



Course Report 2017

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

In Section 1: Scottish, three out of the four issues from the mandatory content are sampled. In 2017, issues 1, 2 and 3 were sampled. The issues and order of question stems are the same across each of the five parts in Section 1, but the sampling will vary each year.

In Section 2: British, and Section 3: European & World, three of the six issues are sampled. In 2017 issues 1, 4 and 6 were sampled. These will be the same issues in each part, but the sampling will vary each year.

The question paper performed as intended in 2017. Feedback from centres suggests the question paper was fair and accessible. There was evidence to suggest that some candidates found it difficult to complete the question paper in 2 hours 20 minutes. However, most candidates appeared to use the time effectively. Some chose to complete the extended responses first. 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 assignment allows candidates to select an appropriate issue and write an extended response under controlled conditions in one hour and thirty minutes. Most candidates submitted what could be considered their best work. However, some candidates did not perform well because either they did not select an issue that was appropriate, or the question stem did not provide a basis for analysis/evaluation.

The principles established for the Higher History assignment resource sheet were applied by centres, although not by all.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

In Section 1 most candidates applied detailed knowledge to answer Question 2: *'How fully...'* This provided them with the opportunity to access a wide range of knowledge from the illustrative areas appropriate to issue 1. Those candidates who performed well included a judgement at the start of their answer.

In Question 1, '*Compare the views of sources...*', most candidates accessed the marks through a combination of full illustrative quotes that explained why they agreed, and an overall comparison that was a summary of the key points the sources agreed on.

In Section 2, the majority of candidates answered from Part D: Britain 1851–1951, in particular Question 26 and Question 27 (issues 4 and 6). In most cases candidates completed the historical context. The issues/factors were covered with relevant knowledge, supported by comments that addressed the issue.

In Section 3 most candidates answered from Part D: Germany, 1815–1939, Question 42 (issue 6) and Part G: USA 1918–68, Question 49 (issue 1). Other sections of note included: Part F: Russia, 1881-1921; Part H: Appeasement and the Road to War, to 1939 and Part I: The Cold War, 1945–89. Candidates were usually very consistent in their essay writing over the question paper.

Component 2: Assignment

Most candidates selected an appropriate question that was 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 analysis, and some candidates made good use of evaluation. The most effective responses used an assessment or evaluation type question, eg '*How successful...*' or '*How important...*' or '*To what extent...*'.

Many candidates used the resource sheet as required. The most effective use was as an essay plan, eg providing a summary of the factors, key knowledge points and references (author, textbook and quote).

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

In Section 1 many candidates had difficulty with Question 1: '*Compare the views...*' because they did not use the source comparison points in detail. At Higher, candidates are expected to use full illustrative quotes from the sources for each comparison mark awarded. Some candidates were selecting two or three words as points of comparison, rather than a detailed quote.

A few candidates had difficulty with Question 2 ('*How fully...*') because they did not provide a clear overall judgement in their answer. Another weakness was the failure of some candidates to make a meaningful comment in support of the source points selected, rather than explaining the point and linking their answer to the question.

In Question 3, '*Evaluate the usefulness...*' many candidates simply gave generic responses to both the origin and purpose of the source, rather than explaining the source in relation to the specific question and issue. Focus should be on the author, type of source, purpose and timing in relation to the particular Scottish topic of study.

In the British and European & World section, many candidates were unable to access the full range of marks. There was evidence of effective use of a counter-argument or limitation for developed analysis, but many candidates did not compare the factors or issues. There were some excellent isolated evaluative comments, but few that allowed the candidate to build a line of argument. In the conclusion, many candidates simply summarised, rather than providing a relative judgement between the different factors, outlining which factor is the most important in answering the historical issue.

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 resulted in a significant loss of analysis/evaluation marks.

Poor use of the resource sheet was also a factor in many cases. There were a few cases in which paragraphs were copied from the resource sheet to the assignment. However, the main issue was referencing. Rather than factual evidence, references should be short quotes, primary or secondary, with clear evidence of their provenance. There was some evidence where candidates had not provided the author and/or textbook. Poor use of referencing from websites was evident in many candidate responses.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

Candidates should be aware of the skills and knowledge that are being assessed in the Scottish section of the question paper.

In the '*Compare the views...*' question, a direct comparison should be made between the sources, and candidates should quote the sources in full and explain why they agree or disagree. Each comparison question will either agree or disagree. Candidates are expected to quote more than two or three words as a direct comparison. At Higher it is expected that the candidate would quote in detail from the source to make a comparison. An overall comparison mark can be awarded where a candidate provides a summary paragraph showing how the comparison points agree or disagree.

The '*How fully...*' question requires a clear judgement, eg Source D partly explains or explains to an extent. The judgement can be included at the start or end of the answer. Candidates can only achieve a maximum of two marks in this type of question if there is no judgement. Source points selected should be supported by a meaningful explanation linked to the question. Developed knowledge should be linked to the question.

In 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. Developed knowledge should be linked to the question. However, purpose and origin remain a weakness for many candidates. Focus should be on the author, type of source, purpose and timing linked directly to the particular Scottish topic of study. Generic

statements provide weak candidate answers; focus should be on the question and Scottish issue.

In the British and European & World sections, centres should encourage all candidates to read the essay questions to avoid answering the wrong question/issue. Candidates must answer the question as it appears in the question paper and not a pre-prepared answer. Those who exemplified best practice focused on the issue in the question, not the topic. Candidates need to be aware that a conclusion is not a summary. A relative judgement between the different factors is essential in accessing full marks in the conclusion.

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

Component 2: Assignment

Candidates should not self-penalise with an inappropriate choice of question. The use of assessment or evaluation type questions is recommended so candidates can access the analysis and evaluation marks. The most effective candidate responses used an assessment or evaluation type question, eg *'How successful...'* or *'How important...'* or *'To what extent...'*. Most candidates use a question from the 'new' Higher past papers. Changing an isolated factor allows candidates from the same centre to answer a different question on the same issue.

The historical context used in the introduction should be relevant to the question. A minimum of two sentences of background are required. In the conclusion, candidates should focus on the issue in answering the question. Technique alone is not sufficient in gaining the marks. A relative judgement between the factors/issue is essential to access the three marks available.

It was clear that overall candidate performance was improved this year in the assignment write-up. This reflects good support from teachers/lecturers. However, the resource sheet was an issue in some cases, in particular the use of references. Best practice was reflected in those candidates who used the resource sheet as an essay plan, eg providing a summary of the factors, key knowledge points and references (author, textbook and quote).

For a secondary source the author's name, book title and quote is required. For a primary source the author, date and quote is required. Some website references demonstrated poor practice. For a website, candidates should give the full website address (which only counts as one word) and the quote, again, showing the author/text. References should not include factual evidence. References used to support analysis and/or evaluation exemplified best practice.

It is important to note that the resource sheet, handwritten or typed, should have no more than 250 words and should be confined to one side of A4 paper.

Centres should ensure that all relevant supporting documentation is sent in for candidates, ie the assignment (the full question being answered) — with the candidate's name, each page numbered, the flyleaf signed with the marking sheet overleaf and a completed resource sheet of no more than 250 words.

Whilst it was pleasing to see that the conditions of assessment for coursework were adhered to in the majority of centres, there were a small number of examples where this may not have been the case. Following feedback from teachers, we have strengthened the conditions of assessment criteria for National 5 subjects and will do so for Higher and Advanced Higher. The criteria are published clearly on our website and in course materials and must be adhered to. SQA takes very seriously its obligation to ensure fairness and equity for all candidates in all qualifications through consistent application of assessment conditions and investigates all cases alerted to us where conditions may not have been met.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	11168
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Number of resulted entries in 2017	10760
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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	31.1%	31.1%	3341	64
B	30.4%	61.5%	3275	55
C	21.1%	82.6%	2272	46
D	6.3%	88.9%	673	41
No award	11.1%	-	1199	-

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.