



Course report 2023

Higher Physical Education

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. You should read the report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022: 11,848

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 11,485

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	3,764	Percentage	32.8	Cumulative percentage	32.8	Minimum mark required	70
B	Number of candidates	3,518	Percentage	30.6	Cumulative percentage	63.4	Minimum mark required	60
C	Number of candidates	2,829	Percentage	24.6	Cumulative percentage	88	Minimum mark required	50
D	Number of candidates	1,043	Percentage	9.1	Cumulative percentage	97.1	Minimum mark required	40
No award	Number of candidates	331	Percentage	2.9	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

Please note that rounding has not been applied to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

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 and information](#) page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper performed as expected.

Feedback from team leaders and markers indicated that the paper was accessible for all candidates and whilst some questions were more demanding, overall, all candidates were able to access marks when they attempted to answer all questions.

It was noted at grade boundaries that whilst a number of questions were deemed to be difficult, the average mark for the question paper increased.

Performance

The performance component performed as expected. A range of activities was verified. Centres appear to have embraced the chance to allow personalisation and choice in the activity chosen by candidates. For some centres this represented a challenge as some of their candidates were assessed in activities outwith the centre setting.

The marking instructions allowed for a full range of marks to be accessed.

Some centres were outwith tolerance in their judgements and were required to revisit the marks for the entire cohort and adjust the marks where necessary. Each centre in this situation received feedback and support to ensure they marked to the national standard.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Section 1

Section 1 of the question paper sampled from all four factors impacting on performance and included a 6-mark question which enabled candidates to demonstrate depth in their response.

Candidates performed well in the description questions. Answers were well structured and provided a depth of descriptive features and characteristics. Almost all candidates gained full marks in question 5(a) when asked to identify approaches to develop physical factors.

Section 2

In section 2 there were opportunities for candidates to reflect on work they would have carried out as part of the performance development process in the course. The candidates were asked to describe a session and most candidates were able to access marks in the question.

In question 6(a), candidates used their knowledge and experience to describe a session they had completed. Most candidates described a session which displayed a common theme, or followed an accepted structure (warm up, practical activity, cool down). Candidates performed well in this question.

Section 3

The final section of the question paper presented performance data that required analysis. Most candidates attempted this section but feedback from team leaders and markers was that this section was answered poorly. Attempts to analyse pertinent information from the data and make the link of the physical factor impacting on the mental factor, were lacking the required depth.

In question 8(a), many candidates were able to describe appropriate approaches for improving mental factors during the performance context.

Performance

Candidates performed well in the performance component of the course with many achieving full marks. Verifiers reported some excellent performances where some candidates performed above Higher level. It was clear that teachers and lecturers knew their candidates well and were able to provide appropriate contexts for the assessment.

Personalisation and choice contributed to strong performances in this component of the course.

There were few, if any, reports of candidates having difficulty accessing marks from any particular area of the marking instructions.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Throughout the question paper candidates struggled to provide the required depth of knowledge required to gain high marks in explain, evaluate, and analyse questions.

Section 1

In section 1, question 2(a), candidates were required to describe a model performance or performer for social factors. Many candidates struggled to provide the required descriptive characteristics of the social factors identified.

In question 3, many candidates did not demonstrate knowledge of the process of prioritisation. Candidates were able to explain why they had to address emotional factors to improve performance but struggled to exemplify the importance of addressing one development need over another, or by addressing their needs at the start of a performance development programme.

Many candidates did not provide the required depth to support their evaluations in question 5(b). Responses contained evaluative language but lacked sufficient evidence of how the approaches made an impact on performance.

Section 3

In section 3, many candidates did not clearly identify the impact of the physical factor on the mental factor, instead providing a narrative of the information displayed in the scenario. Some candidates were able to provide analytical insight into the possible reasons the physical factors led to a drop in performance within the mental factors.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres should ensure that candidates have knowledge across all areas of mandatory content.

Centres should make sure that candidates review their understanding of:

- ◆ prioritisation of development needs
- ◆ how one factor can impact another
- ◆ evaluating approaches that develop performance

Performance

Centres should ensure that candidates are fully prepared for assessment across two single performances.

A key aim of the Higher Physical Education course is to develop candidates' ability to perform in physical activities by enabling them to acquire a comprehensive range of movement and performance skills in a variety of activities.

The course will return to full assessment requirements from session 2023–24 onwards, therefore, the modifications within this component will be removed for session 2023–24.

Centres are reminded that candidates must choose two activities which allow them the opportunity to display a significantly different range of movement and performance skills. To set it apart from normal learning and teaching activities the assessment of these performances must take place in a context which is suitably challenging for a Higher Physical Education candidate.

Guidance can be found on the Physical Education subject page of SQA's website to help teachers and assessors decide which activities are acceptable for assessment.

Appendix: 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 was developed to support learners and centres. This included modifications to course assessment, retained from the 2021–22 session. This support was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic while recognising a lessening of the impact of disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic. The revision support that was available for the 2021–22 session was not offered to learners in 2022–23.

In addition, SQA adopted a sensitive approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining

standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams continue to do so in different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019 and 2022.

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 2023 and the ongoing impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on learners. 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 the removal of revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2023 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 2023 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).