



Course report 2019

Subject	History
Level	Advanced Higher

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. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

This year saw a reduction in the number of candidates presented. Yet again there was exceptional work and the strongest candidates had developed the skills mastered at National 5 and Higher. The clear progression was noted.

There was evidence of considered and considerable research in the dissertations. Candidates used the full wording allowance and the strongest dissertations contained genuine research and real engagement with history. As last year, primary evidence was more frequently used alongside narrative or historiographical references.

In some cases markers noted a mechanistic response to essay-writing. Essay questions should not be only topic-driven but should focus on an aspect or issue which involves the cause, nature or effect which should be tested in the answer. This should be addressed specifically; a generic response is not expected. The strongest responses answered the specific question set, and many candidates wrote full, thorough, analytical and evaluative answers. Source answers in the main recognised the distinct expectations of each of the three questions. Some candidates reverted to an active comparison question when tackling the two-source question.

This report gives a brief summary of question paper performance and a general overview of dissertation performance before considering, in more detail, each field of study.

Question paper

The question paper was very well received and candidate responses in the main were competent. An exceptional standard of response was notable over all fields. Some outstanding work had historians' views embedded and used to drive forward the argument.

Markers reported that more question papers than usual were not completed.

A generic essay response to the question set restricted attainment. These responses also included those who misinterpreted the intention, ignored the isolated factor, wrote about effects rather than causes, or did not pay attention to the phrasing of the question. It is vital for candidates to read and analyse the question, plan their answers, and write to the question set. Candidates whose essays were assigned a D grade or below did not appear to have managed their time well. There was more evidence this year of candidates completing only one essay.

Very few candidates are still not including historians which means that they cannot gain more than 12 marks. While the use of historians is to be encouraged, it is vital that candidates do this on their own terms rather than engage with historical debate on the chosen issue. Candidates should not leave the marker unaware of their own conclusions.

Some essay responses lacked fluency of analysis and evaluation. Some candidates produced mechanical, analytical and evaluative commentaries that, quite often, had little grounding in factual evidence. Over-working also had an impact on timing.

The source technique is understood by most, and where that was the case the results were commendable; where that was not the case candidates were awarded less marks. The key

point is that the techniques are vital to gain marks. The marking template on SQA's website gives a guide to the marks awarded. Candidates will benefit from scrutiny of this and the detailed marking instructions for the field of study.

Yet again, provenance points proved difficult for some candidates to access. Linking comments to the question is essential.

Equally the two-source question is about viewpoints, not two 'How fully....?' questions. Some candidates continue to apply an active comparison technique in the two-source question.

Markers in all fields felt that the question paper was fair with sufficient challenge to give candidates the opportunity to present the knowledge and skills they had developed in this course of study. Candidate response to the question set, rather than a generic response, is what is expected.

Project–dissertation

Titles

Most dissertation titles were selected from the suggested Advanced Higher History dissertation titles which is updated regularly.

Most project–dissertations included use of primary evidence which is now mandatory and most had evidence of the depth and breadth of research undertaken in footnoting, the bibliography and annotated bibliography.

Structure

Year on year we see that candidates are much more aware of the significant role that structure plays in setting out the dissertation. Those candidates who lost track of their arguments did so most frequently in the essay-style approach. Chapter headings help give an idea of the direction of key areas of argument and inform candidates' selection of appropriate material.

Chapter headings should also highlight the individual nature of the research. While marking instructions for essays which appear in the question paper might give some guidance, they should not be a template for the project–dissertation.

Mini-conclusions made throughout the project–dissertation are on the whole used effectively to draw the attention back to the issue and thesis underpinning the project–dissertation.

Word count

Writing beyond the word limit rarely occurs. With the inclusion of a 10% leeway, candidates are managing their work well. The project–dissertation must be, in part, a test of the selection skills of the candidate, and the word limit allows for that. Again, this year there were instances of abbreviations being used which are not common practice. This should be avoided and should not be used as a tool to limit word count. The significant weakness was when major shortfall occurred, rather than excess wordage. Candidates who write to a word count of 3,000 words are not able to present the substance required.

Footnotes and bibliography

This continues to improve. A few candidates are still not citing sources properly, and even fewer are attempting to put text into the footnotes to remedy an excessive word count. Footnotes like this really stand out as contravening the expected structure of the piece, and will not enhance candidates' work. It is important to remember that footnoting is expected only to reference sources, and (in the exceptional case) to define or explain an unusual term. The absence of footnoting is a concern. Markers need to see the recognition of sources researched as part of the dissertation and this can help avoid consideration of plagiarism. Similarly, bibliographies should be included.

Plagiarism

Markers are quick to recognise derivative work, not only if taken from standard texts. When this is recognised, the thoroughness of the piece is called into question as the research is obviously limited. Where the 'cut and paste' approach is used, this is flagged as plagiarism. This applies to published notes online. This year we saw a few instances of this.

Internet sources used well can enhance work and this is becoming the case. However, over-use of material from less than rigorous authorities in an unquestioning manner will not gain candidates marks.

Typography and proofreading

The majority of candidates demonstrated professional standards and courtesy, and only a minority did not present work in a format that was easy to read.

Markers noted that closer proofreading would benefit candidates. Proofreading is part of the task.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Field of study 1: Northern Britain: From the Iron Age to 1034

Question paper

Some candidates made excellent use of historiography in essays to support their argument. Some had a clear depth of understanding of the narrative and used it well to drive forward the argument. The two-source question was done well. The source answers were competent in their overall approach.

Project–dissertation

Some excellent work, which was obviously research driven. Markers highlighted work on the Creation of Alba. Good work had plenty of breadth and depth of knowledge on show and good use of primary works.

Field of study 2: Scotland: Independence and Kingship, 1249–1334

Question paper

Good candidate responses displayed a clear structure with a line of argument and a range of historical interpretations. In general, the standard of writing was impressive. The question paper was considered very fair by the marking team with a good spread across the issues, and accessible for candidates. Many candidates had an impressive grasp of the relevant detail and an ability to address the specific wording of the questions fluently.

Candidates had a clear understanding of the expectations of the source questions, were well-versed in techniques and analysed effectively. Candidates achieved the highest marks when they quoted directly and interpreted the quote. Markers highlighted better understanding of Alexander than in previous years, good information on Norham and the Great Cause and some excellent responses to the Wallace question.

Project–dissertation

There was a wider range of responses this year. Many responses on Balliol and Wallace included impressive supporting evidence reflecting serious scholarship. The better work contained chapter headings which were carefully constructed, and which made candidates focus on the argument. The best work demonstrated a sophisticated level of argument with sustained treatment of evidence. Outlining the argument in the introduction is good practice. The insightful use of historians produced a better range and engagement with views, alongside some excellent use of primary sources which were embedded in the work.

Field of study 4: Scotland: From the Treaty of Union to the Enlightenment, 1707–1815

Question paper

An efficient essay structure was more or less universal in this field. The best work kept context and background to a minimum which allowed the candidate to write thorough and

analytical work. Candidates also had really engaged with the debate. Source responses again were good and candidates scored well.

Project–dissertation

Quality of argument was extremely good and particularly notable in dissertations achieving the upper range of marks. In these cases evidence (historiographical) was being used to support the line forwarded by candidates, rather than merely as a substitute for facts. This was supported by real detail and breadth of coverage.

When the line of argument was established in the introduction, markers noted the building of the line of argument and sub-conclusions were used well. The best work had high-quality discussion based on the reading, and primary sources used critically to pursue the line of argument.

Field of study 5: USA: ‘A House Divided’, 1850–1865

Question paper

Candidates performed well in the use of historians’ views, particularly on the causes of war. Essay questions were considered clear in their demand. Markers noted the response to question 33, from some, was very good and the analysis was strong (although others ignored the ‘disputes’ in the question). Knowledge was well used in question 34 and the thoroughness of some answers was excellent.

Source technique was very firm from most candidates. The provenance comments for the Richmond Enquirer were good. The two-source question allowed for some impressive wider contextual development alongside a full examination of the views given. Many candidates were well-versed in the formula for source answers. Candidates were able to access the full set of marks across the three question areas.

Project–dissertation

This year the causes of war was popular, as was the Emancipation Proclamation. Markers noted there was more work on women and the American Civil War, and on the profitability of slavery issue. Good structure was noted as the hallmark of many and included establishing a line of argument and maintaining that throughout.

Many candidates were strong on the narrative and extensive research was shown by presenting good exemplification using more obscure events and detail. Markers noted that many candidates demonstrated thoroughness of coverage and effective use of extensive research. Many were also very good in the use of historical schools of thought, and the best work had these embedded throughout.

Field of study 6: Japan: The Modernisation of a Nation, 1840–1920

Question paper

There were some excellent responses with evidence of candidates who could write essays with the expected width and the depth of knowledge expected. There were some excellent answers where candidates had clearly thought about the nature of the question and

combined the necessary analysis and evaluation to maintain a sustained, intelligent line of argument. School of argument was often clearly flagged up.

Project–dissertation

The markers noted the breadth of titles which were well approached. Most had laid out a clear line of argument in the introduction. There were excellent examples of research which allowed candidates to go beyond the most obvious. These candidates had accessed articles online. There was increased use of journals and greater evidence of wider reading. Candidates are now considering the context of Japanese historiography.

Field of study 7: Germany: From Democracy to Dictatorship, 1918–1939

Question paper

The responses to question 50 and question 53 were clearly worded. These responses had a solid structure and sound knowledge in the strongest essays. There were some very good responses to questions on the German Revolution and opposition. Some candidates used a rich variety of historians, which allowed for genuine counterviews. They also pursued their line of argument. Markers noted that the introductions were universally done well.

Source responses appeared to be stronger than the essays. Interpretation points in all source questions seemed to be tackled very well. Some answers had a sustained amount of relevant wider contextual development. Generic responses were not apparent.

Project–dissertation

This year work on Volksgemeinschaft, the role of propaganda, and the role of the SS or Gestapo in maintaining power were popular topics.

The best work used the introductions well and had relevant chapters where the key issues and factors were identified. There was evidence of an excellent range of reading which allowed candidates to produce an informed piece supported by a real depth of detail.

In the most successful work, there was significant research which had clear links to the argument and evaluation. The quality of argument in the best work was highlighted when candidates built their argument throughout the piece. Primary evidence was used effectively, and this was highlighted by some in the bibliography. Markers commented on the clarity of writing and impressive structuring of the best work. The strongest responses were those that tackled a small number of interpretations in depth with clear understanding.

Field of study 8: South Africa: Race and Power, 1902–1984

Question paper

Candidates appeared to be clear about the demands of the question, and essays contained better counterarguments. The breadth of factors was consistent, but in some responses this was at the expense of depth. It is clear when a candidate reads widely as the argument flows well.

There was more evidence of provenance successfully addressed in the source responses. The use of wider contextual development in the best work was impressive and supported the points made.

Project–dissertation

Most candidates committed to a line of argument from the outset and therefore the introductions were strong. Markers commended the line of argument in the best work. There was a better and more accurate use of historians' views. Candidates covered a wide range of topics and some had obviously researched thoroughly and planned their write-up carefully.

Field of study 9: Russia: From Tsarism to Stalinism, 1914–1945

Question paper

Some outstanding essays were seen and responses were both relevant and detailed. Questions 65 and 69 proved popular this year.

Source answers had a lot of relevant wider contextual development and used historians. The response from markers was that the evidence suggested this was a very fair paper where the sources and essay questions sampled a good variety of the course content.

Project–dissertation

This year, in the main, titles were taken from the later part of the course, where markers noted the growth in the number on the Great Patriotic War. However excellent work was also seen on White disunity as a cause of Red victory and on the Comintern.

Regarding structure, markers noted that all papers were recognisably dissertations, and that chapters were used well, giving focus to the argument. The quality of argument was made all the better by the evidence, including a wide range of reading; more books and fewer websites.

Candidates made clearer use of primary evidence. The best work came from those who were well read on the topic. The use of historians was best when it was part of the argument and questioned, rather than used as illustrative commentary. The writing was usually tightly focused and relevant, and the line of argument pursued. The strongest responses used sub-conclusions to build the argument.

Field of study 10: Spain: The Civil War — Causes, Conflict and Consequences, 1923–1945

Question paper

All questions were covered by candidates, and essays were generally well done, with very good recalled knowledge and strong analysis and evaluation. Essays had strong lines of argument, and very impressive detail and embedded historiography. Better work had the appropriate source technique and answers were rich in wider contextual development.

Project–dissertation

Markers commented that there was a varied selection of titles which resulted in some excellent pieces of analysis and evaluation.

Evidence of wide reading was seen in most cases — averaging 8–10 books — and there was better use of primary evidence. Some works were effective in the ability to use different sources to build and enhance the different perspectives. There was some excellent evidence of sophisticated arguments, analysis and evaluation.

In the strongest responses historical interpretations were organised to drive forward the debate.

Field of study 11: Britain: At War and Peace, 1938–1951

Question paper

This year questions 81 and 83 were most popular. Markers noted that all essays were easily accessible. Markers also felt that the sources questions were well answered, and this applied to all the questions. The best work was rich in relevant historical perspectives which were embedded in answers.

Project–dissertation

Markers commented on outstanding work on Britain and military and social preparedness for war in 1939. Equally well tackled were those on social change in wartime Britain, social inequalities in the 1930s, and social class inequality of experience.

Most candidates provided introductions which contextualised well, introduced the areas to be covered, and the historians. The strongest responses tended to bring in the line of argument from the outset. There was evidence of a great deal of research and endeavour by candidates. Often the analysis and evaluation were well used. The best work was clear in presentation, used chapters, and had a carefully built argument.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Field of study 1: Northern Britain: From the Iron Age to AD 1034

Question paper

Some candidates failed to deal with the isolated factor in the question. Weaker answers to question 1 were largely descriptive. In essay four on the Vikings, some responses failed to address the impact on other areas of Northern Britain, or decided to cover the whole of Europe from Ireland to the Mediterranean but lacked detail on Scotland. Some responses referred to the wrong historians.

In the source answers, provenance was often vague. Several candidates did not complete the question paper.

Project–dissertation

Poor structure let down many candidates. For some this meant that the narrative dominated, and the analysis was very sparse. Some candidates did not answer the question they had set themselves. Some included information that was not relevant to the question. Sustaining a line of argument was challenging for some.

Field of study 2: Scotland: Independence and Kingship, 1249–1334

Question paper

In the essay questions, weaker responses ignored the dates given. Some responses also tended to use any information learned rather than engage with the question set. Others twisted the questions to suit. In question 9 many candidates focused on 'peace and prosperity' rather than the 'Scottish political community' working collectively. Some introductions did not contain a line of argument while others had no reference to historians.

Weaker responses in source questions contained minimal development of points. There was evidence that some candidates still find provenance problematic, and others misinterpreted the sources. A small number of candidates confused the two-source answer with a comparison question. Some candidates did not complete the question paper

Project–dissertation

Structure is key and markers noted the lack of chapters, chapter headings which did not reflect the substance of the issue, and a chronological approach even when the question suggested themes.

Several candidates had a good structure but fell short of producing consistent, detailed material and demonstrating knowledge across the width of the issue.

Candidates who lacked resources and research were limited and these aspects tended to restrict the ability to analyse and evaluate. For some the use of primary evidence was minimal.

Field of study 4: Scotland: From the Treaty of Union to the Enlightenment, 1707–1815

Question paper

In the essay questions, a structure which really reinforced the line of argument was less common. Question 25 referred to the 18th century but most candidates concentrated on the first half of the 18th century. Most candidates had a good approach but there were relatively few factual examples to back up their assertions. A few candidates found it difficult to adapt their prepared material to the question set. Markers noted the extreme importance of time management as some candidates ran out of time.

Project–dissertation

Occasionally a title was not followed up properly and material and argument were limited. Weaker work had an over-reliance on general points with no telling detail to provide the evidence on which they were based. Having sections of descriptive detail with no sense of

the argument was also a problem. In using historical interpretations, words such as 'revisionist' do not impress by themselves. In some cases, poor sentence structure or vocabulary obscured clarity.

Field of study 5: USA: 'A House Divided', 1850–1865

Question paper

Weaker essays had little specific detail. In question 33 some candidates took 'slavery' rather than 'disputes over slavery' as a cause of the Civil War. Some candidates tended to write the answer to the essay they wanted rather than address the actual question. Historians' views could be vague or misattributed quotes given. Some essays had elaborate analysis points based on little supporting evidence.

Provenance remains a challenge for some. Comments such as 'A primary source from the time' or 'newspapers are always biased' is not enough here. Candidates were less successful in noting the timing and the purpose from the rubric. Some are still approaching the two-source question as a comparison rather than an examination of the views given. Some gave wider contextual development as a list, 'it fails to mention.....', but not linking this to the question.

Project–dissertation

On occasion a title included an isolated factor but that was not fully covered in the candidate's work. Weaker introductions did not address key issues or the line of argument but had wider, sometimes irrelevant context which caused some candidates to lose focus. Some candidates did not reflect on the evidence — they took a position and continued with it regardless of the evidence. Many candidates had the width of coverage but not the depth, adopting a narrative approach with 'bolted on' primary evidence and mini-conclusions.

Some candidates did not engage with the schools of thought and historians were used as illustrative points. The need for evaluation was noted — it is not enough to analyse areas in isolation. Other candidates had a tendency to assert rather than to prove a point.

As ever proofreading was mentioned, because carelessness with detail limits attainment. Some work was presented at under 3,000 words. To omit 25% of the task is self-penalising.

Field of study 6: Japan: The Modernisation of a Nation, 1840–1920

Question paper

Lack of clarity in the line of argument limited the essay mark for some candidates, while a few lacked specific historical details. Weaker candidates focused on a narrative and some fused point and comment in source answers. Other candidates did not look at the full point in the source but tried to split it up into different parts. Markers noted that interpretation points were less well done this year.

Project–dissertation

Some candidates overlooked the importance of chapter introductions and conclusions to help create synthesis. A sustained approach to the argument was often the issue. Markers

found two out of the three chapters to be strong, with the third slightly losing sight of the question.

Some work had historical interpretations as an after-thought. These were dropped in, often in an unsuitable context, as opposed to allowing the differing perspectives to drive the analysis. In some less convincing work, historians were not used as introductory lines of argument nor were they used for synthesis in the conclusion.

Field of study 7: Germany: From Democracy to Dictatorship, 1918–1939

Question paper

Some candidates misinterpreted the Stresemann question and missed the ‘disguise his true aims’ point. Others wrote a pre-prepared ‘great European’ or ‘good German’ response.

Question 51 was turned into a ‘rise of Hitler’ essay, which made for a lot of irrelevance.

Question 53 was tackled as a Volksgemeinschaft question with opposition added on. Some candidates struggled with inserting specific factual detail without going into too much narrative. Many candidates had add-on analyses and did not embed them throughout the essay. Addressing the historical debate was often not done. Weaker work saw candidates quoting historians without substance.

The struggle with provenance was still an issue for some candidates. The phrase ‘political challenges’ in question 54 caught out some candidates. Some source answers had little wider contextual development. Some candidates paraphrased the point but did not explain why it answered the question. Some answered the two-source question as a comparison question. Markers noted that a significant number of candidates did not complete the question paper.

Project–dissertation

In the introduction some candidates had contextualisation which was more of a story and did not have any direct relevance to the specific title. The lack of chapters in some work became self-penalising. Candidates lost focus and many candidates included the main interpretations but failed to develop the factors they considered less important than the key factor that supported their argument.

Analysis was far more frequent and better applied than evaluation. Often evaluation was a final comment (one sentence) at the end of a long chapter. Some candidates struggled with the question that they had set themselves and produced essays with fairly simple analysis and evaluation. For example, ‘This is important because...’ as a constant stem for analysis points. The least successful candidates had an inability to explain and evaluate. Some did not follow the line of argument consistently.

Historians’ views were illustrative and not examined. Some candidates did not have footnotes which meant they limited the authority of their work, and candidates should be more considered in their use of websites.

Field of study 8: South Africa: Race and Power, 1902–1984

Question paper

Weaker responses to essay questions did not give due attention to the isolated factor and some did not have the correct chronology. In some responses the analysis was not sustained and the conclusions were not explained. Quite a few candidates made vague references to historical views.

In the sources some candidates missed opportunities to broaden wider contextual development beyond the points in the source. Others struggled with the selection of interpretation points and markers noted that there were a number of unfinished papers.

Project–dissertation

Some adaptation of titles was again self-penalising, producing two isolated factors in one case. Some candidates tackling later topics in the course struggled to grasp the issue, for example, ‘revival’ of resistance as 1970s.

Candidates who did not write in chapters were hampered by the lack of evaluation and sub-conclusions to build the line of argument. Some had too much of a narrative, which showed the amount of reading but limited the possibility of analysis. Some contained a lot of irrelevance caused by the failure to relate the evidence to the issue, while some had chapters which seemed to sit in isolation.

Field of study 9: Russia: From Tsarism to Stalinism, 1914–1945

Question paper

Some introductions had too much contextualising. Weaker responses to both question 65 and question 69 were relatively light on the isolated factor. Some did not prioritise the isolated factor in the development.

In question 68 some candidates wrote on the results of industrialisation rather than the causes of it. Also, some candidates did not consider a counterargument at all. Historians were still missing from some responses but if used, were as an illustrative point, not to advance argument or to show an opposing view.

Some work was very formulaic and recall points were very brief at times. Some candidates were still tagging on analysis or evaluation at the end of paragraphs.

It was self-penalising when candidates had decided to answer all source questions as ‘How fully questions...?’ Few candidates managed to gain the marks allocated for provenance. In the two-source question the link to ‘motivation’ was not always made and wider contextual development in this question was also weaker. Some of the weaker work had no historians’ views in the answer.

Project–dissertation

Some candidates did not engage with the actual question and evidence was not always used to back up the line of argument they had decided on. There was a misunderstanding of

terms such as 'fear' or 'opportunism'. Equally there were some who chose Trotsky's leadership in the Civil War but did not contrast this with White leadership.

Introductions which lacked the historiographical debate limited attainment. At times this was omitted but the contextualisation was overly developed and not necessarily relevant to the debate. For others, narrative dominated and the argument was limited. The challenge for most candidates seemed to be the ability to sustain a line of argument throughout the work. Lack of proofreading or perhaps an attempt to edit work which was close to the word limit did not enhance work.

Field of study 10: Spain: The Civil War — Causes, Conflict and Consequences, 1923–1945

Question paper

Some candidates were weaker on the isolated factor in question 73. Answers to question 77 were largely one-sided and some candidates appeared to misunderstand the aims of the question.

Some struggled with the sources section. The provenance points were not developed enough. Some candidates appeared to misinterpret the questions and wrote too much information, most of which was not relevant.

Project–dissertation

A significant number of candidates lacked a coherent line of argument. Sub-conclusions read more like conclusions of the section rather than feeding into the central debate. The line of argument was in some responses fragmented by the division of factors where separate sections were treated more like individual essays. Some candidates spread the coverage to areas which were not necessary and this affected depth.

Field of study 11: Britain: At War and Peace, 1938–1951

Question paper

Some candidates did not react explicitly to the question. There was evidence of relevant argument, but factual detail was limited to back it up. Some source answers required wider contextual development linked to the question. Weaker work did not have this, nor did some candidates remember to show the meaning and importance of points in the 'Evaluate the usefulness....' question. Others attempted to broaden the scope of the 'How fully...' question to include the wider contextual development they knew. A significant number of candidates attempted only one essay.

Project–dissertation

Candidates who decided not to have chapters made the more thematic approach challenging. Some candidates tended to add historians' views on at the end of the point or chapter and did not integrate them as expected. Similarly, primary evidence was included but not integrated into the argument. Some wrote in the first person, which is not a convention expected in a dissertation.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

The following points may help clarify key issues and areas of preparation for the question paper and project–dissertation.

Question paper

Essays

- ◆ The best essays are the ones that answer the question. Expecting a prepared essay to a ‘banker’ question at this level is wrong. The expected topic may appear, but the question is worded specifically to invite a particular type of debate. Make sure that candidates read the question carefully. One word will change the expectation of the response.
- ◆ The isolated factor means that significant attention should be given to it, not just a cursory comment.
- ◆ Candidates may refer back to the isolated factor in discussion of subsequent factors. This is good practice but should be done in a succinct, not laboured, way.
- ◆ Balance in the discussion is vital. This means considering more than one view. It does not mean candidates must find a balance overall. They should use historians to highlight the range, or not, of arguments — not as ‘history’ but as evidence of the arguments. Candidates can also challenge views, as long as this can be justified.
- ◆ It is important that the candidate’s view comes across, not a synopsis of the viewpoints currently held.
- ◆ Candidates’ own conclusions are vital.

Sources

- ◆ To ensure the best answers to source questions, candidates can prepare by using the marking instructions grids to evaluate class work. These are available from the subject page on SQA’s website.
- ◆ Interpretation is more than repetition of sources. Candidates need to explain why their selected point is important to the issue being discussed. The ‘scaffolding’ of English is necessary, and the addition of further recall will gain more marks.
- ◆ The two-source question is not the same as a comparison question. Differing viewpoints may be read but these sources are not set out to contrast one another. Candidates are required to provide a substantial amount of wider contextual development. Look at the mark allocation for interpretation, contextualisation and historians’ views.

Project–dissertation

Titles

- ◆ Project–dissertation grades can be improved by careful planning and monitoring of the process. In the first instance, choosing a title from the current list of suggested Advanced Higher History dissertation titles is advised. If a candidate wants to deviate from this, submitting the proposed title to SQA will allow advice to be given.

Structure

- ◆ Candidates will benefit from establishing a clear structure at the outset. Key here is the function of the introduction. It should contextualise, focus the reader on the key areas of debate, and present the writer's hypothesis. In this way the reader is prepared for a line of argument to be proved in the following chapters.
- ◆ Chapter headings provide direction, and most candidates benefit from using them. They should be used to inform the reader of the area and its value to the research. It does not need to be a question. It is important to read the candidates' views as the synthesis of all points of argument in each chapter. These conclusions should be seen throughout the work and in the conclusion itself. The use of chapters is strongly advised.
- ◆ Thoroughness is one of the main drivers. The depth of research is demonstrated by the selection of fine detail which then links to the chapter argument and to the line of argument as a whole. The task is to present carefully chosen apposite evidence. This refinement of the narrative should take much of the time in this task. The internet is rich in resources which have not been verified and might not be that reliable. In research best practice, at least two sources are needed to confirm the authenticity of the point.
- ◆ Analysis and/or evaluation is also a main driver which needs the support of substantial evidence. This can be much more nuanced than essays candidates have written. Grand eloquent assumptions based on minimal research make little impression. Cross-referencing and evaluation of sources of evidence, both primary and secondary, will help with this.
- ◆ From session 2019–20, footnoting will be recognised as an indication of the extent of individual research and, alongside the bibliography, will help inform the marker of the rigour of the study.
- ◆ Footnoting is expected, and the use of an academic system is required.
- ◆ Bibliographies help the marker to understand what the candidate has read. Candidates should include only what they have read. Better to have consulted fewer sources but used them very well than provide an extensive list which, on closer examination, could not have been consulted. From session 2019–20 there will be a more transparent recognition of this, and it will inform the marker of the range of information gathered and used to present the work.
- ◆ In terms of presentation, it is strongly advised that candidates take account of the following conventions:
 - proofread their work
 - use double (or one-and-a-half) line spacing — this was highlighted as important by markers
 - use 11 or 12 point standard font (Arial or Times New Roman)
 - reference quotes, statistics and arguments, in some cases by using footnotes
 - include a contents page
 - number pages
 - add a word count on each page
 - include an appropriate bibliography and appropriate footnoting
 - have an annotated bibliography
 - embed historical opinions or debates throughout the work
 - do not staple the whole project–dissertation
 - print in single-sided copy
 - use the marking grid to help understand the progression in the assessment

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	1525
Number of resulted entries in 2019	1273

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	28.4%	28.4%	361	98
B	27.4%	55.8%	349	84
C	23.8%	79.6%	303	70
D	8.7%	88.3%	111	63
No award	11.7%	-	149	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ 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.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The principal assessor and SQA qualifications manager meet with the relevant SQA head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards 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 to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.