Course Report 2018

Subject	History
Level	National 5

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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 Post Results Services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: question paper

The question paper performed as intended for most candidates — the boundary at grade C was set at notional difficulty (50 marks) as a consequence. This highlights the fact that the 2018 question paper was pitched at the right level for prepared candidates who were suitably rewarded for the effort they put in. A great deal of care was taken when redesigning the National 5 History question paper to ensure there was a mixture of straightforward questions as well as questions which are designed to provide challenge appropriate for this level. All four issues in each context are now sampled which allowed candidates to showcase the breadth of their knowledge as well as their skills.

However, for strongly performing candidates the 2018 question paper did not provide enough challenge overall — the boundaries at grade A were raised as a consequence (to 74 and 87 marks respectively) This highlights the fact that well-prepared candidates had good depth (not just breadth) of knowledge as well as excellent skills. This is testament to the hard work put in by both candidates and their teachers and lecturers, and is very encouraging to observe.

Component 2: assignment

The assignment performed as intended with the average score being 15.7 out of 20 marks). However, some candidates did not perform well because they did not select an issue that was appropriate.

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 which should always be submitted, but the space for candidates to enter their question has made a positive difference as it is 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

The National 5 History question paper includes knowledge and understanding (KU) and source handling (SH) questions. Most candidates knew how to answer KU1 (*Describe…*) questions correctly. As in 2017, this was by far the most accessible KU question for candidates, who gained high marks for good historical knowledge.

Most candidates also knew how to answer SH2 (*Compare the views of sources…*) questions correctly. As in 2017, this was by far the most accessible SH question for candidates, who benefited greatly from gaining marks for making an overall comparison as well as simple and developed comparisons in this type of question.

There is also clear evidence that the overall standard in KU3 (*To what extent…* or *How important…* or *How successful…*) and SH1 (*Evaluate the usefulness…*) questions is improving — many candidates tackled these questions much better in 2018.

Component 2: assignment

As in the previous year, most candidates selected an appropriate question (this 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 submit their best work.

Most candidates also used the History resource sheet sensibly, and viewed it as a prompt to write what is essentially an extended-response/essay for 20 marks. Clearly these candidates were well-supported by their teachers and lecturers.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

Some candidates, as in 2017, had difficulty with SH1 (*Evaluate the usefulness…*) questions. An evaluative comment is required for each aspect of the source and many candidates found this quite challenging.

It is not enough for candidates to write, for example, '*The source says [x] which is useful*' when trying to achieve a mark for content. There are always going to be distracters in the sources for this type of question, so candidates must not presume that every piece of presented evidence is useful.

Instead candidates should use the phrases '*…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 (see exemplification in marking instructions).

The minimum expected to achieve a content mark is '*The source says [x] which is useful because it is accurate*', although the ideal is that candidates also provide some historical

context that relates their knowledge to the question being asked: '*The source says [x] which is useful because it was the case that….*' Candidates must evaluate and not just interpret points from the source — these are not the same thing.

Many candidates also had difficulty with SH3 (*How fully…*) questions, and as in the previous session, were disadvantaged by their lack of recalled knowledge. Candidates can only achieve a maximum of 2 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 not presume that every piece of presented evidence is relevant — they should only select the appropriate points from the source. The lack of recalled knowledge was also apparent in KU questions (for example, question 40 and question 61) that are (and have always been) key parts of the course content.

As in 2017, 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.

For example, candidates struggled with question 16 to some extent as they simply described or gave examples of success rather than explaining the reasons why Scots who emigrated were successful. Question 20 was answered in a very similar way — often just examples of militancy with no link to harming the cause.

There was a typographical error in question 8 in the Scottish section but the changes made to the marking instructions ensured that candidates were not adversely affected by this.

Both questions 15 and 31 challenged candidates but the average overall score for these sections compare very favourably with all the other British sections.

Component 2: assignment
As in 2017, some candidates had difficulty accessing the full range of marks available because they selected an inappropriate question (for example, *Describe…* or *Why…?*). This meant that evaluation marks could often not be awarded and the overall mark awarded for the conclusion would likely be low. Even when an appropriate question was selected, some candidates still did not address the issue they had set themselves, only providing a descriptive or narrative response instead of trying to explain and evaluate consistently. It is sometimes not enough to simply put the phrase '*To what extent…?'* in front of a statement to turn it into a good assignment question. A good question would need to be KU3 (*To what extent…?*) in style and must also have an isolated factor to access the full range of marks available.

As in 2017, many candidates attempted questions that were too ambitious — they tried to cover five or more factors and did not attempt a conclusion, meaning they were unable to access the full marks available.

Some candidates did not make use of any references in their response so could not achieve either of the 2 marks available for this. References must be integrated within the response (and not just listed at the end) and ideally used to support the line of argument. Many

resource sheets had minimal prompts on them (often combined with poor questions) — teachers and lecturers need to spend an adequate amount of time advising and preparing candidates for their assignment write-up.

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 above and exemplification in marking instructions and on the 'Understanding Standards' section of SQA's website). This issue has been highlighted in previous course reports and also at Understanding Standards events and exemplification.

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 and on the 'Understanding Standards' section of SQA's website).

This is particularly important as there is a KU2 question in every section of the National 5 question paper, and this type of question is marked to a different standard than KU1 questions (*Describe…*). Many candidates provide accurate historical knowledge in their KU2 answers but this is not enough on its own — this knowledge must be used to answer the question asked (with each point the candidate makes demonstrating a clear link to the question).

Some candidates did not have sufficient knowledge on certain aspects of the course (for example, questions 16, 20 and 41) and teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are better prepared to answer similar questions in the future.

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 black or blue ink only to ensure greater legibility. Many candidates would benefit from access to ICT, for handwriting that is difficult to read is also difficult to mark.

When candidate scripts are being typed, please use a large enough size of font and double spacing to allow markers enough room to use correction codes and annotate marks. Centres should also ensure that the marks grid is also printed and sent with these candidate's scripts so that markers can record and total marks accurately.

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates 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.

Teachers and lecturers should discourage candidates from attempting sections out of sequence as this can be to their overall disadvantage.

Centres should note that all areas of the course can and will be sampled (see comments above on particular questions).

The course specification was amended from session 2017–18 to provide greater clarity for both teachers and lecturers and candidates. The 2018 question paper increased from 60 marks to 80 marks (with a duration of 2 hours and 20 minutes) — the vast majority of candidates finished the entire paper. Centres should also ensure that they liaise with their SQA Coordinator and regularly check SQA's website for updates so they are aware of the most up-to-date advice.

Component 2: assignment

A revised marking grid was used from 2018 as part of wider changes to National 5 History and these changes were communicated to centres as part of our ongoing programme to improve the understanding of national standards. The main changes were that only 1 mark was available for supporting a conclusion and 3 marks (instead of just 2) were available for evaluating different factors. The assignment is still worth 20 marks overall (and the average score was 15.7).

Centres should try to ensure that candidates do not disadvantage themselves with an inappropriate choice of question. Ideally, questions should be KU3 in style (for example, *How important…?* or *To what extent…?*) and must also have an isolated factor to access the full range of marks available. Just having the phrase '*To what extent…?'* at the beginning of a question does not necessarily make it a good question*.*

Moreover, some questions selected by candidates really only invite a yes/no response and do not entirely suit the marking criteria for the National 5 assignment. Therefore, centres should ensure the work of their candidates suits the marking criteria. This is the single issue, that if suitably addressed, would have a major impact on overall candidate performance. The marking grid is used to mark the assignments submitted by candidates and it is clear that some types of question do not suit this approach. Markers use the marking grid to mark the question selected by the candidate (and not the question they perhaps should have set themselves instead).

Unsuitable questions still only achieved partial credit in 2018 — for example, a *Describe…* question was normally only able to achieve a maximum of 10 marks, and an *Explain…* question normally only able to achieve a maximum of 13 marks. This resulted in discrimination between these candidates and candidates who selected more appropriate questions.

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 (see exemplification in marking instructions and sample responses on the 'Understanding Standards' section of SQA's website).

Centres should however ensure that candidates do not attempt questions that are over-ambitious (for example, by trying to cover too many factors) in the time available.

Sources must be referred to clearly and directly within the response — a list of sources at the end of the response is not good practice. References should also be used to support the argument and be clearly presented on the resource sheet.

Resource sheets are not marked but they are referred to by markers (see sample plans on the 'Understanding Standards' section of SQA's website). Centres should ensure that candidates do not just copy out their entire response from the resource sheet (or large parts from it). It is highly likely that candidates will not be able to access the full range of marks available if they choose to do this since copied text does not gain marks.

Centres must ensure that all the relevant documentation is submitted for candidates (for example, resource sheet, flyleaf/marking 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 (for example, with the candidate's question included) before sending to SQA.

Centres should encourage candidates to use black or blue ink only to ensure greater legibility. Many candidates would clearly benefit from access to ICT, for handwriting that is too difficult to read is also difficult to mark.

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 question at the beginning of their response.

When candidate scripts are being typed, please use a large enough size of font and double spacing to allow markers enough room to use correction codes and annotate marks.

Candidates are expected to use the resource sheet to generate the evidence under controlled conditions, and they **must** submit it with their evidence. The resource sheet is not assessed formally. However it is important that teachers and lecturers ensure that candidates know how to use and submit resource sheets which are reviewed during the marking process.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	15078

Number of resulted entries in 2018	14473

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	31.5%	31.5%	4561	74
B	24.9%	56.4%	3599	62
C	21.4%	77.8%	3100	50
D	12.6%	90.4%	1819	38
No award	9.6%	-	1394	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which 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.

Therefore SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.