



Course report 2022

Subject	Geography
Level	National 5

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	10265
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	41.5	Cumulative percentage	41.5	Number of candidates	4265	Minimum mark required	52
B	Percentage	22.5	Cumulative percentage	64.0	Number of candidates	2305	Minimum mark required	43
C	Percentage	16.5	Cumulative percentage	80.5	Number of candidates	1695	Minimum mark required	35
D	Percentage	12.2	Cumulative percentage	92.7	Number of candidates	1255	Minimum mark required	26
No award	Percentage	7.3	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	750	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

Question paper

The question paper was mostly well-received by teachers, lecturers and markers, with results showing that it was accessible to most candidates. There was a slightly higher proportion of 3- and 4-mark questions in 2022 and therefore, slightly fewer 5- or 6-mark questions than in recent years. This helped candidates to achieve well overall.

Some of the discriminator questions, such as questions 1(a), 2(a) and 14, didn't differentiate between candidates quite as much as expected. As a result of this, as well as the slight change in the balance of 5- or 6-mark questions compared to 3- or 4-mark questions, the A grade boundary was raised.

In the global issues section, the health and environmental hazards questions were quite popular choices, but many candidates chose the climate change question, which was the most popular option.

Assignment

The requirement to complete the assignment was removed for session 2021–22.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Questions 1(a) and 2(a)

(Map evidence to show features of a glaciated landscape or features of a river and its valley)
These alternative questions were answered well by candidates who showed good map skills by identifying relevant landscape features. This type of question appeared for the first time in 2019, and the better performance of candidates this year reflects that this has been well taught by centres.

Question 3

(Matching field sketches with grid references)
Generally, candidates performed well in this question.

Question 4

(Advantages of the area shown in the map extract for two chosen land uses)
Most candidates were able to give good examples of how the landscape was used with corresponding map evidence. A small number of candidates lost out on 1 mark by referring only to one land use type.

Questions 5(a) and (b)

(Land use conflicts and solutions)
Many candidates performed well in both parts of this question by being able to describe how different land users were in conflict, and then in part (b) by highlighting possible solutions to the conflicts that they had identified. Many candidates made good references to case studies they had studied in class.

Question 6

(Draw a weather symbol)
Most candidates drew this symbol accurately, reflecting a good knowledge of synoptic charts.

Question 8

(Measuring distances)
Most candidates measured all three distances accurately.

Question 9

(Matching land use zones with grid references)
Most candidates were able to correctly identify all three land use zones, although a significant number could not identify the area of old industry.

Question 10

(Identifying changes in land use between 1994 and the present day)

Although this type of question had not appeared at National 5 before, most candidates made good use of their map skills and performed well by comparing the maps and correctly identifying relevant land use changes.

Question 11

(Reasons for the location of Meadowhall Shopping Centre)

Candidates were able to do well in this question by identifying relevant features from the map such as nearby housing estates for workers and customers, and the many different modes of transport providing good access to the site. Crucially, they were then able to elaborate on how these features may have influenced the developers' choice of location.

Question 13

(Improvements in areas of informal housing)

This was a topic that appeared to have been very well taught, as most candidates were able to give lots of good, up-to-date examples of improvements and explain how they benefited rural communities.

Question 14

(Recent changes in farming)

Although this was a 6-mark question, many candidates scored highly. This may, in part, have been because there was a choice between developed and developing world farming, but also shows that it is an area of the course specification that appears to be very well covered by centres.

Question 15(b)

(Human causes of climate change)

Most candidates wrote extensive answers to this question and were able to explain in detail how human activities contribute towards climate change. Some candidates tended to list causes without explaining them in detail and, as a result, could not access all the marks available.

Question 20(b)

(Methods used to control disease)

Nearly all candidates chose either Malaria or Cholera when answering this question. Most candidates were able to explain how the control measures that they highlighted helped to reduce the impact of the disease, although a few candidates did not explain this sufficiently and therefore could not access all of the marks available.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 2(b)

(Formation of stalactites and stalagmites)

Some candidates did not elaborate fully on the processes involved in the formation of dripstone features such as solution or crystallisation and therefore did not score as well as candidates in the alternative question, question 1(b) about headlands and bays, where explanations of marine erosion processes tended to be more detailed.

Question 7

(Reasons for differences in weather conditions)

Many candidates showed good knowledge of weather systems in this question but didn't always fully explain the reasons for differences in the weather conditions between Edinburgh and Nice and therefore were not able to access all of the marks. Occasionally, candidates gave good reasons for the weather being experienced in one of the cities but didn't go on to explain why it was different in the other city.

Question 12

(Reasons for differences in population density)

Many candidates did not relate the factors which might affect population density to areas of high or low population. Instead, they gave statements such as 'people don't like to live in areas which are cold' or 'people like to live in areas with good soils' without elaborating to explain how these factors affect population density. Some candidates also focused their answers on differing birth and death rates and therefore were unable to effectively explain why population density varies.

Question 17(a)

(Distribution of tropical storms and hurricanes)

Some candidates referenced mainly the lines of latitude when talking about the location of different strengths of tropical storms/hurricanes and therefore were unable to access the full number of marks. A significant number of candidates did not refer to named sea areas, countries or coastal areas and therefore also failed to access all of the marks. A few candidates did not differentiate between the different categories of tropical storms/hurricanes as shown in the key and could not access all of the marks as a result.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

It was pleasing to see many candidates referring to up-to-date case studies, which they have studied in class, and were then able to highlight aspects of these studies in a way that is relevant to the question. For example, in question 13 (improvements in informal housing), there were many references to Dharavi in Mumbai or to Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro, where candidates were able to quote good examples of initiatives that have helped improve living standards for residents.

Up-to-date case studies are important in answering many questions in all three sections of the National 5 Geography question paper. In question 14 (agricultural change), some candidates chose the United Kingdom as a case study area, but then went on to talk about the benefits of Genetically Modified (GM) crops in the UK. Currently GM crops are not permitted on UK farms, so it is important that candidates are aware of this, so that their answers are accurate and more likely to achieve full marks.

Centres should note that Ordnance Survey (OS) map skills will continue to be an integral part of the National 5 Geography question paper. Interpreting OS maps is a skill in itself, but they are also a medium through which it is possible to assess candidates' knowledge of physical and urban landscapes, land uses and land use conflicts. Centres should therefore continue to make good use of OS map extracts and ensure that map skills continue to be fully incorporated into National 5 Geography courses.

In the skills section of global issues questions, candidates continue to show improvement in their geographical knowledge when identifying places from world maps. Centres should encourage candidates to also make full use of the keys in these maps to highlight places that are affected by the different categories that are displayed. For example, in question 15(a) (climate change), a good response would include mention of specific areas that are at low, medium, high or very high risk of the effects of climate change.

In the knowledge section of the global issues questions, candidates also showed good knowledge of case studies. It is important however, that they relate their case study knowledge to the question in a way that is relevant. For example, in question 20(b) (health), most candidates were well aware of control measures that are used to manage the disease they had chosen to write about. A few candidates tended to write lists of these measures such as 'using bed nets at night', 'draining swampy areas', and 'educating people about malaria (or cholera)' but did not then elaborate as to how these helped to reduce incidence of the disease. Centres should continue to reinforce the need for candidates to fully explain the impact of what they have learned in their case studies in order to be able to access all of the marks.

For examples of candidate responses to National 5 Geography question papers, teachers and lecturers can refer to the Understanding Standards website. Each anonymised response has been marked and a commentary provided for each candidate to explain why marks have, or have not, been awarded. The website will be updated with responses from the 2022 question paper.

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](#).