



Course report 2023

Advanced Higher Physical Education

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative, and to promote better understanding. You should read the report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022: 1,051

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 943

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----|------------|------|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|-----|
| A | Number of candidates | 202 | Percentage | 21.4 | Cumulative percentage | 21.4 | Minimum mark required | 69 |
| B | Number of candidates | 238 | Percentage | 25.2 | Cumulative percentage | 46.7 | Minimum mark required | 58 |
| C | Number of candidates | 260 | Percentage | 27.6 | Cumulative percentage | 74.2 | Minimum mark required | 48 |
| D | Number of candidates | 178 | Percentage | 18.9 | Cumulative percentage | 93.1 | Minimum mark required | 37 |
| No award | Number of candidates | 65 | Percentage | 6.9 | Cumulative percentage | 100 | Minimum mark required | N/A |

Please note that rounding has not been applied to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Project

The project component performed as expected.

Stages 1(b), 2(b) and 4(a) proved to be the most demanding.

Stages 1(a), 3 and 4(b) were found to be the most accessible.

Most candidates did not achieve the 'connections' marks.

Performance

The performance component performed as expected. A range of activities was verified. Centres appear to have embraced the chance to allow personalisation and choice in the activity chosen by candidates. The marking instructions allowed for a full range of marks to be accessed.

Very few centres were outwith the tolerance in marking the performance and these centres took on board the feedback given to ensure that they were in line with the national standard.

The live assessment verification was welcomed in most centres. For some centres this represented a challenge as some of their candidates were assessed in activities outwith the centre setting.

In some centres the verification was completed through live assessment on the day of the visit and in others it was completed from video evidence of the live assessment.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Project

Stage 1(a)

Most candidates provided relevant explanations as to the appropriateness of their selected methods.

Many candidates successfully used initial generic method(s) of investigating performance and then subsequently used more focused methods to establish a focus for their project.

Some candidates' investigations did not support the establishment of a clear focus. This lack of focus often led to a broad range of topics being included in the project; it was only possible to award marks for one of the topics.

Stage 1(b)

Some candidates, who gathered detailed qualitative and quantitative information in 1(a), successfully analysed this information in depth.

Many candidates did an overview of a multitude of factors, and this impacted negatively on the marks that could be awarded.

Stage 2(a)

Most candidates successfully conducted research by reviewing appropriate sources.

Some candidates presented information without referring to the source(s) and as a result could not be awarded marks.

Many candidates presented information that lacked a focus on establishing a Personal Development Plan and/or the depth required at Advanced Higher. This had an impact on their ability to carry out analysis in 2(b).

Stage 2(b)

Most candidates found this section very demanding, often as a result of insufficient information relating to the creating of a Personal Development Plan in 2(a).

Many candidates focused incorrectly on the impact on performances, rather than the creation of a Personal Development Plan, and could not be awarded marks.

Stage 2(c)

Many candidates set appropriate targets.

Some candidates did not justify their targets and, as a result, could not be awarded marks.

Stage 3

Most candidates produced a summary of their Personal Development Plan in the main text and referred to a detailed record of Personal Development Plan implementation contained in the appendices.

Stage 4(a)

Candidates found this section demanding — this was often as a result of the limited nature of the data gathering.

Stage 4(b)

Many candidates successfully made generic and specific judgements about the value of the process of carrying out the Personal Development Plan.

Some candidates did not provide the evidence from Stage 3 and/or Stage 4(a) to substantiate the judgement.

Stage 4(c)(i)

Many candidates justified their new development need(s) by using information gathered from the post-PDP analysis and/or evaluation of the Personal Development Plan.

Some candidates selected development needs from two or more factors; marks could only be awarded for the need(s) from **one** factor.

Stage 4(c)(ii)

Many candidates offered explanations, and showed understanding, of how meeting new development need(s) could have a positive effect on the other three factors that impact performance.

Performance

Candidates performed very well with many achieving full marks.

Verifiers reported that they observed some outstanding performances. Overall, centres were able to provide suitable contexts for assessment. The context for the single performance event must be challenging, competitive and/or demanding.

Personalisation and choice led to strong performances in this component of the course. Candidates provided information on their composition, tactics or roles in a variety of ways including discussion and written information. There were no reports of candidates having difficulty accessing marks in any particular assessment item of the marking instructions.

There were no reports of candidates struggling with this component. All those involved knew what was expected of them.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Project

Selection of project focus

Candidates should select a clear performance focus which allows for depth of study — a broad overview covering a multitude of issues is inappropriate.

Candidates may select focused topics where, potentially, several factors may be involved, however a clear link should be established.

Candidates should be encouraged to make a personal choice by selecting an authentic issue impacting on their performance. Stage 1 should be utilised to gather detailed information on performance and to identify the specific focus of the project.

Note:

- ◆ Selecting a topic from previous courses and undertaking a familiar Personal Development Plan can deprive a candidate of an opportunity to advance their learning and address an authentic issue.
- ◆ It is inappropriate to have several candidates from the same centre producing near identical work.

Understanding standards

Further information is available on the SQA Understanding Standards website.

Performance

A key aim of the Advanced Higher course is to enable candidates to develop their ability to demonstrate a broad and comprehensive range of complex movement and performance skills in one activity, in a challenging context. Candidates should select, demonstrate, apply, and adapt these skills and use them to make informed decisions. As they develop their knowledge and understanding of how these skills combine to produce effective outcomes, candidates should develop consistency, precision, finesse, control and fluency of movement as they respond to, and meet, the demands of performance in a safe and effective way.

Centres must ensure that candidates choose one activity, which allows them the opportunity to display a range of movement and performance skills. To set it apart from normal learning and teaching activities, the assessment of this single performance must take place in a context which is suitably challenging for an Advanced Higher-level candidate thus allowing the opportunity to access the full range of marks.

Guidance can be found on SQA's website to help teachers, lecturers and assessors decide which activities are acceptable for assessment.

Where verification took place from a video of the live performance, a number of centres provided a detailed assessment record. Some included the time at which a skill or decision

or other relevant item had taken place or a clear description of why a passage of performance had been credited. Other centres had overlaid a commentary on the video to allow justification of the marks awarded. While this is not a requirement, it gave these centres an excellent record of why the marks were awarded and could be used for reference in the future.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures was developed to support learners and centres. This included modifications to course assessment, retained from the 2021–22 session. This support was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic while recognising a lessening of the impact of disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic. The revision support that was available for the 2021–22 session was not offered to learners in 2022–23.

In addition, SQA adopted a sensitive approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining

standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams continue to do so in different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019 and 2022.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2023 and the ongoing impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on learners. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and the removal of revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2023 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2023 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).