



Course report 2022

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 appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	9865
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	35.7	Cumulative percentage	35.7	Number of candidates	3520	Minimum mark required	53
B	Percentage	25.3	Cumulative percentage	61.0	Number of candidates	2495	Minimum mark required	43
C	Percentage	17.1	Cumulative percentage	78.1	Number of candidates	1690	Minimum mark required	34
D	Percentage	11.4	Cumulative percentage	89.5	Number of candidates	1125	Minimum mark required	24
No award	Percentage	10.5	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	1035	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

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 page of [SQA's website](#).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

The question papers performed as expected. Feedback from the marking team, teachers and lecturers indicated that both question papers were positively received by centres and were fair and accessible for candidates.

Question paper 1 — British, European and world history

Candidates were given a choice of four questions from the six key issues, in both the British and European and world sections.

Most candidates answered questions 14 (issue 3) or 16 (issue 5) in Section 1 — British: Part D — Britain, 1851–1951.

In Section 2 — European and world, many candidates answered questions in Part D — Germany, 1815–1939, questions 33 (issue 1) or 36 (issue 5), and in Part G — USA, 1918–1968, questions 45 (issue 1) or 48 (issue 5).

Some candidates found difficulty with the isolated factor selected in a few of the questions, particularly questions 14, 36 and 43. The five areas or factors from the description of content used in the selection of exam questions are listed in the course specification.

There was no evidence to suggest candidates underperformed in this question paper. The majority of candidates understood what was required and completed the two required sections in the allocated time.

Question paper 2 — Scottish history

All four issues were assessed this year. The issues and question stems were the same across each of the five parts (A–E) in 2022:

- ◆ ‘How fully does Source X explain ...’
- ◆ ‘Explain the reasons why ...’
- ◆ ‘Evaluate the usefulness ...’
- ◆ ‘How much do Sources X and Y reveal about differing interpretations of ...’

Most candidates performed well in the first two questions.

Assignment

The assignment was removed for session 2021–22.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper 1 — British, European and world history

The most successful candidates were those who completed two essays at a consistent standard. Some candidates were inconsistent in their performance over the two essays. In question paper 1, candidates should allow 45 minutes for each essay.

Many candidates produced well-structured responses. Candidates were confident in changing the argument in the introduction, by selecting another isolated factor to answer the question. However, the isolated factor in the question paper should be addressed in the essay. There were a few examples of evaluation to develop a line of argument in the essay. Additionally, there were some very good isolated evaluative comments. Conclusions should answer the question, not just simply summarise or rank the factors. A relative overall judgement between the factors would see more 2- or 3-mark conclusions.

In Section 1 — British, most candidates studied Part D — Britain, 1851–1951. In Section 2 — European and world, candidates produced good essays in the following:

- ◆ Part D — Germany, 1815–1939, question 33 (issue 1)
- ◆ Part F — Russia, 1881–1921, question 41 (issue 1) and question 42 (issue 3)
- ◆ Part G — USA, 1918–1968, question 45 (issue 1)
- ◆ Part I — The Cold War, 1945–1989, question 54 (issue 3) and question 55 (issue 4)

Question paper 2 — Scottish history

Many candidates performed well in the ‘How fully ...’ and ‘Explain ...’ questions. There is clear evidence of candidates using good historical knowledge, and this was seen in Part E — The impact of the Great War, 1914–1928, particularly in using community and local knowledge to exemplify Scottish history.

Many candidates answered Part D — Migration and empire, 1830–1939.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1 — British, European and world history

In the British and European and world history sections many candidates were unable to access the full range of marks. In the introduction, candidates should have a line of argument, factors, and two points of relevant background to the issue.

Candidates should use relevant and developed knowledge. Use of analysis within essays for some candidates can be very brief. Developed comments are encouraged to access the 6 analysis marks. Although some candidates made isolated evaluative comments, most candidates were unable to connect their evaluative comments to build a consistent line of argument.

In the conclusion, many candidates completed a summary list of the factors. This can only gain a maximum of 1 mark. A few candidates simply ranked the factors in order of importance, which is not good practice.

Question paper 2 — Scottish history

Most candidates found the 'Evaluate the usefulness ...' question challenging, particularly in the area of origin and possible purpose of the source. Candidates should read the question carefully and respond using relevant Scottish historical knowledge. Generic statements are not usually awarded marks. Focus should be on the author, type of source, purpose and timing. Evaluative comments on all aspects of the source should be linked directly to the question.

A few candidates only partially quoted from the source or used ellipsis. This is not considered good practice. Candidates are expected to use the full quote from the source with an explanation to support their understanding or interpretation of the source point.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1 — British, European and world history

Centres should encourage all their candidates to read the essay question to avoid answering the wrong question or issue. Candidates must answer the question as it appears in the question paper rather than providing a pre-prepared answer. Those who exemplify best practice focus on the issue in the question not the topic.

In an introduction, candidates should clearly set out their line of argument. In an evaluation question, candidates should argue which factor is the most important in answering the question. It is important to address the exam question in the introduction and throughout the essay, including in the conclusion. In an assessment question, the impact of an event or development should be clearly stated in the line of argument. For example, in a question on the effectiveness of the Labour reforms, 1945–51 candidates should say whether the reforms were effective or not effective, or whether a statement on their effectiveness is valid or not valid, in answer to the exam question.

Candidates who familiarise themselves with the marking guidance can produce well-structured essays. High marks can be achieved by candidates who use developed knowledge and detailed analysis in support of the factor, as well as a counter argument or limitation. Comparing factors is also encouraged for analysis. The use of evaluation, when used correctly, offers candidates the opportunity to make isolated evaluative comments on an individual factor, or evaluative comments that build a line of argument, allowing candidates to access the full range of marks for this skill.

To access up to 3 marks in a conclusion, teachers and lecturers should look to the marking guidance and the materials on the Higher History Understanding Standards website.

Question paper 2 — Scottish history

Centres should ensure that they prepare candidates with Scottish historical knowledge (as in the Higher History Course Specification.) Many centres are now using specific community, local or national examples that are clearly linked to the Scottish context.

The ‘How fully’ question

Candidates should always support source points with a detailed explanation that is clearly linked to the question in order to access the source marks. Paraphrasing is accepted, but the source point should not lose its meaning in the explanation, up to 4 marks. Candidates should use relevant and developed knowledge, up to 7 marks. The question allows candidates to access all the description of content points as the question addresses the key issue.

The ‘Explain’ question

Candidates are required to ‘explain the reasons’ in answering the key issue. Candidates need to identify a key point from the historical issue and provide a relevant explanation linked to the question. Each point is worth 1 mark, up to 8 marks in total. There is no additional mark awarded for a developed point.

The 'Evaluate' question

Candidates perform well using both the source points and developed knowledge in answering this question, which always comes from the description of content. However, there is the additional skill of evaluating the usefulness of 'the origin and possible purpose of the source'. Generic statements provide weak answers and are rarely awarded marks. The four aspects of the source related to provenance that candidates should comment on are author, type of source, purpose, and timing. The comments provided by candidates should demonstrate that they have thought about each aspect of the origin and purpose of the source, and why they are useful in answering the issue from the description of content. Focus should be on the specific area of Scottish history studied. Up to 4 marks are available for origin and purpose, as well as up to 2 marks for source points, and up to 3 marks for developed knowledge as points of significant omission. A total of 8 marks.

The 'How much do' two-source question

Candidates are required to interpret the views from the sources, up to two points from each source. A maximum of 4 marks are available for the interpretation of the views from the two sources. A further 2 marks are available for the overall viewpoint in each source, 1 mark for each overall viewpoint. Each source point identified should correctly interpret the view and be linked to answering the question. Candidates should also include relevant and developed knowledge, up to 6 marks.

Appendix 1: 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 including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

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 2022. 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 revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 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 2022 Awarding—Methodology Report](#).