



Course Report 2016

Subject	History
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Summary of the Course assessment

Component 1: Question paper

There are three sections within the paper; Section 1 – Scottish; Section 2 – British; Section 3 – European and World. Each section is worth 20 marks. In Section 1 there are now only four sources for three questions; Evaluate the usefulness ... (6 marks); Compare the views ... (5 marks); How fully ... (9 marks). Sections 2 and 3 require candidates to answer one extended response (essay) from each section.

There was no obvious evidence to suggest that candidates found difficulty in completing the question paper in 2 hours 20 minutes. Most candidates appeared to use the time effectively. Some chose to complete the extended responses first. However, other candidates followed the order of the question paper as presented. Candidates should continue to answer the question paper in the order that allows them to best demonstrate their own particular strengths.

Component 2: Assignment

The Higher assignment expects candidates to select an appropriate issue and write an extended response under controlled conditions within one hour and thirty minutes.

Most candidates submitted what could be considered their best work — most centres built on the good practice already established by Higher History. However, some candidates did not perform well because they either did not select an issue that was appropriate, or the question stem did not provide a basis for analysis/evaluation.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

The majority of candidates performed well.

In Section 2, the majority of candidates answered from Part D Britain 1851–1951, in particular Question 26 (issue 3). In most cases, candidates provided historical context. The issues/factors were covered with detailed and relevant knowledge, supported by comments which addressed the issue.

Most candidates knew how to apply knowledge points to answer the ‘How fully ...?’ question. This provided candidates with the opportunity to access a wide range of knowledge points from the relevant illustrative areas appropriate to the issue.

Component 2: Assignment

The assignment allowed most candidates to improve their overall grade by providing an example of their best work. Markers commented on the improved quality of assignments, in particular the more effective use of analysis.

Most candidates selected an appropriate question, relevant to their area of study. Candidates successfully followed the requirements for placing the issue in its historical context (introduction), providing detailed and relevant knowledge with good use of referencing to support analysis and/or evaluation. The most effective answers used an assessment or evaluation question.

Most candidates used the resource sheet as required. The most effective use was from candidates who used it as an essay plan, eg providing a summary of the factors, knowledge points and references (quotes, author and textbook/website).

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

Candidates had most difficulty with Section 1 (Scottish). In the 'Evaluate the usefulness ...' question many candidates did not evaluate the origin and purpose of the source successfully. Candidates should support this aspect of the source, eg author, type of source, purpose or timing with evaluative comments.

Many candidates had some difficulty with the 'How fully ...?' question because they did not provide a clear overall judgement in the answer. Many candidates also did not make a meaningful comment in support of the source points selected.

Some candidates had difficulty with the comparison question because they did not compare the sources in detail. At Higher, candidates are expected to use full illustrative quotes from the sources for each comparison mark.

Some candidates had difficulty answering the extended response in the British and European & World sections, and many were unable to access the full range of marks regarding analysis/evaluation. In analysis, candidates were able to make an isolated comment on an individual factor, but often did not analyse the factor in terms of the question. Similarly, there were some isolated evaluative comments, but few which allowed the candidate to build a line of argument. In some cases, there was a complete lack of evaluation. It should be noted, however, that as the skills of analysis and evaluation are considered higher-order skills, some candidates will find it difficult to access these marks.

Component 2: Assignment

In the assignment some candidates had difficulty accessing the full range of marks available because they selected an inappropriate question, eg a describe type question. This meant they were unable to access the full range of marks available for analysis/evaluation.

Some candidates also did not make the best use of the resource sheet. In many cases, the resource sheet had insufficient detail in the references. There were also a few cases in

which paragraphs were copied from the resource sheet to the assignment. In these cases, marks could not be awarded for the copied text.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

In Section 1 – Scottish, centres should ensure that candidates access the full range of marks to answer the ‘Evaluate the usefulness ...’ question. The content of the source was correctly used in most cases, but candidates should ensure they explain the source point in answer to the question. However, purpose and origin remained a weakness for many candidates. Date, author, purpose and type (of source) can all be selected to access the full range of marks with a meaningful supporting comment.

Centres should ensure that candidates compare the sources in detail to answer the ‘Compare the views ...’ question. A direct comparison between the sources should quote the sources in full and explain why they agree/disagree. At Higher it is expected that the candidate would quote a complete line and/or sentence from each source to make a comparison.

Centres should ensure that candidates provide a judgement to answer the ‘How fully ...?’ question, eg *source D partly explains or explains to an extent*. Source points selected should be supported by a meaningful explanation linked to the question. Candidates can only achieve a maximum of 2 marks in this type of question if there is no judgement.

In Section 2 — British, and Section 3 — European & World, centres should encourage candidates to read the extended response questions carefully to avoid answering the wrong question/issue. Candidates must answer the question as it appears in the question paper and not use a pre-prepared answer. Those who exemplified best practice focused on the issue in the question, not the topic.

Centres should note that all areas of the syllabus can and will be sampled. In Section 1 — Scottish, any three from four issues will be examined. The question types can be asked in any order. They will remain the same across the five Scottish topics. In Section 2 — British, and Section 3 — European & World, any three from six issues will be examined. It is essential that candidates are prepared for a minimum of four issues in each Section studied.

Component 2: Assignment

In the assignment, centres should ensure that candidates do not self-penalise with an inappropriate choice of question. The use of evaluation or assessment type questions are recommended so candidates can access the analysis and evaluation marks. In the conclusion candidates should focus on the issue in answering the question. Technique alone is not sufficient in gaining the marks.

Resource sheets are not marked, but they are used by markers for guidance in assessing the assignment. When using information from sources, candidates should refer to at least

two different sources. These may come from the same author, but they must come from two different sources (eg different text books). Those who used four different authors/sources exemplified best practice.

References used to support analysis/evaluation also exemplified good practice. The origin and quote used as a reference should be recorded on the resource sheet, eg a secondary source — author's name, book title and quote; a primary source — author, date and quote; a website can also be used (the full website address would only count as one word) with the quote, ideally showing the origin/author. References should not include recall, statistics or picture sources.

It is important to note that the resource sheet should have no more than 250 words and should be confined to one side of A4 paper. This would be expected to include the factors, summary knowledge points and references.

Centres should ensure that all relevant supporting documentation is sent in for candidates, eg the assignment with the candidate's name, the question being answered, each page numbered, the flyleaf signed with the marking sheet overleaf and a completed resource sheet.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	7375
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Number of resulted entries in 2016	11168
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	36.8%	36.8%	4114	66
B	30.2%	67.1%	3376	57
C	19.6%	86.7%	2192	48
D	4.9%	91.6%	548	43
No award	8.4%	-	938	0

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and 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.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ 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.