Course report 2019

Subject	History
Level	National 5

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper was less demanding than intended. The paper did not provide enough challenge overall at the top end of the marks scale so the grade boundary at grade A was adjusted as a consequence.

On the whole, popular sections such as Section 1 — Part E: The Era of the Great War 1900–1928 (in particular question 21), performed strongly compared to other Scottish contexts.

In the European and world context, most candidates performed less well in those sections where the 9-mark short essay was the last question in the paper, than in those sections where this assessment item was placed earlier, for example Section 3 — Part D: Hitler and Nazi Germany, 1919–1939.

Assignment

Many candidates performed very well in their assignment. However, some candidates did not access the full range of marks because they did not select appropriate issues for historical research. Other candidates did not follow the guidance on achieving reference marks, and some candidates did not ensure that their conclusion directly addressed the issue chosen.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Most candidates answered the 'describe' and 'compare' questions well, demonstrating good historical knowledge. Similarly, candidates also performed strongly in the 'how fully' question.

Overall, standards have continued to improve in the 'evaluate the usefulness' question but some candidates still need to remember to make the required evaluative comments on all aspects of the source.

For the 'to what extent', 'how successful', 'how important' question, most candidates were well-prepared and had a clear idea of how to present their answer in a structured way.

Candidates performed very strongly in some sections, for example, Section 1 — Part E: The Era of the Great War.

Assignment

Most candidates selected issue-based questions, demonstrated good knowledge, and organised their answers well.

Most candidates made sensible use of their resource sheet and submitted work of a high quality.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

For Section 1 — Scottish contexts, candidates are required to demonstrate specific historical knowledge. Some candidates did not do so, especially for Part E — The Era of the Great War.

Candidates found the 'to what extent' (question 16) in Section 1 Part D — Migration and Empire section, challenging.

Some candidates found the 'evaluate the usefulness' question more challenging because they did not carry out the required evaluation for each aspect of the source. For both the 'evaluate the usefulness' and 'how fully' questions, some candidates did not carefully select evidence from the sources. Instead, they chose distractors; information that provides context but is not directly relevant to the question asked. Some candidates were unable to provide relevant recalled knowledge, which meant that in the 'how fully' question they could achieve a maximum of 2 marks.

Some candidates had difficulty with the 'explain' question because they did not clearly link their evidence to the question asked, presenting facts without the required explanation. Some candidates found 'explain' questions requiring specific historical knowledge more challenging, for example questions 1, 19 and 23.

In question 38, a minority of candidates experienced particular difficulty because they wrote about the impact of the slave trade on Africa rather than the Caribbean islands.

Assignment

Although most candidates performed very well in this assessment, there were some issues which limited the marks of some candidates.

Some candidates did not select an appropriate issue which would support analysis and debate. In addition, some candidates forgot to include their question, which made it very difficult to mark. Others did not make good use of their resource sheet, copying significant parts into assignments, which does not attract marks.

Furthermore, many candidates made very brief evaluative comments. Evaluation is a higher order skill, therefore evaluation should be an extended comment supported by evidence or further explanation.

Some candidates did not clearly and directly use information from sources to support factors.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates and centres should note the following key messages:

Section 1 — The Scottish contexts

♦ Centres should ensure that they prepare candidates with specific Scottish historical knowledge (as detailed in the course specification). This advice is especially important for centres teaching Part E — The Era of the Great War, where some candidates were clearly not familiar with some topics such as rationing or the campaign for women's suffrage from a Scottish perspective.

♦ Valid Scottish historical knowledge may include specific local or national examples and/or evidence that is clearly linked to the Scottish context. For example, 'In Edinburgh, trams were used as mobile recruiting centres to encourage men to volunteer' or 'Recruitment posters were displayed in Scotland using Scotland's military history to persuade men to volunteer'.

♦ In preparing for the examination, candidates and centres are encouraged to review the specified content and consider the variety of ways in which questions could be asked rather than relying on previously assessed items.

Candidates and centres will find further clarification in the general marking principles for National 5 History and in the general marking instructions for each type of question in the specimen question paper available on the National 5 History subject page.

Assignment

Candidates and centres should note the following key messages:

♦ Centres should support candidates in researching and analysing issues using the question stems: 'to what extent', 'how successful' 'how important' as per the question stems for the 9-mark essay in the question paper. In line with the qualification skills framework for History, questions which require a candidate to evaluate the reason for a development, or assess the impact of a trend are equally valid. For example, the impact of Liberal and/or Labour reforms in solving the problems of poverty and the reasons for the Liberal and/or Labour reforms, should both be considered as valid issues for historical research. Centres should refer candidates to the National 5 History course specification for support when devising a suitable question.

♦ For information from sources, evidence should be collected from at least two different sources and referred to clearly and directly. This means that references should be enclosed by the use of quotation marks. Candidates should ensure that the beginning and end of their reference quote is clear (either by quotation marks or indentation) in order to be awarded a reference mark.

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	14473

Number of resulted entries in 2019	14735

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	37.7%	37.7%	5557	74
B	23.7%	61.4%	3485	62
C	17.9%	79.3%	2637	51
D	12.4%	91.6%	1823	39
No award	8.4%	-	1233	-

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.