

Course report 2026

National 5 Sociology, SCQF level 5

We've written this report for teachers and lecturers. We recommend you read this with the published course assessment documents and marking instructions.

The report:

- provides a summary of how each course component performed
- highlights areas of the question paper and coursework where candidates performed well and areas where they did not perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

We collect and prepare the statistics in course reports before we complete the appeals process.

Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 237

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 238

Distribution of course awards (including minimum mark to achieve each grade)

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	93	39.1	39.1	72
B	49	20.6	59.7	61
C	35	14.7	74.4	50
D	27	11.3	85.7	39
No award	34	14.3	100	Not applicable

We've not applied rounding to these statistics.

In this report:

- 'Most' means greater than or equal to 70%.
- 'Many' means 50% to 69%.
- 'Some' means 25% to 49%.
- 'Few' or 'a few' means less than 25%.

You can find [statistical reports](#) on our website.

General commentary on grade boundaries

Our main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels, and to maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, we aim 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's very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, we hold a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Senior Qualifications Scotland staff normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors use their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. We 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.

We can adjust the grade boundaries downwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.

We can adjust the grade boundaries upwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.

If levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).

How the course assessment performed

Question paper

Overall, this component performed well, with candidates demonstrating a sound level of understanding across the assessment. Most candidates answered almost all parts of question 1 successfully, indicating that they understood the content and could apply their knowledge effectively.

For culture questions 2(c) and 2(d), we awarded marks to candidates using the Amish as an example of a distinct culture in their answers, although sociological literature is not consistent in this view. This approach ensured fairness and consistency in candidate outcomes.

The question paper provided opportunities for candidates across the full ability range, with an appropriate distribution of topics and a varied range of command words. Straightforward questions enabled most candidates to achieve at least half marks by demonstrating core knowledge and understanding, while more demanding questions allowed stronger candidates to show deeper understanding and analytical skills, and to apply concepts in more complex contexts.

Candidate performance suggests that the question paper provided a reliable measure of the intended learning outcomes. While each individual question provided a fair assessment of candidates' abilities, the overall level of demand across the question paper was slightly lower than in previous years. Consequently, we raised grade boundaries.

Assignment

The assignment performed as intended, offering an appropriate level of challenge while enabling candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. It provided a meaningful opportunity for candidates to show their understanding across the assessed content.

How candidates performed

Question paper

Question 1: Most candidates answered this question well, indicating a strong general understanding of the material assessed. They engaged effectively with the earlier parts of the question.

Question 1(f): This part of the question played a key role in differentiating between candidates. It distinguished those with a deeper level of understanding and the ability to apply their knowledge in a more developed or analytical way. Most candidates answered this well.

Question 2: Most candidates answered this question well, demonstrating a secure understanding of the assessment objectives covered in this section. Performance across most parts of the question was strong and consistent.

Question 3: Most candidates answered this question well, with many demonstrating a good overall understanding of the topic area and engaging effectively with the demands of the question.

Question 3(a)(ii): This part of question 3 proved to be more challenging. Some candidates did not explicitly identify named research studies or clearly attribute evidence. We could only award marks where research evidence was clearly signposted in the candidate's answer.

Assignment

Most candidates performed well in the assignment. It was accessible and effectively aligned with SCQF level 5. Candidates were well prepared for the demands of the assignment. The range of topics selected by candidates demonstrated an encouraging level of sociological understanding. Most candidates selected issues that lent themselves well to sociological investigation and analysis, and this resulted in focused and conceptually grounded assignments.

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper

You should use a broad range of clear, unambiguous, and widely accepted examples when exploring key sociological concepts such as culture. This minimises confusion arising from contested or borderline examples and supports candidates in applying their knowledge more accurately and confidently in assessments.

Emphasise the explicit teaching and reinforcement of named research studies.

Encourage candidates to identify specific researchers, studies, and sources when presenting evidence, rather than relying on general or implied references to research findings. Clear signposting of research is essential, as it enables markers to clearly identify the intended evidence and award marks appropriately. Developing this practice will improve the clarity, precision, and reliability of candidate answers, ensuring that they name supporting material consistently and accurately. This will help candidates to access available marks and enhance their overall performance in assessments.

Assignment

Continue to ensure that candidates use the template provided and that choice of topic is as diverse and individual as possible.