



Course report 2019

Subject	History
Level	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

Question papers

The Higher History question papers performed as intended in 2019. Feedback from centres suggests the question papers were fair and accessible.

Question paper 1 — British, European and world history

A significant number of candidates answered question 12 (Issue 6) in Section 1 — British: Part D — Britain, 1851–1951.

In Section 2 — European and world: Part D — Germany, 1815–1939, question 27 (Issue 6), some candidates found difficulty with the isolated factor ‘social policies’, although the issue is clearly listed in the description of content in the Higher History course specification document.

There was no real evidence to suggest candidates underperformed in this question paper. Overall essay marks were enhanced by strong responses in Section 2 — European and world.

Question paper 2 — Scottish history

The Scottish history question paper now assesses all four issues. These are the same issues and question stems for each of the five parts (A–E), so in 2019, questions in Part A were as follows:

- ◆ question 1: ‘How much ...’,
- ◆ question 2: ‘How fully ...’,
- ◆ question 3: ‘Evaluate ...’
- ◆ question 4: ‘Explain ...’.

All four issues are assessed each year, but the question stem sampling will vary each year.

A growing number of centres are teaching Part A — The Wars of Independence, 1249–1328.

Candidates performed well in the new ‘two source’ and ‘explain’ questions.

There are now up to 24 knowledge marks available in this question paper, providing the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate a wide range of relevant Scottish knowledge. Additionally, there are up to 16 marks available from the sources.

Assignment

The Higher History assignment performed well, allowing candidates to select an appropriate issue and write an extended-response under controlled conditions in 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Many candidates produced responses of a high standard. Some candidates did not perform as well because they either did not select an issue that was appropriate, or the question stem did not provide a basis for analysis or evaluation.

The principles established for the Higher History assignment resource sheet were applied by most centres, although there continues to be some issues.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1 — British, European and world history

Not all candidates were consistent in both essays. The Higher History exam has two separate question papers, both 1 hour 30 minutes. Candidates should note they have 45 minutes per essay. The most successful candidates were those who completed two essays at a very consistent standard answering the exam questions.

Most candidates completed well-structured responses. The factors were covered with relevant knowledge and good use of analysis which addressed the issues. In some cases, candidates made good use of the additional mark in the introduction. Conclusions, however, appeared a little more inconsistent.

In Section 1 — British, most candidates are taught Part D — Britain, 1851–1951. In Section 2 — European and world, many candidates produced strong responses for the following:

- ◆ Part D — Germany, 1815–1939, question 25
- ◆ Part G — USA, 1918–1968, question 34

Other parts in which candidates produced good responses included:

- ◆ Part F — Russia, 1881–1921, questions 31 and 33
- ◆ Part I — The Cold War, 1945–1989, questions 41 and 42

Question paper 2 — Scottish history

Many candidates performed well in the ‘two source’ question and the ‘explain’ question. Similarly, candidates continue to perform strongly in the ‘How fully ...’ question. Some responses demonstrated good historical knowledge to answer the questions, particularly where candidates used local Scottish knowledge or exemplification from previous marking instructions. This gave candidates the opportunity to access a wide range of knowledge from the Scottish context of study.

There was an increase in the uptake for both Part D — Migration and Empire, 1830–1939 and Part A — The Wars of Independence, 1249–1328.

Assignment

Most candidates selected an appropriate question relevant to their area of study, which also helped them prepare for the question paper. The most effective candidate responses used an assessment or evaluation type question, for example ‘How successful’ or ‘How important’ or ‘To what extent’. An exam-style question as used in the Higher History British, European and world question paper, proved the most effective for a good candidate response.

Many candidates used the resource sheet as required. The most effective use was by candidates who used it as an essay plan, for example providing a summary of the key

factors, knowledge points and references (clearly noting the author, textbook and full quote on the resource sheet).

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1 — British, European and world history

In Section 1 — British and Section 2 — European and world, many candidates were unable to access the full range of marks. The introduction did not always have a line of argument. Candidates can use their own line of argument but the question in the exam paper must also be addressed.

There is evidence of effective use of a counter argument or limitation for developed analysis, but many candidates did not choose to compare the factors or issues. There were some excellent isolated evaluative comments, but few which allowed the candidate to build a line of argument.

In the conclusion, many candidates simply summarised, rather than provide a relative judgement between the different factors, outlining which factor is the most important in answering the historical issue. Ranking the factors in order of importance in a conclusion is not good practice. Many conclusions were given 1–2 marks which was disappointing given there are now 3 marks available.

Question paper 2 — Scottish history

Candidates and centres are reminded that within the Higher History course specification document it indicates that candidates should demonstrate specific Scottish historical knowledge in this paper. Parts A–C are usually given clear Scottish historical examples, but Part D — Migration and empire, 1830–1939 and in particular Part E — The impact of the Great War, 1914–1928, are given more focus as British issues.

Good practice was seen where candidate responses demonstrated Scottish history to answer the question, particularly where candidates used local knowledge or exemplification from previous marking instructions. Generic statements are not usually awarded marks. In the Scottish history paper many candidates did not use the full relevant quote from the source. At Higher level, candidates are expected to use full illustrative quotes from the sources for each mark awarded. Paraphrasing is accepted but some candidates do not explain the correct meaning from the source or link their answer to the question.

The ‘Evaluate ...’ question saw many candidates simply give generic responses to both the origin and purpose of the source, rather than explaining the source in relation to the specific question and Scottish issue. Focus should be on the author, type of source, purpose and timing, linked to the question, with reference to the particular Scottish issue. Generic statements are not usually awarded marks.

Assignment

In the assignment some candidates had difficulty accessing the full range of marks available because they selected an inappropriate question, for example, a ‘describe’ type question. This resulted in marks not being awarded for analysis and evaluation.

Poor use of the resource sheet was also a key issue in many cases. There were a few examples in which paragraphs were copied from the resource sheet to the assignment. Where this happens, the marker must disregard those parts of the assignment that result from copying.

However, the main issue remains referencing. References should be short quotes, primary or secondary, with clear evidence to the provenance of the quote. There was a lot of evidence where candidates had not provided either the author, textbook or website, or quote on the resource sheet. It is important that candidates provide this information in full. A reference should be used to support a factor. It should not be a fact.

Centres and candidates are reminded that evaluation is a higher order skill, therefore evaluation should be an extended comment supported to build a line of argument, for example providing new evidence, further explanation, or a historical debate.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1 — British, European and world history

Centres should encourage all candidates to read the essay questions to avoid answering the wrong question or issue. Candidates must answer the question as it appears in the question paper and not a pre-prepared answer. Those who exemplified best practice focused on the issue in the question not the topic.

In an introduction, two points of historical context are required, as well as factors or issues to be discussed, and a line of argument. If a candidate is choosing to answer an evaluation question by selecting another factor, they must still address the question. In an assessment question, candidates should address the issue, for example, if it was effective or not effective in the line of argument. They should not select an isolated factor.

Essay structure is being well taught by centres but candidates should remember to use detailed accurate knowledge.

Candidates should be prepared to write a balanced conclusion which is linked to the line of argument. A relative judgement between the different factors is essential in accessing the full marks in a conclusion.

In Section 1 — British and Section 2 — European and world, any three from six issues are assessed. These will remain the same across Sections 1 and 2. It is essential that candidates are prepared for a minimum of four issues in both the British and European and world sections studied. Many centres teach all six issues and this is considered good practice.

Question paper 2 — Scottish history

The 'How much do' question uses two sources showing differing interpretations from an area in the description of content. Centres should not teach this as a comparison question.

Candidates are required to identify the overall interpretation in each source. Candidates should carefully select the relevant points from the sources and interpret why the selected points are important to the issue being discussed.

Quotes must be linked to the question. Candidates should also introduce recalled knowledge to develop the source point and/or contextualise the content of the source. Recall should be linked to the question. The question is worth 10 marks — up to 3 marks for each source (including an overall interpretation and two source points from each source or three source points from each source). There are up to 6 marks for recall.

Centres should note that from session 2020–21 the source marks will be as follows: up to 1 mark for the overall interpretation in each source and up to 2 marks for using the correct source points from each source. Therefore, candidates must attempt the overall interpretation in each source to access the 6 source marks.

The 'How fully' question requires a clear judgement, for example, 'Source ... partly explains' or '...explains to an extent'. The judgement can be included at any point in the answer. Source points selected should be supported by a detailed explanation clearly linked to the question (it is considered good practice to quote fully from the source). Developed knowledge should also be linked to the question. The question is worth 10 marks — up to 4 marks for source points and up to 7 marks for recall.

For the 'Evaluate' question the content of the source was correctly used in most cases but candidates should quote fully from the source, ensuring they explain the source point, linking the answer to the question. Developed knowledge should also be linked to the question.

However, purpose and origin remain a weakness for many candidates. Focus should be on the author, type of source, purpose and timing, linked directly to the particular area of Scottish history. Generic statements provide weak candidate answers — focus should be on the question and the Scottish issue. This question is worth 8 marks — up to 4 marks for purpose and origin, up to 2 marks for source points, and up to 3 marks for recall.

For the 'Explain' question candidates are required to 'explain the reasons' in answer to a key issue. There is no source. Candidates should not just give a fact. The candidate needs to identify a key point from a historical issue and provide a relevant explanation linked to the question. The question is worth 8 marks.

Centres should ensure that they prepare candidates with specific Scottish historical knowledge (as per the Higher History course specification document). This advice is especially important for centres teaching Part E — The impact of the Great War, 1914–1928.

Many centres are using valid evidence which includes specific local examples and/or evidence that is clearly linked to the Scottish context. Generic comments on Britain are not usually awarded marks. The extensive marking instructions in past papers and the specimen question paper provide further examples.

Centres should note that all areas of the syllabus will be sampled each year in the Scottish history question paper. All four issues will be examined from four questions. The question types can be asked in any order. They will remain the same across the five Scottish topics. The 'How fully' and 'Explain' questions will come from the key issues in the Higher History course specification document. The 'two source interpretation' and 'Evaluate' questions will come from the description of content.

Assignment

Candidates should choose an appropriate question which will allow them to access the full range of marks. The most effective candidate responses used an assessment or evaluation type question, for example 'How successful' or 'How important' or 'To what extent'. Most candidates used a question from a past Higher History paper (recommended 2015–19).

Changing an isolated factor allows candidates from the same centre to answer a different question on the same issue. It is not considered good practice to have candidates from a centre use the same question, factors, recall and references.

The historical context used in the introduction should be relevant to the question. A minimum of two sentences of context are required. In the conclusion candidates should focus on the issue in answering the question, linked to the line of argument in the response. A relative judgement between the factors or issue is essential to access the 3 marks available. Candidates should answer the question they set.

Overall candidates performed well in the assignment write-up. This reflects good support from teachers and lecturers. However, the resource sheet remains an issue, in particular the use of references. Best practice was reflected in those candidates who used the resource sheet as an essay plan, for example providing a summary of the factors or issues, key knowledge points, and detailed referencing such as author, textbook (website) and full quote.

Candidates should note the following requirements when referencing sources:

- ◆ secondary sources – provide author, book title and quote
- ◆ primary sources — provide author, date and quote
- ◆ websites provide quote, author or text (note: the full website address would only count as one word)

It is important to note that some website references demonstrated poor practice. References should not include factual evidence. References used to support the analysis and/or evaluation exemplified best practice.

It is important to note that the resource sheet should have no more than 250 words, and it can only be one side of A4 paper or the SQA template.

Centres should ensure that, along with the assignment, all relevant supporting documentation is submitted for candidates. This includes checking the following:

- ◆ candidate's name and the full question being answered should be noted on both the flyleaf and the first page of the assignment
- ◆ each page should be numbered
- ◆ the flyleaf should be signed, with the marking sheet overleaf
- ◆ the resource sheet should be complete (and have no more than 250 words)

Centres must ensure that resource sheets, research sheets or processed information sheets are submitted for each candidate for the 2019-20 session. These sheets are not marked but must be submitted to SQA along with the candidate's assignment. A penalty of 20% of the candidate's overall mark for the assignment component will be applied in the case of non-submission. Further information can be found in the Coursework for External Assessment document and the course assessment task on the subject page of the SQA website.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	10296
Number of resulted entries in 2019	9987

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%	2833	77
B	24.4%	52.8%	2436	66
C	20.0%	72.8%	1998	55
D	13.5%	86.3%	1350	44
No award	13.7%	-	1370	-

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.