Course report 2023

National 5 Accounting

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:   855

Number of resulted entries in 2023:   795

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	420	Percentage	52.8	Cumulative percentage	52.8	Minimum mark required	90
B	Number of candidates	134	Percentage	16.9	Cumulative percentage	69.7	Minimum mark required	75
C	Number of candidates	114	Percentage	14.3	Cumulative percentage	84	Minimum mark required	61
D	Number of candidates	61	Percentage	7.7	Cumulative percentage	91.7	Minimum mark required	46
No award	Number of candidates	66	Percentage	8.3	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

Question paper

Performance in the question paper was significantly better than in session 2021–22 and was at the higher end of the range observed in recent years.

The number of candidates not attempting to answer questions was lower than in session 2021–22. This indicated that candidates were better prepared this session.

Most candidates were able to gain marks in the less demanding questions, while the more demanding questions were accessible to the most able candidates. In particular, cash budgets and overhead analysis questions were carried out to a very high standard.

Once again, candidate performance in computational questions was stronger than in theory questions.

Assignment

The requirement to complete the assignment was removed for session 2022–23. This was taken into account when setting grade boundaries.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Of the two 35-mark questions, candidates answered question 2 (cash budgets) significantly better than question 1 (ledgers and Statement of Financial Position extracts).

Of the four 15-mark questions, candidate performance was highest in question 5 (overhead analysis plus theory). The second best performing question was question 4 (ratios), followed by question 3 (business documents plus theory). Candidate performance was lowest in question 6 (break-even).

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 1 PART B(b): most candidates understood how to calculate a provision for bad debts and the effect it had on trade receivables.

Question 2(a): although there were a couple of complex instructions in the question, candidates completed the cash budget to a very high standard. Full consequentiality was built into the marking instructions to address when candidates made errors of interpretation. For example, if candidates had given a discount of 10% to credit sales (instead of cash sales) then they would not be awarded 1 mark instead of not being awarded all marks for the line. This meant that, despite candidates making several errors, they were rewarded consequentially for their line of thought, which resulted in high marks.

Question 4(a): candidates calculated ratios very well. They were provided with a formulae sheet, but candidates still had to calculate certain ratio components, and most were able to do so.

Question 5(a): statistically, this was the highest performing question in the paper.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 1(a): most candidates made a decent attempt to answer the question, however many did not attain high marks. Candidates had difficulty with the VAT inclusive calculation and the entries required to deal with the bankruptcy.

Question 2(c): many candidates found this question challenging. Duties of a financial or management accountant is a common question, and it is clear from both this session and previous diets that candidates struggle to categorise different duties.

Question 4(b): this question had the highest amount of 'no responses' and most candidates who did attempt it had difficulty working backwards to get the purchases figure.

Question 5(c): statistically, this was the lowest scoring question across the entire paper. Candidates were not referring to 'production' in their responses.

Question 6(c): many candidates could not be awarded marks due to not showing working. As highlighted in last session's course report, full consequentiality can only be given by markers where it is clear how candidates arrive at incorrect answers.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Theory in the question paper is cyclical, and most theory questions have appeared previously in past papers or specimen papers. Therefore, candidates should be directed to these questions (and the marking instructions) in their revision.

With the addition of a formulae sheet, calculation of ratios has become more straightforward for candidates and, as a result, performance has improved significantly. In future assessment, there may be more of a requirement to 'work ratios backwards' for some of the available marks, to provide the necessary challenge within a question. Teachers and lecturers should ensure these types of questions are included in their teaching of the topic.

Teachers and lecturers should share the advice in this report with candidates when they are preparing for the question paper.

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.