



Course report 2022

Subject	Psychology
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	1005
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	50.3	Cumulative percentage	50.3	Number of candidates	505	Minimum mark required	70
B	Percentage	17.9	Cumulative percentage	68.2	Number of candidates	180	Minimum mark required	60
C	Percentage	11.9	Cumulative percentage	80.1	Number of candidates	120	Minimum mark required	50
D	Percentage	8.7	Cumulative percentage	88.8	Number of candidates	85	Minimum mark required	40
No award	Percentage	11.2	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	115	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 assessments performed as expected. Feedback from the marking team and teachers and lecturers indicated that the question paper was positively received by centres and was fair and accessible for candidates. It was perceived to be a well-balanced paper in terms of content and demand.

Most candidates understood what was required — they submitted the assignment on time and completed all questions in the question paper within the time allocation of 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Question paper

Overall, many candidates benefited from only having to revise for the two mandatory topics that were assessed in the question paper.

Assignment

Candidates submitted a research plan for further research on a topic in psychology. Most candidates planned research on one of the two mandatory topics although some planned the research on the optional topics such as non-verbal communication and phobias.

Most candidates clearly indicated sections A–F in their plan.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper

The majority of candidates were well-prepared for the question paper.

Section 1: Individual behaviour — sleep and dreams

Question 1(a)(ii)

Many candidates found this question demanding — Explain **one** strength and **one** weakness of the Restoration Theory of Sleep (Oswald, 1966). Some candidates explained the strengths and weaknesses of Dement and Kleitman's (1957) research study. They appeared to associate strengths and weaknesses with research studies and not with theories.

Questions 1(b)(i) and (ii)

Candidates performed very well in the questions on Dement and Kleitman's (1957) research study.

Question 1(c)

Candidates demonstrated their thinking skills by applying their knowledge of the psychoanalytic theory to explain the behaviour in the scenario.

Questions 1(d)(i) and (ii)

Candidates performed less well in the questions of Freud's (1909) study of Little Hans as some focused on phobias rather than dreams.

Section 2: Social behaviour — conformity

Question 2(b)

Some candidates found this question challenging where they were asked to explain internalisation and informational social influence.

Questions 2(c)(i) and (ii)

Candidates performed very well when asked to describe and explain one strength of Asch's (1951) research study.

Question 2(c)(iii)

When asked to explain how Mori and Arai attempted to improve Asch's (1951) study, some candidates explained the differences but not the improvements.

Question 2(d)

Candidates performed well when asked to apply their knowledge of conformity to a scenario.

Assignment

There were more similarities in the research plans than in previous years.

Candidates were able to explain their topic with reference to psychological evidence in sections A and B. Candidates who explained the links between psychological concepts and theories and research evidence were awarded the highest marks.

Most candidates were able to attain the 1 mark for the aim of the study in section C but only those candidates who clearly expressed the hypothesis gained the full 2 marks in section D.

Many candidates found section E to be the most challenging. Twelve marks were available for describing the research plan. Some candidates confused opportunity and random sampling methods. Some candidates did not justify their choice of research method.

There were fewer ethical issues raised than in previous years. However, some candidates still breached ethical guidelines by planning to:

- ◆ deprive participants of sleep
- ◆ manipulate behaviour by changing caffeine consumption, hours of sleep, or exposure to blue light (instructing participants not to use phones or not to consume caffeine before bedtime is a breach of BPS guidelines)
- ◆ use confederates in conformity studies
- ◆ use discussion in the replication of Jenness' study

Candidates whose assignment breached ethical guidelines were unable to gain full marks in the 'procedures' section of their research plan.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Teachers and lecturers are reminded that the course content remains unchanged in the modified course. Centres must continue to deliver content from the optional topics to give candidates the opportunity to study the breadth of psychological knowledge as indicated in the course specification. This will ensure that candidates remain engaged and are better prepared for their next steps.

Assignment

The modified course gave greater control to teachers and lecturers to suggest the research topic and research method for groups (or the whole class), to reduce teaching time and support delivery of the assignment. These modifications remain in place for session 2022–23.

Centres are advised to apply professional judgement this year so that candidates are given more choice where appropriate in choosing a topic based on their individual interests. A more open choice of topic will provide candidates with a better understanding of the research process and will allow them to take more ownership of their learning. It will also allow centres to ensure the authenticity of submissions.

Some candidates produced reports that clearly showed that they had researched the topic as they had included up-to-date research, and there was a range of topics within the centre. In addition, some candidates submitted reports on the optional topics, which is commendable.

Teachers and lecturers are advised that even though at National 5 the candidates submit a plan and do not conduct research, they should still avoid breaching the ethical guidelines.

Teachers and lecturers are advised to ensure that candidates know they should follow the detailed marking instructions in the assignment task.

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](#).