Assignment (if using A4 lined paper) and write out their actual question at the beginning of their response.

Where candidate scripts are being typed, please use a large enough size of font and double spacing to allow markers enough room to use correction codes and annotate marks.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	13430
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	15775
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## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 80				
A	35.2%	35.2%	5556	54
B	22.4%	57.6%	3529	46
C	20.1%	77.6%	3164	38
D	6.6%	84.3%	1047	34
No award	15.7%	-	2479	-

In 2014 grade boundaries were lowered to take account of specific issues. For 2015 the intention was to align assessments with notional values of 50% for a grade C and 70% for a grade A.

However, grade boundaries were adjusted from notional to take account of the following:

- A small number of questions did not function as intended (1 mark reduction).
- 'Evaluate the usefulness' questions were found to be more difficult than intended (1 mark reduction at upper A, 2 mark reduction at A and a 3 mark reduction at C).
- The Assignment was found to not be functioning at the required SCQF level therefore a scaled adjustment was made (1 mark increase at Upper A and A and a 2 mark increase at C).