



Course report 2022

Subject	Sociology
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	280
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	30.2	Cumulative percentage	30.2	Number of candidates	85	Minimum mark required	67
B	Percentage	20.7	Cumulative percentage	50.9	Number of candidates	60	Minimum mark required	55
C	Percentage	22.4	Cumulative percentage	73.3	Number of candidates	60	Minimum mark required	43
D	Percentage	12.1	Cumulative percentage	85.4	Number of candidates	35	Minimum mark required	31
No award	Percentage	14.6	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	40	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 performed as expected. It provided opportunities for discrimination between A-grade and C-grade candidates.

The modifications to assessment for session 2021–22 removed question 3 on social issues from the question paper. The duration of the question paper was reduced, and the marks scaled up. There was no evidence that there was insufficient time for candidates to complete the paper.

These modifications to assessment remain in place for session 2022–23.

Assignment

The assignment performed as expected. It allowed candidates to build their wider sociological knowledge and develop the skill of extended analysis.

Most candidates handled the assignment well. The arrangements for submitting the assignment changed this year, with the introduction of a template. It was clear that the template benefitted a number of candidates as it provided a scaffold for their finished work.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper

Most candidates did reasonably well. There were clear gaps in knowledge and understanding for a few candidates, which adversely affected their overall grades.

Question 1(f) and question 2(c) were the most demanding questions.

A high number of candidates gave no response to question 1(f). Centres should look at this aspect of the course (the different ways in which structural and action perspectives explain relationships among individuals, groups, and institutions in society) as similar questions will feature in future question papers.

The average overall mark for question 2(c) was low. This is partly understandable because it is the only 8-mark question in the paper; however, centres must ensure that candidates understand this element of the course (features and examples of diversity within cultures and subcultures).

Assignment

Most candidates did very well in the assignment. Many candidates chose very interesting topics. They researched well and showed good insight and application of sociological concepts and theories.

Candidates continue to perform well in the two 2-mark sections (A and C).

Section E remains the most challenging for candidates, although this year over half of all candidates received half marks or more in this section.

A few candidates tackled research topics in a non-sociological way. This could be defined as:

- ◆ Investigating a non-sociological topic — although this definition is very broad, there are some topics that are very difficult to make interesting to sociologists. The topic must be a real-world issue, not an imagined one or one that is based in fiction.
- ◆ Investigating a sociological topic from a non-sociological perspective, for example a psychological or medical perspective.
- ◆ Investigating a non-sociological topic in a non-sociological way, particularly through choosing inappropriate sources. This includes studies that show the medical effects of dieting, or the psychological consequences of actions. Candidates may set out to investigate a topic in a sociological way, but their choice of sources precludes this.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres should ensure candidates understand sociological concepts instead of using rote learning.

Centres should help improve candidates' understanding of the relationship among individuals, groups, and institutions in society. Centres should also help candidates to improve their understanding of diversity, that is the presence and coexistence of different sets of beliefs, religions, cultural norms, and customs within one society.

Assignment

The choice of topic, research studies, and sources is vitally important.

Teachers and lecturers should read the SQA guidance, particularly on reasonable assistance, to best support their candidates in making the right choices. When providing appropriate reasonable assistance, teachers and lecturers should remind candidates to take a sociological approach.

Teachers and lecturers should also remind candidates to use the template when they are completing their assignments.

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](#).