



Attainment Statistics — December 2023

Official Statistics

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Attainment statistics

Attainment Statistics — December 2023 presents a summary of entries and attainment following the completion of appeals and other post-certification procedures, reflecting information at a particular point in time (8 November 2023).

In this release, attainment statistics for 2023 are generally presented with reference to attainment in the previous year (2022) and to 2019 (the most recent year prior to the pandemic). The different awarding arrangements in place between 2020 and 2023 mean that it is not possible to compare attainment between years without full consideration of this essential contextual information as outlined in the background information section.

Qualifications included

The types of qualification covered in this release are described in Table 1.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) has 12 levels, which, in ascending order (SCQF levels 1–12) indicate the level of difficulty of a particular qualification. The SCQF allows for broad comparisons to be made between qualifications to allow candidates, employers and the public to understand the range of skills and learning that should be achieved at each level. [More information can be found on the SCQF website.](#)

Table 1: Types of qualification covered in this release.

Qualification	Description
National 5 courses (SCQF level 5)	National 5 courses are notionally based on 160 hours of directed learning and 80 hours of self-directed learning and equate to 24 SCQF credit points.
Higher courses (SCQF level 6)	Higher courses are notionally based on 160 hours of directed learning and 80 hours of self-directed learning and equate to 24 SCQF credit points.
Advanced Higher courses (SCQF level 7)	Advanced Higher courses are notionally based on 160 hours of directed learning and 160 hours of self-directed learning and equate to 32 SCQF credit points.
Scottish Baccalaureate (SCQF level 7)	The Scottish Baccalaureate is available in four subject areas (Science, Languages, Social Sciences and Expressive Arts) and consists of a coherent group of Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications, and an Interdisciplinary Project. The Scottish Baccalaureate is notionally based on 1040 hours of learning and equates to 104 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF level 7.
National 2 (SCQF level 2)	National 2 courses were introduced in 2014. National 2 courses require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units in a particular subject and is notionally based on 180 hours of learning and equate to 18 SCQF credit points.
National 3 (SCQF level 3)	National 3 courses were introduced in 2014 and require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units in a particular subject and is notionally based on 180 hours of learning and equate to 18 SCQF credit points.
National 4 (SCQF level 4)	National 4 courses were introduced in 2014 and require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units, including an Added Value unit, in a particular subject and is notionally based on 240 hours of learning and equate to 24 SCQF credit points.
Skills for Work (SCQF levels 3–6)	Skills for Work courses are available across SCQF levels 3 to 6. Skills for Work courses involve a strong element of learning through involvement in practical activities which are directly related to a particular vocational area,

Qualification	Description
	and they develop knowledge and skills that are important to employment. The courses require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units in a particular subject.
Awards (SCQF levels 1–6)	SQA Awards recognise the life and work skills that candidates gain from activities they might already be taking part in at school, at college or elsewhere — such as sport, mentoring, voluntary work or fund-raising activities. In common with some other qualifications in SQA’s portfolio they have been designed to recognise wider achievement. Awards require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units in a particular subject.
National Certificates (SCQF levels 3–6)	National Certificates are primarily aimed at 16- to 18-year-old candidates and adults in education, normally at a college. They offer candidates a full-time programme of vocational study. National Certificates require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units in a particular subject.
National Progression Awards (SCQF levels 2–6)	National Progression Awards are designed to develop and assess a defined set of skills and knowledge in specialist vocational areas. They are linked to National Occupational Standards — the basis of Scottish Vocational Qualifications. National Progression Awards require the attainment of a number of SQA quality assured internally assessed units in a particular subject.

Headline figures

National 5

- ◆ Entries were 321,385 in 2023, an increase of 3.6% from 310,265 in 2022.
- ◆ A to C attainment was 78.9% (81.6% in 2022; 85.8% in 2021; 89.0% in 2020; 78.3% in 2019).
- ◆ A attainment was 38.8% (41.2% in 2022; 46.7% in 2021; 42.4% in 2020; 35.2% in 2019).

Higher

- ◆ Entries were 191,820 in 2023, an increase of 1.9% from 188,280 in 2022.
- ◆ A to C attainment was 77.4% (80.3% in 2022; 87.3% in 2021; 89.3% in 2020; 74.9% in 2019).
- ◆ A attainment was 33.3% (36.5% in 2022; 47.7% in 2021; 40.1% in 2020; 28.5% in 2019).

Advanced Higher

- ◆ Entries were 27,745 in 2023, a decrease of 1.7% from 28,220 in 2022.
- ◆ A to C attainment was 80.2% (82.6% in 2022; 90.2% in 2021; 93.1% in 2020; 79.6% in 2019).
- ◆ A attainment was 33.4% (35.0% in 2022; 51.0% in 2021; 46.3% in 2020; 32.0% in 2019).

Scottish Baccalaureate

- ◆ Entries were 175, with a total attainment rate of 75.7% (74.2% in 2022; 92.7% in 2021; 87.9% in 2020; 72.1% in 2019).

National 2 to National 4

- ◆ National 2 entries were 2,995, with an attainment rate of 71.9% (74.9% in 2022; 70.5% in 2021; 77.6% in 2020; 79.7% in 2019).
- ◆ National 3 entries were 22,420, with an attainment rate of 86.1% (86.5% in 2022; 88.6% in 2021; 92.9% in 2020; 89.0% in 2019).
- ◆ National 4 entries were 135,870, with an attainment rate of 90.1% (88.2% in 2022; 89.2% in 2021; 92.4% in 2020; 90.0% in 2019).

Skills for Work

- ◆ Total entries across all SCQF levels were 16,300, with an attainment rate of 84.4% (81.6% in 2022; 83.4% in 2021; 87.4% in 2020; 85.0% in 2019).

Entries in graded National Qualifications

By qualification level

At National 5, there were 321,385 entries in 2023, an increase of 3.6% from 310,265 in 2022 (Figure 1; Table 2).

At Higher, there were 191,820 entries in 2023 (an increase of 1.9% from 188,280 in 2022; Figure 1; Table 2).

At Advanced Higher, there were 27,745 entries in 2023 (a decrease of 1.7% from 28,220 in 2022; Figure 1; Table 2).

Entries have increased for National 5 and Higher in 2023 from 2022 but decreased for Advanced Higher.

Figure 1: Entries for National 5, Higher, and Advanced Higher from 2019 to 2023.

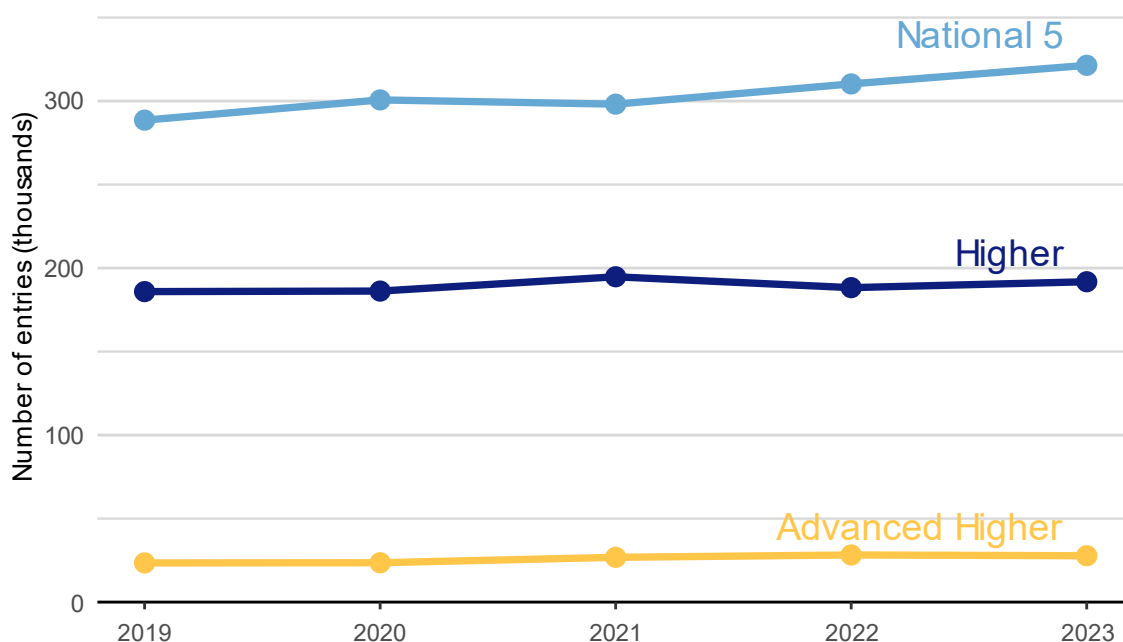


Table 2: Entries for National 5, Higher, and Advanced Higher from 2019 to 2023.

Level	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
National 5	288,560	300,685	298,135	310,265	321,385
Higher	185,915	186,225	194,795	188,280	191,820
Advanced Higher	23,465	23,570	26,805	28,220	27,745

Subject breakdown

National 5

Entries increased in seven of the nine most popular (largest entry) National 5 subjects in 2023 compared to 2022.

Figure 2: Entries in the nine most popular (largest entry) National 5 subjects from 2019 to 2023.



Table 3: Entries in the nine most popular (largest entry) National 5 subjects from 2019 to 2023.

Subject	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Applications of Mathematics	4,460	10,430	10,760	14,315	19,025
Biology	21,550	21,790	21,215	22,580	22,940
Chemistry	16,035	16,080	15,170	15,595	15,560
English	45,595	46,665	46,875	47,735	49,000
History	14,705	15,035	15,245	15,680	16,235
Mathematics	41,525	41,225	36,450	38,245	37,500
Modern Studies	11,960	12,185	12,940	13,635	13,725
Physical Education	16,770	17,195	18,375	19,180	20,025
Physics	13,790	13,655	12,985	13,210	13,235

Higher

Entries increased in six of the nine most popular (largest entry) Higher subjects in 2023 compared to 2022.

Figure 3: Entries in the nine most popular (largest entry) Higher subjects from 2019 to 2023.

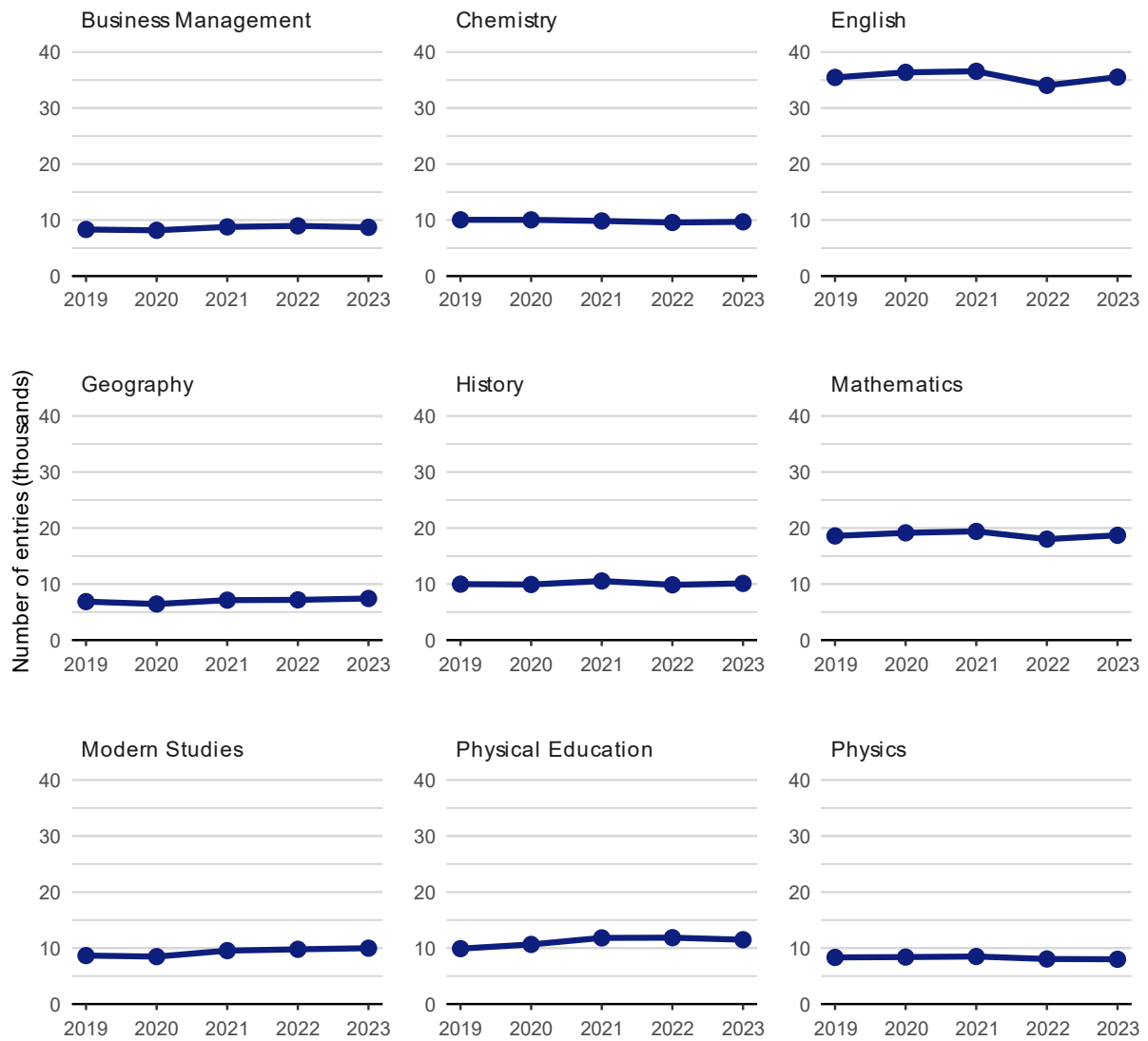


Table 4: Entries in the nine most popular (largest entry) Higher subjects from 2019 to 2023.

Subject	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Business Management	8,320	8,175	8,780	8,965	8,710
Chemistry	10,045	10,040	9,845	9,570	9,685
English	35,460	36,370	36,560	34,045	35,520
Geography	6,865	6,440	7,130	7,180	7,425
History	9,985	9,920	10,550	9,865	10,115
Mathematics	18,595	19,145	19,405	18,020	18,705
Modern Studies	8,655	8,475	9,535	9,775	9,975
Physical Education	9,895	10,645	11,810	11,850	11,485
Physics	8,325	8,390	8,490	8,045	7,995

Advanced Higher

Entries decreased in six of the nine most popular (largest entry) Advanced Higher subjects in 2023 compared to 2022.

Figure 4: Entries in the nine most popular (largest entry) Advanced Higher subjects from 2019 to 2023.

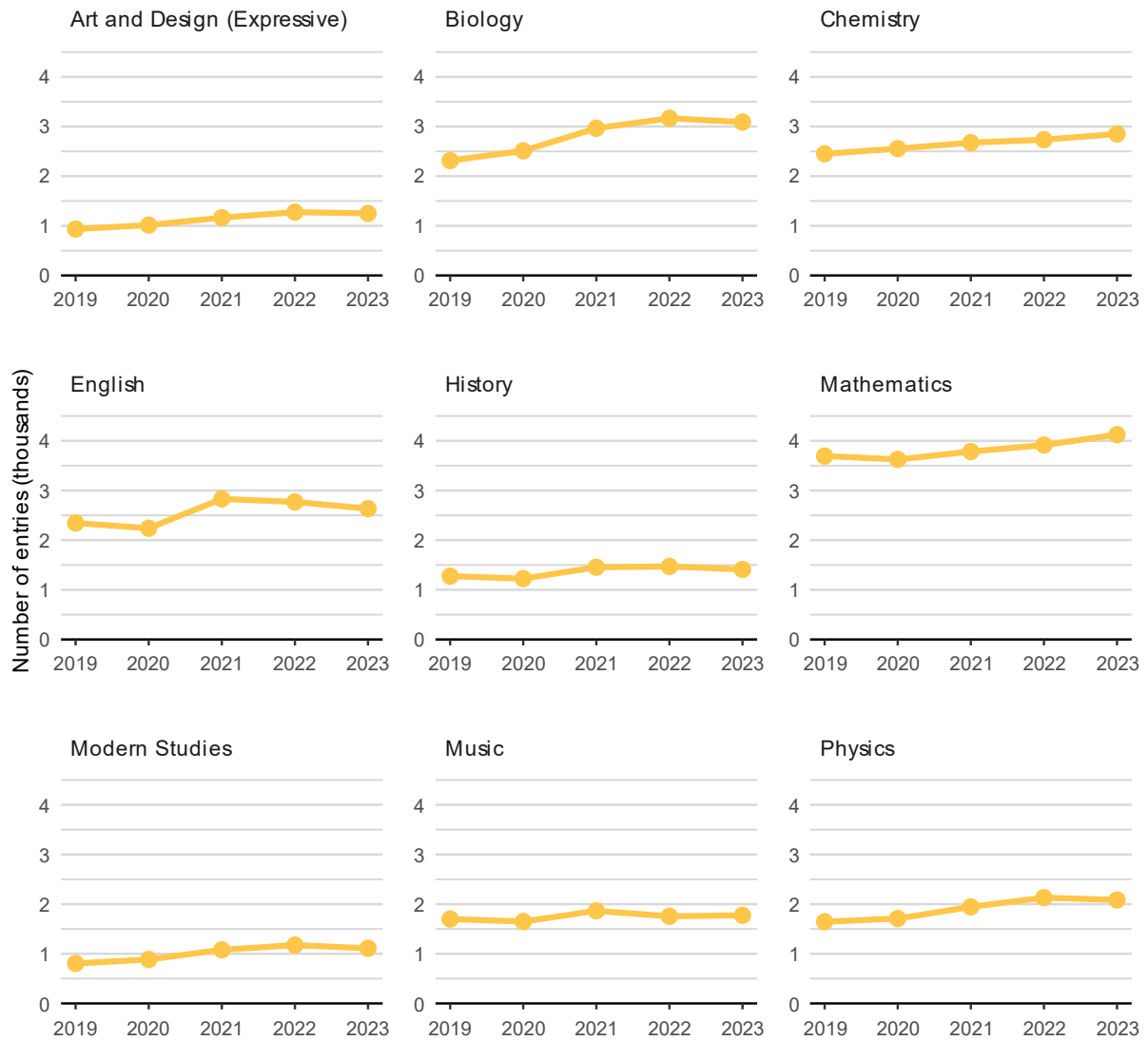


Table 5: Entries in the nine most popular (largest entry) Advanced Higher subjects from 2019 to 2023.

Subject	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Art and Design (Expressive)	935	1,015	1,165	1,275	1,250
Biology	2,315	2,510	2,965	3,165	3,090
Chemistry	2,450	2,555	2,675	2,735	2,850
English	2,345	2,240	2,830	2,770	2,635
History	1,275	1,225	1,455	1,470	1,410
Mathematics	3,695	3,625	3,785	3,915	4,125
Modern Studies	805	885	1,080	1,175	1,110
Music	1,700	1,650	1,865	1,755	1,775
Physics	1,645	1,710	1,945	2,130	2,085

Sex breakdown

At National 5, there were 160,150 male candidate entries in 2023 (an increase of 3.5% from 154,760 in 2022). There were 161,150 female candidate entries in 2023 (an increase of 3.7% from 155,425 in 2022; Table 6).

At Higher, there were 88,720 male candidate entries in 2023 (an increase of 1.9% from 87,040 in 2022). There were 103,010 female candidate entries in 2023 (an increase of 1.8% from 101,140 in 2022; Table 6).

At Advanced Higher, there were 12,400 male candidate entries in 2023 (a decrease of 1.9% from 12,640 in 2022). There were 15,330 female candidate entries in 2023 (a decrease of 1.5% from 15,570 in 2022; Table 6).

Table 6: Entries by sex in graded National Qualifications from 2019 to 2023.

Level	Sex	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
National 5	Female	148,570	153,725	150,265	155,425	161,150
National 5	Male	139,985	146,935	147,780	154,760	160,150
Higher	Female	104,005	103,830	106,735	101,140	103,010
Higher	Male	81,900	82,390	88,030	87,040	88,720
Advanced Higher	Female	13,180	13,210	15,160	15,570	15,330
Advanced Higher	Male	10,285	10,360	11,645	12,640	12,400

Centre type breakdown

The majority of entries in graded National Qualifications are from education authority centres and the same is true in 2023. The number of entries to National Qualifications across different centre types can be impacted by a range of factors.

At National 5, there were 299,735 entries for education authority centres in 2023 (an increase of 3.8% from 288,880 in 2022). There were 19,180 entries for independent centres in 2023 (an increase of 0.9% from 19,015 in 2022). There were 2,410 entries for FE colleges in 2023 (an increase of 3.7% from 2,325 in 2022).

At Higher, there were 173,530 entries for education authority centres in 2023 (an increase of 2.0% from 170,080 in 2022). There were 14,845 entries for independent centres in 2023 (an increase of 1.8% from 14,585 in 2022). There were 3,275 entries for FE colleges in 2023 (a decrease of 5.9% from 3,480 in 2022).

At Advanced Higher, there were 22,810 entries for education authority centres in 2023 (a decrease of 2.6% from 23,430 in 2022). There were 4,690 entries for independent centres in 2023 (an increase of 3.1% from 4,550 in 2022). There were 85 entries for FE colleges in 2023 (an increase of 13.3% from 75 in 2022).

Table 7: Entries by centre type in graded National Qualifications from 2019 to 2023.

Level	Centre type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
National 5	Education Authority	266,495	278,565	276,480	288,880	299,735
Higher	Education Authority	164,830	166,670	175,855	170,080	173,530
Advanced Higher	Education Authority	19,325	19,090	22,260	23,430	22,810
National 5	Independent	18,300	18,370	18,830	19,015	19,180
Higher	Independent	14,575	14,165	14,480	14,585	14,845
Advanced Higher	Independent	3,895	4,230	4,315	4,550	4,690
National 5	FE College	3,680	3,690	2,780	2,325	2,410
Higher	FE College	6,410	5,280	4,315	3,480	3,275
Advanced Higher	FE College	95	80	50	75	85

Attainment in graded National Qualifications

SQA external assessments did not go ahead in 2020 and 2021 due to disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Alternative approaches to assessment, relying on teacher judgement, were used to award grades and allow learners to progress. All visualisations of attainment in this report indicate this period using grey background shading.

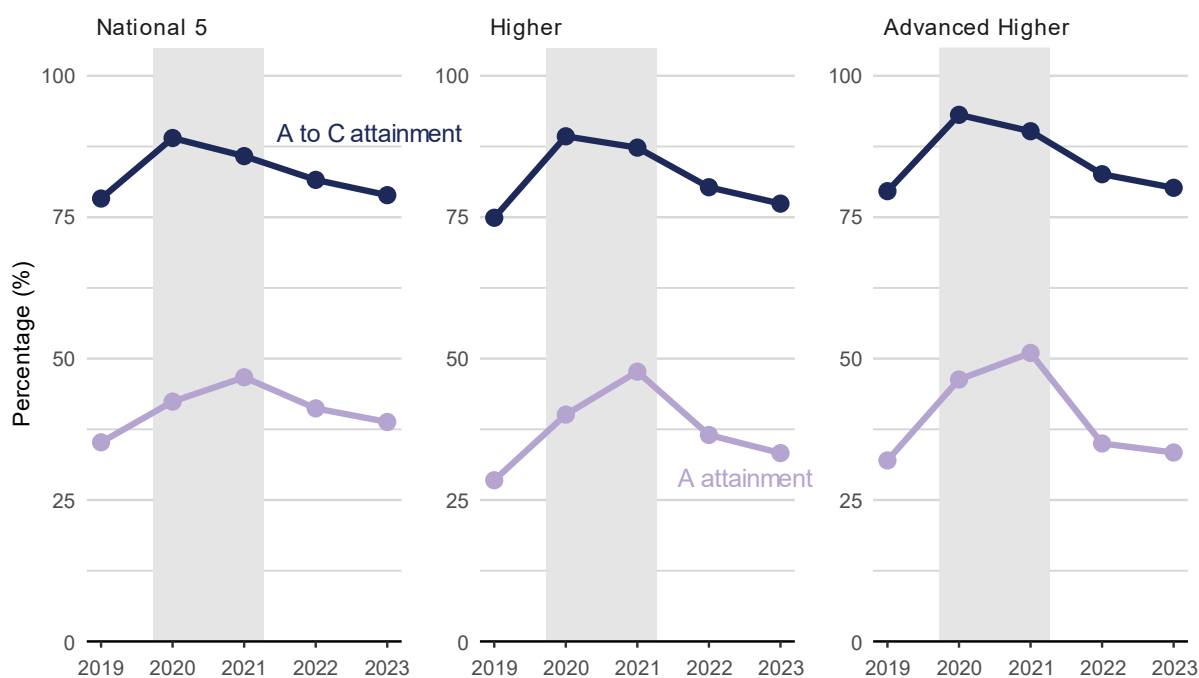
SQA external assessments returned in 2022, but assessment modifications were put in place with the aim to increase learning and teaching time. These assessment modifications were retained for 2023. In this section, attainment statistics for 2023 are generally presented with reference to attainment in the previous year (2022) and to 2019 (the most recent year prior to the pandemic). The different awarding arrangements in place between 2020 and 2023 mean that it is not possible to compare attainment between years without full consideration of this essential contextual information.

The proportion of entries that achieved an A grade and the proportion of entries that achieved A to C grades are referred to as 'attainment rates' throughout this section.

By qualification level

National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher attainment decreased in 2023 to levels between 2022 attainment and pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 5: Trends in overall attainment rates at grade A and grades A to C from 2019 to 2023.



Note: The period represented by the grey background shading indicates that alternative approaches to assessment, relying on teacher judgement, were used to award grades and allow learners to progress.

Table 8: Summary of overall attainment rates from 2019 to 2023.

Level	Grade(s)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
National 5	A to C	78.3%	89.0%	85.8%	81.6%	78.9%
National 5	A	35.2%	42.4%	46.7%	41.2%	38.8%
Higher	A to C	74.9%	89.3%	87.3%	80.3%	77.4%
Higher	A	28.5%	40.1%	47.7%	36.5%	33.3%
Advanced Higher	A to C	79.6%	93.1%	90.2%	82.6%	80.2%
Advanced Higher	A	32.0%	46.3%	51.0%	35.0%	33.4%

National 5

The overall attainment rate at grades A to C for National 5 was 78.9% in 2023. This represents a decrease of 2.7 percentage points from 81.6% in 2022 and an increase of 0.6 percentage points from 78.3% in 2019.

The overall attainment rate at grade A was 38.8% in 2023. This represents a decrease of 2.4 percentage points from 41.2% in 2022 and an increase of 3.6 percentage points from 35.2% in 2019.

Higher

The overall attainment rate at grades A to C for Higher was 77.4% in 2023. This represents a decrease of 2.9 percentage points from 80.3% in 2022 and an increase of 2.5 percentage points from 74.9% in 2019.

The overall attainment rate at grade A was 33.3% in 2023. This represents a decrease of 3.2 percentage points from 36.5% in 2022 and an increase of 4.8 percentage points from 28.5% in 2019.

Advanced Higher

The overall attainment rate at grades A to C for Advanced Higher was 80.2% in 2023. This represents a decrease of 2.4 percentage points from 82.6% in 2022 and an increase of 0.6 percentage points from 79.6% in 2019.

The overall attainment rate at grade A was 33.4% in 2023. This represents a decrease of 1.6 percentage points from 35.0% in 2022 and an increase of 1.4 percentage points from 32.0% in 2019.

Subject breakdown

In this section, attainment is summarised for a selection of the most popular (largest entry) subjects at each level. Entries and attainment for the complete list of subjects is available in the data tables that accompany this release.

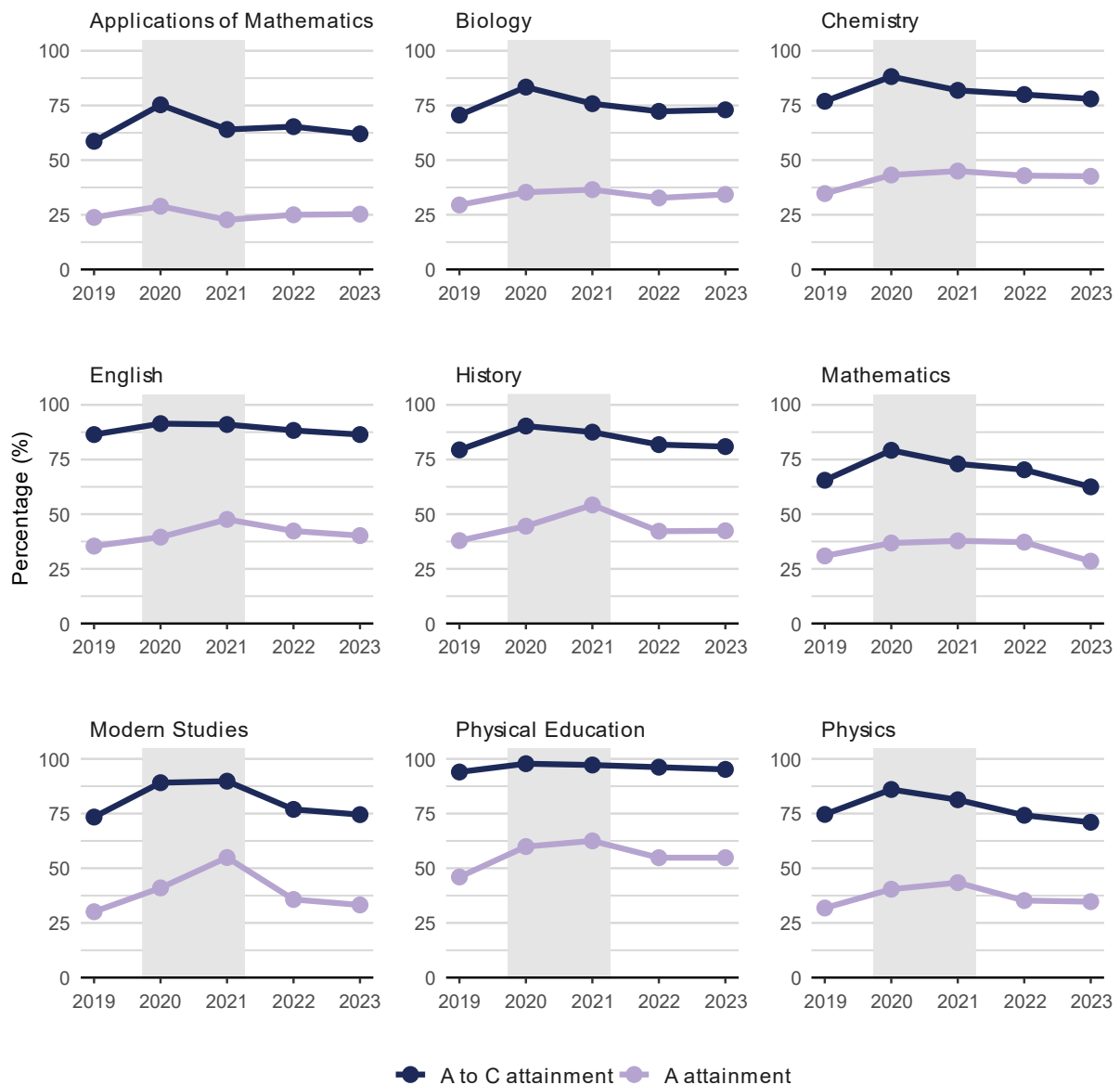
National 5

There were 37,500 entries for National 5 Mathematics in 2023 (a decrease of 1.9% from 38,245 in 2022). 62.5% of grades were A to C, a decrease of 7.8 percentage points from 70.3% in 2022 and a decrease of 3.0 percentage points from 65.5% in 2019. 28.5% of grades were A, a decrease of 8.7 percentage points from 37.2% in 2022 and a decrease of 2.4 percentage points from 30.9% in 2019.

There were 49,000 entries for National 5 English in 2023 (an increase of 2.7% from 47,735 in 2022). 86.4% of grades were A to C, a decrease of 1.9 percentage points from 88.3% in 2022 and no change in percentage points from 86.4% in 2019. 40.2% of grades were A, a decrease of 2.1 percentage points from 42.3% in 2022 and an increase of 4.8 percentage points from 35.4% in 2019.

For the other large uptake subjects including Applications of Mathematics, Chemistry, History, Modern Studies, Physical Education and Physics, the A to C attainment rate decreased from 2022. However, Biology saw an increase. Excluding Physics, all other subjects saw an increase in the A to C rate from 2019. The A rate for Chemistry, Modern Studies and Physics decreased from 2022. Applications of Mathematics, Biology and History all saw an increase in the A rate from 2022. The A rate for Physical Education remained the same. For all of these large uptake subjects (with the exception of Mathematics), the A rate increased from 2019 (Figure 6; Table 9).

Figure 6: Trends in attainment at grade A and grades A to C for the nine most popular (largest entry) National 5 subjects from 2019 to 2023.



Note: The period represented by the grey background shading indicates that alternative approaches to assessment, relying on teacher judgement, were used to award grades and allow learners to progress.

Table 9: Summary of attainment for selected National 5 subjects from 2019 to 2023.

Subject	Grade(s)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Applications of Mathematics	A to C	58.6%	75.3%	64.0%	65.3%	62.0%
Biology	A to C	70.6%	83.4%	75.8%	72.3%	73.0%
Chemistry	A to C	76.9%	88.2%	81.9%	80.0%	78.0%
English	A to C	86.4%	91.4%	91.0%	88.3%	86.4%
History	A to C	79.4%	90.3%	87.5%	81.8%	80.9%
Mathematics	A to C	65.5%	79.2%	73.0%	70.3%	62.5%
Modern Studies	A to C	73.4%	89.1%	89.8%	76.9%	74.5%
Physical Education	A to C	94.0%	97.8%	97.2%	96.2%	95.2%
Physics	A to C	74.6%	86.0%	81.3%	74.2%	71.0%
Applications of Mathematics	A	23.8%	28.9%	22.7%	25.0%	25.3%
Biology	A	29.5%	35.3%	36.5%	32.7%	34.3%
Chemistry	A	34.7%	43.2%	45.0%	42.9%	42.6%
English	A	35.4%	39.5%	47.6%	42.3%	40.2%
History	A	37.9%	44.5%	54.2%	42.2%	42.4%
Mathematics	A	30.9%	36.8%	37.8%	37.2%	28.5%
Modern Studies	A	30.1%	41.0%	54.9%	35.7%	33.2%
Physical Education	A	46.0%	59.9%	62.5%	54.8%	54.8%
Physics	A	31.8%	40.4%	43.4%	35.2%	34.7%

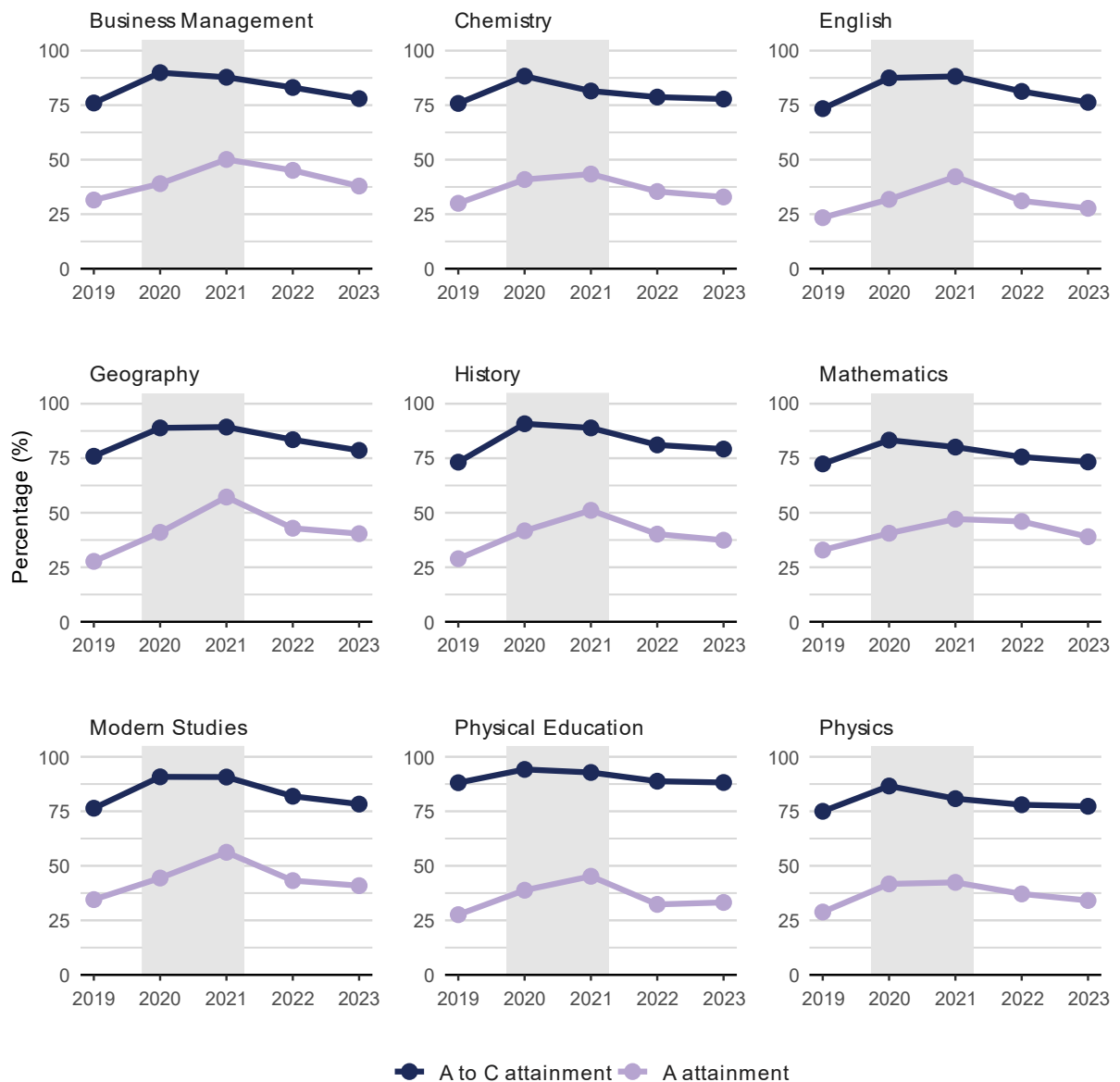
Higher

There were 18,705 entries for Higher Mathematics in 2023 (an increase of 3.8% from 18,020 in 2022). 73.3% of grades were A to C, a decrease of 2.3 percentage points from 75.6% in 2022 and an increase of 0.9 percentage points from 72.4% in 2019. 39% of grades were A, a decrease of 7.0 percentage points from 46.0% in 2022 and an increase of 6.1 percentage points from 32.9% in 2019.

There were 35,520 entries for Higher English in 2023 (an increase of 4.3% from 34,045 in 2022). 76.3% of grades were A to C, a decrease of 5.0 percentage points from 81.3% in 2022 and an increase of 2.9 percentage points from 73.4% in 2019. 27.7% of grades were A, a decrease of 3.4 percentage points from 31.1% in 2022 and an increase of 4.3 percentage points from 23.4% in 2019.

Trends in the proportion of candidates awarded grades at grade A or grades A to C in other large entry subjects generally follow similar patterns to Mathematics and English. However, Physical Education has a higher 2023 A attainment rate than in 2022. (Figure 7; Table 10).

Figure 7: Trends in attainment at grade A and grades A to C for the nine most popular (largest entry) Higher subjects from 2019 to 2023.



Note: The period represented by the grey background shading indicates that alternative approaches to assessment, relying on teacher judgement, were used to award grades and allow learners to progress.

Table 10: Summary of attainment for selected Higher subjects from 2019 to 2023.

Subject	Grade(s)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Business Management	A to C	76.0%	89.9%	87.8%	83.1%	78.0%
Chemistry	A to C	75.8%	88.3%	81.5%	78.7%	77.8%
English	A to C	73.4%	87.5%	88.2%	81.3%	76.3%
Geography	A to C	75.9%	88.9%	89.3%	83.5%	78.6%
History	A to C	73.2%	90.8%	88.9%	81.1%	79.2%
Mathematics	A to C	72.4%	83.3%	80.1%	75.6%	73.3%
Modern Studies	A to C	76.4%	90.8%	90.7%	81.9%	78.3%
Physical Education	A to C	88.1%	94.2%	92.8%	88.8%	88.2%
Physics	A to C	75.0%	86.6%	80.8%	78.0%	77.3%
Business Management	A	31.5%	39.0%	50.1%	45.1%	37.9%
Chemistry	A	30.0%	40.9%	43.4%	35.4%	32.9%
English	A	23.4%	31.8%	42.2%	31.1%	27.7%
Geography	A	27.7%	41.0%	57.2%	42.9%	40.4%
History	A	28.9%	41.7%	51.1%	40.2%	37.4%
Mathematics	A	32.9%	40.6%	47.1%	46.0%	39.0%
Modern Studies	A	34.5%	44.4%	56.2%	43.2%	40.9%
Physical Education	A	27.6%	38.8%	45.2%	32.3%	33.2%
Physics	A	28.8%	41.7%	42.4%	37.1%	34.1%

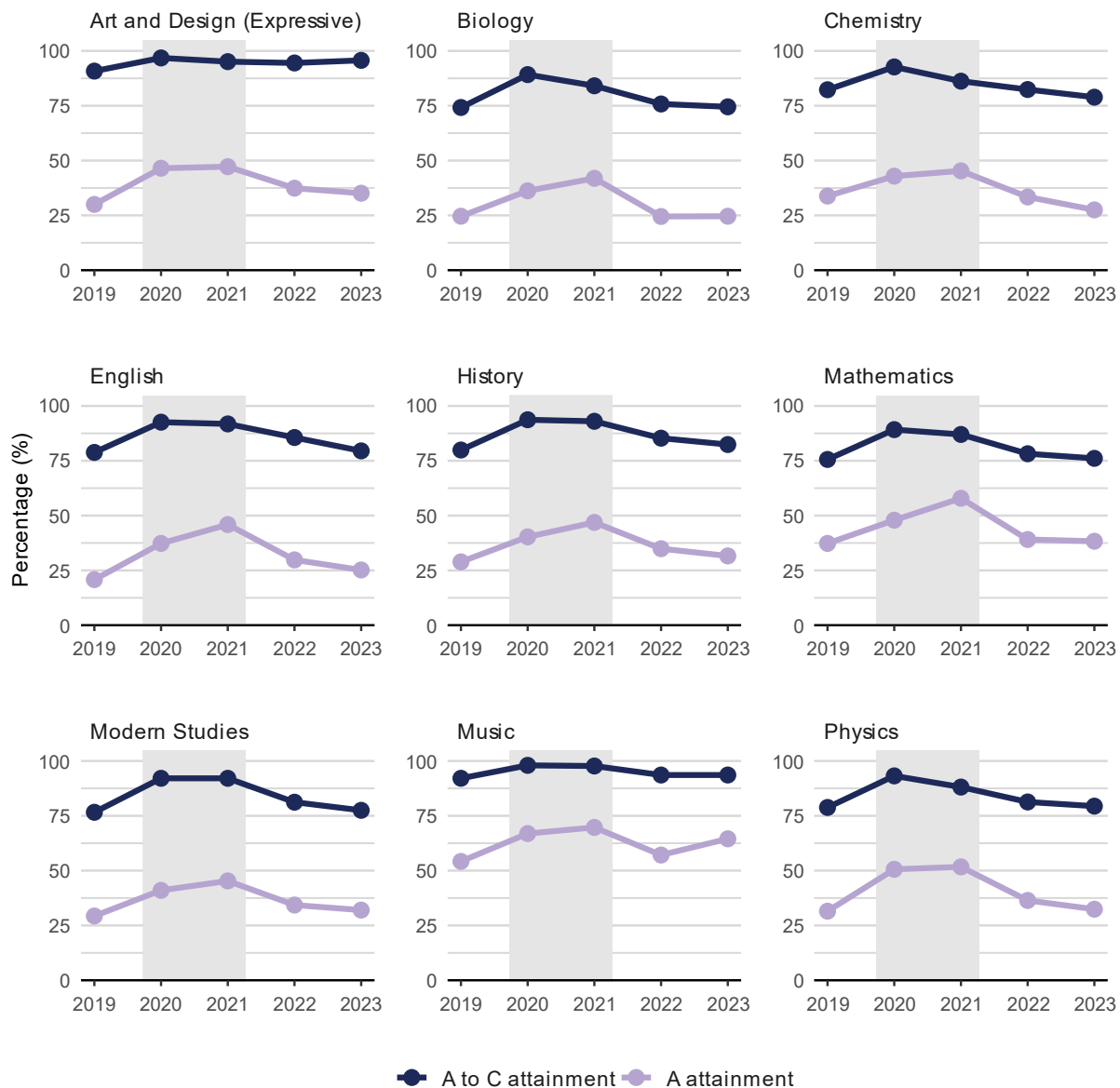
Advanced Higher

There were 4,125 entries for Advanced Higher Mathematics in 2023 (an increase of 5.4% from 3,915 in 2022). 76.1% of grades were A to C, a decrease of 2.1 percentage points from 78.2% in 2022 and an increase of 0.5 percentage points from 75.6% in 2019. 38.3% of grades were A, a decrease of 0.8 percentage points from 39.1% in 2022 and an increase of 1.0 percentage points from 37.3% in 2019.

There were 2,635 entries for Advanced Higher English in 2023 (a decrease of 4.9% from 2,770 in 2022). 79.5% of grades were A to C, a decrease of 6.1 percentage points from 85.6% in 2022 and an increase of 0.7 percentage points from 78.8% in 2019. 25.2% of grades were A, a decrease of 4.6 percentage points from 29.8% in 2022 and an increase of 4.4 percentage points from 20.8% in 2019.

For the other large uptake subjects including Biology, Chemistry, History, Modern Studies, and Physics the A to C rate decreased from 2022, however Art and Design (Expressive) saw an increase and Music was the same as in 2022. Excluding Chemistry, all other large uptake subjects saw an increase in the A to C rate from 2019. The A rate for Biology and Music increased from 2022. Art and Design (Expressive), Chemistry, History, Modern Studies and Physics all saw a decrease in the A rate from 2022. Excluding Biology and Chemistry, all other large uptake subjects saw an increase in the A rate from 2019 (Figure 8; Table 11).

Figure 8: Trends in attainment at grade A and grades A to C for the nine most popular (largest entry) Advanced Higher subjects from 2019 to 2023.



Note: The period represented by the grey background shading indicates that alternative approaches to assessment, relying on teacher judgement, were used to award grades and allow learners to progress.

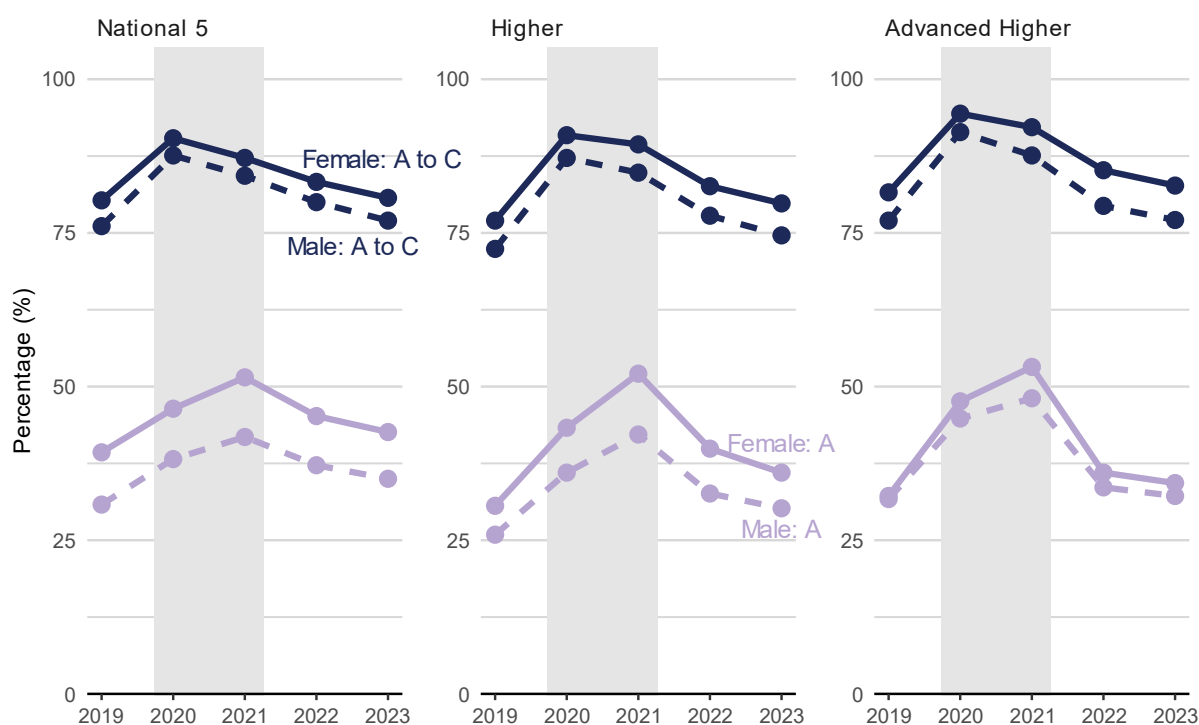
Table 11: Summary of attainment for selected Advanced Higher subjects from 2019 to 2023.

Subject	Grade(s)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Art and Design (Expressive)	A to C	90.8%	96.8%	95.1%	94.5%	95.7%
Biology	A to C	74.2%	89.2%	84.1%	75.8%	74.5%
Chemistry	A to C	82.3%	92.7%	86.2%	82.4%	78.9%
English	A to C	78.8%	92.6%	91.8%	85.6%	79.5%
History	A to C	79.9%	93.7%	93.0%	85.3%	82.4%
Mathematics	A to C	75.6%	89.2%	87.0%	78.2%	76.1%
Modern Studies	A to C	76.6%	92.1%	92.1%	81.2%	77.5%
Music	A to C	92.1%	98.0%	97.7%	93.6%	93.6%
Physics	A to C	78.8%	93.2%	88.1%	81.3%	79.4%
Art and Design (Expressive)	A	30.0%	46.5%	47.2%	37.4%	35.1%
Biology	A	24.6%	36.2%	41.9%	24.5%	24.6%
Chemistry	A	33.8%	42.9%	45.3%	33.4%	27.5%
English	A	20.8%	37.3%	45.9%	29.8%	25.2%
History	A	28.9%	40.3%	46.9%	34.9%	31.6%
Mathematics	A	37.3%	47.9%	57.9%	39.1%	38.3%
Modern Studies	A	29.3%	41.0%	45.3%	34.3%	32.0%
Music	A	54.2%	66.9%	69.7%	57.1%	64.5%
Physics	A	31.5%	50.6%	51.7%	36.4%	32.4%

Sex breakdown

Attainment rates have decreased for both male and female candidates in 2023 from 2022 across all levels and female candidates continue to have higher attainment rates than male candidates.

Figure 9: Attainment rates by Sex for National 5, Higher, and Advanced Higher from 2019 to 2023.



Note: The period represented by the grey background shading indicates that alternative approaches to assessment, relying on teacher judgement, were used to award grades and allow learners to progress.

National 5

At grades A to C, the attainment rate decreased for male candidates and for female candidates in 2023 from 2022. 80.7% of female candidate grades at National 5 were A to C in 2023, a decrease of 2.6 percentage points from 83.3% in 2022 and an increase of 0.4 percentage points from 80.3% in 2019. 77.0% of male candidate grades at National 5 were A to C in 2023, a decrease of 3.0 percentage points from 80.0% in 2022 and an increase of 0.9 percentage points from 76.1% in 2019 (Table 12).

At grade A, the attainment rate decreased for male candidates and for female candidates in 2023 from 2022. 42.6% of female candidate grades at National 5 were A in 2023, a decrease of 2.6 percentage points from 45.2% in 2022 and an increase of 3.3 percentage points from 39.3% in 2019. 35.0% of male candidate grades at National 5 were A in 2023, a decrease of 2.2 percentage points from 37.2% in 2022 and an increase of 4.2 percentage points from 30.8% in 2019 (Table 12).

Table 12: Summary of attainment for National 5 qualifications from 2019 to 2023 by sex.

Sex	Grade(s)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Female	A to C	80.3%	90.4%	87.2%	83.3%	80.7%
Male	A to C	76.1%	87.6%	84.3%	80.0%	77.0%
Female	A	39.3%	46.4%	51.5%	45.2%	42.6%
Male	A	30.8%	38.2%	41.8%	37.2%	35.0%

Higher

At grades A to C, the attainment rate decreased for male candidates and for female candidates in 2023 from 2022. 79.8% of female candidate grades at Higher were A to C in 2023, a decrease of 2.8 percentage points from 82.6% in 2022 and an increase of 2.8 percentage points from 77.0% in 2019. 74.6% of male candidate grades at Higher were A to C in 2023, a decrease of 3.2 percentage points from 77.8% in 2022 and an increase of 2.2 percentage points from 72.4% in 2019 (Table 13).

At grade A, the attainment rate decreased for male candidates and for female candidates in 2023 from 2022. 36.0% of female candidate grades at Higher were A in 2023, a decrease of 3.9 percentage points from 39.9% in 2022 and an increase of 5.4 percentage points from 30.6% in 2019. 30.2% of male candidate grades at Higher were A in 2023, a decrease of 2.4 percentage points from 32.6% in 2022 and an increase of 4.3 percentage points from 25.9% in 2019 (Table 13).

Table 13: Summary of attainment for Higher qualifications from 2019 to 2023 by sex.

Sex	Grade(s)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Female	A to C	77.0%	90.9%	89.4%	82.6%	79.8%
Male	A to C	72.4%	87.2%	84.8%	77.8%	74.6%
Female	A	30.6%	43.3%	52.1%	39.9%	36.0%
Male	A	25.9%	36.0%	42.2%	32.6%	30.2%

Advanced Higher

At grades A to C, the attainment rate decreased for male candidates and for female candidates in 2023 from 2022. 82.7% of female candidate grades at Advanced Higher were A to C in 2023, a decrease of 2.5 percentage points from 85.2% in 2022 and an increase of 1.1 percentage points from 81.6% in 2019. 77.1% of male candidate grades at Advanced Higher were A to C in 2023, a decrease of 2.3 percentage points from 79.4% in 2022 and no change in percentage points from 77.0% in 2019 (Table 14).

At grade A, the attainment rate decreased for male candidates and for female candidates in 2023 from 2022. 34.3% of female candidate grades at Advanced Higher were A in 2023, a decrease of 1.7 percentage points from 36.0% in 2022 and an increase of 2.1 percentage points from 32.2% in 2019. 32.2% of male candidate grades at Advanced Higher were A in

2023, a decrease of 1.4 percentage points from 33.6% in 2022 and an increase of 0.5 percentage points from 31.7% in 2019 (Table 14).

Table 14: Summary of attainment for Advanced Higher qualifications from 2019 to 2023 by sex.

Sex	Grade(s)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Female	A to C	81.6%	94.4%	92.2%	85.2%	82.7%
Male	A to C	77.0%	91.4%	87.6%	79.4%	77.1%
Female	A	32.2%	47.6%	53.2%	36.0%	34.3%
Male	A	31.7%	44.8%	48.1%	33.6%	32.2%

Centre type breakdown

Over time, attainment rates are higher for independent centres than education authority centres and the same was true in 2023.

FE colleges have relatively low uptake for graded National Qualifications (Table 7). The range of subjects taken in FE colleges is also considerably narrower than the other categories of centre type used in this release. For these reasons, overall attainment rates for FE colleges and the other categories of centre type are not comparable.

National 5

The attainment rate at grades A to C in education authority centres was 77.9% in 2023, a decrease of 2.9 percentage points from 80.8% in 2022 and an increase of 0.6 percentage points from 77.3% in 2019. At grade A, the attainment rate was 36.8% in education authority centres in 2023, a decrease of 2.2 percentage points from 39.0% in 2022 and an increase of 3.8 percentage points from 33.0% in 2019 (Table 15).

The attainment rate at grades A to C in independent centres was 94.9% in 2023, a decrease of 0.8 percentage points from 95.7% in 2022 and no change in percentage points from 94.9% in 2019. At grade A, the attainment rate was 71.7% in independent centres in 2023, a decrease of 3.2 percentage points from 74.9% in 2022 and an increase of 2.4 percentage points from 69.3% in 2019 (Table 15).

The attainment rate at grades A to C in FE colleges was 69.4% in 2023, a decrease of 2.4 percentage points from 71.8% in 2022 and an increase of 1.6 percentage points from 67.8% in 2019. At grade A, the attainment rate was 28.2% in FE colleges in 2023, a decrease of 2.4 percentage points from 30.6% in 2022 and an increase of 3.0 percentage points from 25.2% in 2019 (Table 15).

Table 15: Summary of attainment for National 5 qualifications from 2019 to 2023 by centre type.

Centre type	Grade(s)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Education Authority	A to C	77.3%	88.5%	85.1%	80.8%	77.9%
Independent	A to C	94.9%	97.7%	96.8%	95.7%	94.9%
FE College	A to C	67.8%	85.7%	74.9%	71.8%	69.4%
Education Authority	A	33.0%	40.4%	44.8%	39.0%	36.8%
Independent	A	69.3%	73.0%	76.9%	74.9%	71.7%
FE College	A	25.2%	34.9%	33.2%	30.6%	28.2%

Higher

The attainment rate at grades A to C in education authority centres was 76.2% in 2023, a decrease of 3.2 percentage points from 79.4% in 2022 and an increase of 2.1 percentage points from 74.1% in 2019. At grade A, the attainment rate was 31.0% in education authority centres in 2023, a decrease of 3.5 percentage points from 34.5% in 2022 and an increase of 4.7 percentage points from 26.3% in 2019 (Table 16).

The attainment rate at grades A to C in independent centres was 93.3% in 2023, a decrease of 0.7 percentage points from 94.0% in 2022 and an increase of 0.4 percentage points from 92.9% in 2019. At grade A, the attainment rate was 61.6% in independent centres in 2023, a decrease of 2.3 percentage points from 63.9% in 2022 and an increase of 2.7 percentage points from 58.9% in 2019 (Table 16).

The attainment rate at grades A to C in FE colleges was 66.8% in 2023, a decrease of 0.4 percentage points from 67.2% in 2022 and an increase of 10.1 percentage points from 56.7% in 2019. At grade A, the attainment rate was 23.5% in FE colleges in 2023, an increase of 2.6 percentage points from 20.9% in 2022 and an increase of 8.8 percentage points from 14.7% in 2019 (Table 16).

Table 16: Summary of attainment for Higher qualifications from 2019 to 2023 by centre type.

Centre type	Grade(s)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Education Authority	A to C	74.1%	88.8%	86.7%	79.4%	76.2%
Independent	A to C	92.9%	97.7%	97.2%	94.0%	93.3%
FE College	A to C	56.7%	81.7%	79.1%	67.2%	66.8%
Education Authority	A	26.3%	38.1%	45.6%	34.5%	31.0%
Independent	A	58.9%	67.2%	75.5%	63.9%	61.6%
FE College	A	14.7%	28.7%	37.7%	20.9%	23.5%

Advanced Higher

The attainment rate at grades A to C in education authority centres was 77.6% in 2023, a decrease of 2.9 percentage points from 80.5% in 2022 and an increase of 0.5 percentage points from 77.1% in 2019. At grade A, the attainment rate was 28.8% in education authority

centres in 2023, a decrease of 1.9 percentage points from 30.7% in 2022 and an increase of 1.4 percentage points from 27.4% in 2019 (Table 17).

The attainment rate at grades A to C in independent centres was 92.8% in 2023, a decrease of 0.2 percentage points from 93.0% in 2022 and an increase of 1.2 percentage points from 91.6% in 2019. At grade A, the attainment rate was 55.1% in independent centres in 2023, no change in percentage points from 56.5% in 2022 and an increase of 1.2 percentage points from 53.9% in 2019 (Table 17).

The attainment rate at grades A to C in FE colleges was 84.3% in 2023, a decrease of 5.2 percentage points from 89.5% in 2022 and an increase of 2.2 percentage points from 82.1% in 2019. At grade A, the attainment rate was 51.8% in FE colleges in 2023, a decrease of 6.1 percentage points from 57.9% in 2022 and an increase of 5.5 percentage points from 46.3% in 2019 (Table 17).

Table 17: Summary of attainment for Advanced Higher qualifications from 2019 to 2023 by centre type.

Centre type	Grade(s)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Education Authority	A to C	77.1%	92.0%	88.8%	80.5%	77.6%
Independent	A to C	91.6%	97.9%	96.9%	93.0%	92.8%
FE College	A to C	82.1%	88.5%	96.0%	89.5%	84.3%
Education Authority	A	27.4%	41.7%	46.8%	30.7%	28.8%
Independent	A	53.9%	66.8%	72.3%	56.5%	55.1%
FE College	A	46.3%	51.3%	74.0%	57.9%	51.8%

Scottish Baccalaureate

Entries remained small and stable in 2023. Attainment varies each year, which is to be expected given the small number of entries.

Table 18: Summary of entries and attainment for Scottish Baccalaureate qualifications from 2019 to 2023.

Year	Entries	Number of Pass	Percentage of Pass	Number of Distinction	Percentage of Distinction
2019	155	110	72.1%	55	35.1%
2020	150	130	87.9%	85	57.0%
2021	150	140	92.7%	100	65.3%
2022	165	120	74.2%	80	47.9%
2023	175	130	75.7%	80	45.7%

Ungraded National Courses

National 2 and National 3 courses are a flexible provision and are not necessarily completed by candidates in a single academic year. Consequently, the results are not directly comparable with other courses.

National 2, National 3, and National 4 courses are all ungraded. The attainment rate (referred to in the following tables as 'Percentage Attained') is based on entries which have resulted in a pass.

National 2

Entries were made in 16 National 2 courses. Entries numbered 2,995 in 2023 with attainment of 2,155. The attainment rate was 71.9%.

Table 19: Summary of entries and attainment for National 2 qualifications from 2019 to 2023.

Year	Entries	Number Attained	Percentage Attained
2019	2,045	1,630	79.7%
2020	1,990	1,545	77.6%
2021	2,190	1,545	70.5%
2022	2,365	1,770	74.9%
2023	2,995	2,155	71.9%

National 3

Entries were made in 36 National 3 courses. Entries numbered 22,420 in 2023 with attainment of 19,305. The attainment rate was 86.1%.

Table 20: Summary of entries and attainment for National 3 qualifications from 2019 to 2023.

Year	Entries	Number Attained	Percentage Attained
2019	19,285	17,155	89.0%
2020	21,640	20,105	92.9%
2021	20,910	18,535	88.6%
2022	20,300	17,555	86.5%
2023	22,420	19,305	86.1%

National 4

Entries were made in 47 National 4 courses. Entries numbered 135,870 in 2023 with attainment of 122,405. The attainment rate was 90.1%.

National 4 figures for 2019 include those awarded through the Recognising Positive Achievement (RPA) process. SQA treat National 4 attainment arising through course completion and the RPA process as being equivalent. In 2019, National 4 course entries within centres (excluding entries arising through RPA) was estimated, using certification data, to be 95,870.

Table 21: Summary of entries and attainment for National 4 qualifications from 2019 to 2023.

Year	Entries	Number Attained	Percentage Attained
2019	108,000	97,220	90.0%
2020	102,490	94,710	92.4%
2021	103,660	92,490	89.2%
2022	123,750	109,105	88.2%
2023	135,870	122,405	90.1%

Skills for Work

Skills for Work courses are a flexible provision, not necessarily completed by candidates in a single academic year. Consequently, the results are not directly comparable with other courses.

As the courses are all ungraded, the attainment rate is based on entries which have resulted in a pass.

Table 22: Summary of entries and attainment for Skills for Work qualifications from 2019 to 2023.

Year	Entries	Number Attained	Percentage Attained
2019	12,110	10,290	85.0%
2020	14,465	12,640	87.4%
2021	13,280	11,080	83.4%
2022	14,255	11,635	81.6%
2023	16,300	13,755	84.4%

Awards, National Certificates and National Progression Awards

Table 23: Summary of attainment for Award, National Certificate and National Progression Award qualifications from 2019 to 2023.

SCQF level	Qualification	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
SCQF1	Award	460	405	155	245	310
SCQF2	Award	1,070	950	750	695	565
SCQF2	National Progression Award	80	90	85	60	105
SCQF3	Award	4,845	4,445	3,825	3,835	3,225
SCQF3	National Certificate	15	5	0	0	0
SCQF3	National Progression Award	145	240	110	145	120
SCQF4	Award	11,065	12,145	10,135	10,380	11,575
SCQF4	National Certificate	295	210	200	120	105
SCQF4	National Progression Award	5,005	4,865	4,305	5,295	5,835
SCQF5	Award	5,425	8,335	7,435	9,835	11,760
SCQF5	National Certificate	3,605	2,625	2,100	2,330	1,575
SCQF5	National Progression Award	6,395	6,900	6,510	9,185	11,070
SCQF6	Award	5,545	5,900	5,695	5,925	7,340
SCQF6	National Certificate	5,715	4,940	4,255	3,990	2,415
SCQF6	National Progression Award	4,310	7,020	7,855	8,430	9,455

Background Information

Attainment Statistics — December 2023 details the main qualifications taken at school and college level by candidates in Scotland: a mix of current National Courses (National 2 to National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) as well as Skills for Work, Awards, National Progression Awards, and National Certificates.

All figures in this report are rounded to the nearest five.

In this release, attainment statistics for Awards, National Progression Awards and National Certificate qualifications detail the number of certificated entries between 1 August 2022 and 31 July 2023.

The purpose of National Courses, as well as Skills for Work, Awards, National Progression Awards and National Certifications, is to enable certification and recognition for the programmes of work that candidates undertake in the senior phase of secondary education and in colleges.

The broad objectives of National Courses are to provide high standards, and breadth and depth of learning for individual learners, assessed usually via national exams, coursework and/or internally assessed components.

In 2023, awarding operated using the established procedure as far as possible in order to evaluate the performance of the course assessment, but with consideration given to the following factors:

- ◆ The impact of the reducing legacy disruption to teaching and learning caused by the pandemic
- ◆ The impact of modifications to course assessments
- ◆ The impact of removing revision support

Awarding decisions were therefore 'sensitive' to these factors, ensuring that grade boundary decisions recognised that performance continues to be impacted. This was informed by the full range of qualitative and quantitative data used during awarding, with additional data from 2021–22 on the impact of modifications.

Throughout 2022, SQA worked with partners across the education sector (including teachers, lecturers, learners, parents and carers) to agree the wide-ranging package of support that was put in place to enable learners to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do, despite the disruption to learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. SQA implemented various modifications and revision support to reduce the assessment requirements for courses and increase learning and teaching time.

In 2021, the Scottish Government commissioned SQA to develop an Alternative Certification Model (ACM 2021) for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher for 2021. The model was based on teacher judgement, supported by assessment resources and quality assurance. In 2020, the Deputy First Minister directed SQA to issue grades, primarily on the basis of teacher estimates. Grades that had been adjusted upwards in an earlier moderation process were retained.

Additional background information relating to this release is available in the background information document that accompanies it.

All the data analysed in this release is available in the data tables that accompany the release.