



Course Report 2017

Subject	History
Level	National 5

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

The National 5 question paper has two elements: Knowledge & Understanding (KU) and Source Handling Skills (SH). There are three different types of KU question: KU1 (*Describe...*); KU2 (*Explain the reasons why...*); KU3 (*To what extent...How important...How successful*). There are also three different types of SH question: SH1 (*Evaluate the usefulness...*); SH2 (*Compare the views of sources...*); SH3 (*How fully...*).

KU questions are worth 34 marks across the paper, and SH questions are worth 26 marks across the question paper. There is therefore a greater emphasis on KU (and thus recalled knowledge). Some candidates had difficulty providing adequate recalled knowledge in their KU responses. Lack of adequate recalled knowledge was also an issue in SH3 responses to some extent, but the question most candidates had real difficulty with was SH1 (*Evaluate the usefulness...*).

Evidence suggests that the time allocation for this assessment continues to allow candidates adequate time to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

A good range of the syllabus was covered in each of the three sections of the question paper — a maximum of three out of four issues of mandatory content was sampled in each context. Item analysis showed that there were some contexts that have been studied by very few candidates, and so it is likely that some contexts may be withdrawn in the future.

The majority of candidates were entered at the correct level. Feedback indicates that the National 5 question paper was considered to be suitably challenging and provided enough opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Question 28 and Question 32 were not done well by many candidates. Both of these questions assessed aspects of the course that are clearly highlighted in the Course Assessment Specification (now referred to as the Course Specification), so centres should ensure that candidates are prepared to answer similar questions in the future.

Component 2: Assignment

The assignment performed as intended, allowing candidates who selected an appropriate question to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding.

The 20 marks available are divided into eight aspects (introducing, references, knowledge, analysis, evaluating, organising, concluding, and supporting a conclusion) since the subject update at the beginning of 2015–16 session. The National 5 History assignment expects candidates to select an appropriate issue and write an extended response under controlled conditions within a continuous period of one hour, and most candidates again took this opportunity to showcase their best work. However, some candidates did not perform well

because they selected an inappropriate question and/or made poor use of the resource sheet, although this has improved from 2015–16 session.

Many markers reported instances of poor or almost illegible handwriting — made worse by the use of pencil rather than pen. Some centres did not supply resource sheets with candidate responses when our guidance states clearly that resource sheets must be submitted to SQA with candidate evidence.

The space for candidates to enter their question on the flyleaf has made a difference — it is obviously very challenging for a marker to attempt to mark an assignment without a clear question to guide them.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

Most candidates knew how to answer KU1 (*Describe...*) questions correctly. This was by far the most accessible KU question for candidates, who were well rewarded for good historical knowledge.

Most candidates also knew how to answer SH2 (*Compare the views of sources...*) questions correctly. This was by far the most accessible SH question for candidates, who benefited greatly from being awarded marks for making an overall comparison as well as simple and developed comparisons in this type of question.

Component 2: Assignment

Most candidates selected an appropriate question, which is crucial, and provided adequate knowledge and good organisation in their responses. Topics selected, in most cases, allowed candidates enough scope to research successfully and to submit their best work.

Most candidates also used the resource sheet sensibly, and looked on it as a prompt to write their 20-mark assignment.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

Many candidates had difficulty with SH1 (*Evaluate the usefulness...*) questions, with a similar pattern in the standard overall compared to 2016. An evaluative comment is required for each aspect of the source, and many candidates found this quite challenging. Candidates should be encouraged to use phrases such as ‘this is useful because ...’ or ‘this is less useful because ...’, and supply a good reason to support their evaluation of each aspect of the source, rather than writing ‘The source says [x], which is useful’ when trying to achieve a mark for content, for example.

There are always going to be distracters in the sources for this type of question, so candidates must be careful not to assume that every piece of presented evidence is useful. Ideally, they should provide some historical context that relates their knowledge to the question actually being asked, for example: 'The source says [x] which is useful because it was the case that...'. Candidates must evaluate, and not just interpret, points from the source. There is further exemplification in Marking Instructions.

Many candidates also had difficulty with SH3 (*How fully...*) questions, and were unable to access all the marks available because of a lack of recalled knowledge. Candidates can only achieve a maximum of two marks in this type of question if there is no recall and/or judgement in their answer. Moreover, there are always going to be distracters in the sources for this type of question, so candidates must also be careful to only select appropriate points from the source — not every piece of evidence presented is relevant.

Some candidates had difficulty with KU2 (*Explain the reasons why...*) questions because they did not supply reasons in their answers, only facts, which, although acceptable in KU1 questions, can only achieve minimal credit in KU2 questions. Candidates must carry out the correct answer technique or process (supplying genuine reasons) in this type of question to be successful. Moreover, some candidates did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge to answer some questions, eg Question 28.

Component 2: Assignment

Some candidates had difficulty accessing the full range of marks available because they selected an inappropriate question (eg *Describe...* or *Why...?*). This meant that evaluation marks could not really be awarded and the overall mark awarded for the conclusion had to be low. Even when an appropriate question was selected, some candidates still did not address the issue they had set themselves, providing only a descriptive or narrative response, instead of trying to explain and evaluate consistently. A good question would be KU3 in style, and must also have an isolated factor to access the full range of marks available.

Many candidates attempted questions that were too ambitious — they tried to cover five or more factors — and did not attempt a conclusion, which meant they were unable to access these marks.

Some candidates did not make use of any references in their response, so could not be awarded the two marks available for this. References must be integrated within the actual response (and not just listed at the end) and ideally used to support a line of argument.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

Centres should ensure that candidates are fully prepared to answer SH1 questions (*Evaluate the usefulness...*) correctly — an evaluative comment is required for each different aspect of the source (see exemplification in Marking Instructions).

Centres should also ensure that candidates are prepared to answer KU2 questions (*Explain the reasons why...*) correctly. These answers require reasons and not just facts (see exemplification in Marking Instructions). This is particularly important as there is a KU2 question in every section of the National 5 question paper. Many candidates do provide accurate historical knowledge in their KU2 answers, but this knowledge must be used to answer the question that is asked (with each point the candidate makes demonstrating a clear link to the question).

Centres should liaise with invigilators to ensure that incorrect and/or multiple contexts are not attempted. The introduction of the checklist inside the answer booklet used by candidates continues to help with this.

Centres should encourage candidates to use only black or blue ink to ensure greater legibility.

When scripts are being typed, please use a clear font in a large enough size (11 or 12) and double spacing to allow markers enough room to annotate marks.

Candidates should be advised to read all questions and instructions carefully to avoid misinterpretation and/or irrelevance — candidates must do what the question actually *asks* and not what they would *prefer* to write about.

Candidates should be discouraged from attempting sections out of sequence. This can be to their overall disadvantage as it can lead to questions being missed out.

Centres should note that all areas of the syllabus can and will be sampled. It is also worth pointing out that the Course Specification has been amended to provide greater clarity for both teachers and candidates. In 2018, the question paper will increase from 60 marks to 80 marks (lasting for 2 hours 20 minutes). Centres should ensure that they liaise with their SQA co-ordinator and regularly check the SQA website for updates so they are aware of the most up-to-date advice.

Component 2: Assignment

A revised marking grid will be used from session 2017–18 as part of wider changes to National 5 History. The assignment will still be out of 20 marks overall, but there will only be 1 mark available for supporting a conclusion and 3 marks (instead of just 2) for evaluating different factors.

Centres should try to ensure that candidates do not self-penalise with an inappropriate choice of question. Ideally, questions should be KU3 in style (ie *How important...?* or *To what extent...?*) and must also have an isolated factor to access the full range of marks available. Some questions selected by candidates really only invite a yes/no response and, while these may be reasonable essay questions in other situations or at other levels, do not entirely suit the marking criteria for the National 5 assignment. Therefore, centres need to make sure the work of their candidates suits the marking criteria. This is the one single issue that, if suitably addressed, would have a major impact on overall candidate performance.

The marking grid is used to grade the assignments submitted by candidates, and it is clear that some types of question do not suit this approach — centres must take this on board as we will use the grid to mark the question actually selected by the candidate (and not the question they maybe should have set themselves instead).

Unsuitable questions will only achieve partial credit in and after session 2017–18 (eg a *Describe...* question will only be able to achieve a maximum of 10 marks, and an *Explain...* question will only be able to achieve a maximum of 13 marks). This will ensure suitable discrimination between these candidates and candidates who select more appropriate questions. There is further guidance on this in the marking grids in the Course Support Notes.

Centres should ensure that candidates are prepared to provide adequate balance within their responses, by trying to provide balance within a factor and a relative judgement in their conclusion in particular. Exemplification is available in Marking Instructions.

Centres should ensure that candidates do not attempt questions that are over-ambitious (eg by trying to cover too many factors).

Sources must be referred to clearly and directly within the actual response — a list of sources at the end of the response is not acceptable.

Resource sheets are not marked, but they are referred to by markers. Centres should ensure that candidates do not just copy out their entire response from the resource sheet (or large parts from it). Candidates will not be able to access the full range of marks available if they choose to do this.

Centres must ensure that all the relevant documentation is submitted for candidates (eg resource sheet, flyleaf/marketing sheet, candidate response) and that these items are the most up-to-date versions. Centres should also check that each document has been correctly and fully completed (eg with the actual question included) before sending to SQA.

Centres should encourage candidates to use only black or blue ink to ensure greater legibility.

It would also be helpful if candidates were asked to number the pages of their assignment (if using A4 lined paper) and write out their actual question at the beginning of their response.

When assignments are being typed, please use a clear font in large enough size (11 or 12) and double spacing to allow markers enough room to annotate marks.

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	15775
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Number of resulted entries in 2017	15078
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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	31.9%	31.9%	4807	55
B	24.5%	56.4%	3701	46
C	19.7%	76.1%	2973	38
D	6.9%	83.1%	1046	34
No award	16.9%	-	2551	-

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.