



Course report 2023

National 5 Classical Studies

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: 181

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 245

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	125	Percentage	51	Cumulative percentage	51	Minimum mark required	56
B	Number of candidates	37	Percentage	15.1	Cumulative percentage	66.1	Minimum mark required	48
C	Number of candidates	42	Percentage	17.1	Cumulative percentage	83.3	Minimum mark required	40
D	Number of candidates	25	Percentage	10.2	Cumulative percentage	93.5	Minimum mark required	32
No award	Number of candidates	16	Percentage	6.5	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

Overall, candidates performed well across all three sections; however, some candidates struggled to explain the content of the source in question 5 and, as a result, paraphrased its meaning in their responses.

In the Classical literature section, reference was made to a variety of texts with most candidates choosing to base their responses on episodes from Homer's *Odyssey*, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone*, and Euripides' *Medea*.

Most candidates chose the Pompeii option for section 3, but there were a small number of candidates who opted for the Roman Britain option.

Candidates had enough time to complete the question paper and most candidates managed their time accordingly.

There was an increase in candidate entries this year.

Assignment

The requirement to complete the assignment was removed for session 2022–23.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper

Question 1, which asked candidates to 'describe' specific aspect(s) of the classical Greek world, was answered well by most candidates. A small number of candidates listed the qualifications for Athenian citizenship rather than describing what an Athenian man could do to be considered a good citizen.

In question 9, candidates demonstrated a secure knowledge of a fullery in Pompeii and the different types of work carried out there. Likewise, in question 15, candidates had a detailed knowledge of a bathhouse in Roman Britain and were able to describe various aspects such as the types of activities available there and the design and layout of the building(s).

Question 2, the 'explain the reasons why' question, is usually answered well, but it was noticeable that many candidates had a secure knowledge of the subjects taught but did not explain why these prepared pupils for their adult lives. However, there were a few candidates who demonstrated very little knowledge of the subjects taught in classical Greek schools but discussed, at length, the jobs performed by Greeks in their adult life.

In question 10, many candidates scored highly by looking at the different aspects of religion in Pompeii, for example temples, household shrines (*lararia*) and explaining why these seemed important to the people of Pompeii.

In question 16, it was clear the candidates had a detailed knowledge of Boudicca's rebellion and were able to explain why it was successful in the beginning.

Questions 3, 11 and 17, the 'to what extent' questions, were answered very well. It was clear that candidates had a secure understanding of the topics being assessed and were able to structure their answers in a clear and logical way.

Questions 4, 12 and 18, the 'compare' questions, were answered well. Most candidates made the appropriate number of direct comparisons between the classical world and modern world.

In question 5, which asked candidates to explain the content of the source, many candidates merely paraphrased the source in their answers rather than explaining what it tells us about religion in classical Athens.

In question 13, most candidates recognised the picture source and were able to explain what both Source A and Source B were able to tell us about the destruction of Pompeii.

In question 19, many candidates were able to explain what both Source A and Source B tell us about Mithras well with some candidates giving detailed explanations of the picture source (Source A).

Questions 6, 14 and 20 were answered well by most candidates. A small number of candidates focused specifically on interpreting the source and on omissions which limited the number of marks they could be awarded. A few candidates also confused the chronology

of events, for example, in question 6, some candidates commented that the 8th century BC was 300 years after 5th century BC.

In Section 2: Classical literature, it was clear that candidates had a secure knowledge of the texts they had studied and the themes they had covered. In question 7(a), candidates were able to describe, sometimes at length, the decisions characters in their chosen texts faced. A small number of candidates did not address the difficult nature of the decision(s) and so could not be awarded full marks. In question 7(b) and question 7(c), many candidates explained the significance of the theme in the classical world well and so made meaningful comparisons about difficult decisions modern leaders might have to make.

In question 8(a), it was clear that candidates had studied the role of women within their chosen text, but it was noticeable that some candidates were not addressing the specifics of the question. Most candidate responses to question 8(b) were very good.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

In Section 1: Life in classical Greece and Section 3: Life in the Roman world, candidates should be reminded that merely paraphrasing the source for the 'explain the source' question does not attract marks. Candidates are expected to explain what the source tells us about a particular topic. This means highlighting specific points in the source and explaining what these mean. Some candidates choose to quote from the written source; this can be a useful strategy for focusing their explanation, but it is not compulsory.

In Section 2: Classical literature, it is not considered good practice for candidates to produce a rehearsed response when answering the questions. Candidates should read the questions thoroughly and formulate an appropriate response. General comments about the themes which are not related to the specifics of the questions cannot attract the full range of marks available.

Candidates should be reminded that in Section 3: Life in the Roman world, they should answer only the questions on either Part A: Pompeii, or Part B: Roman Britain, not both.

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](#).