



Background information for Grade Boundaries 2023

Table of Contents

Purpose	3
Status.....	3
Geography and time period covered	3
Description	3
Source of data.....	4
Methodology	4
Revisions and corrections	4
Related publications.....	4
Useful links.....	4
Feedback	5

Purpose

Grade Boundaries 2023 presents grade boundaries for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses in 2023.

Status

These data are classified as *information*.

Geography and time period covered

This publication presents National Qualifications grade boundaries in Scotland in the 2022 to 2023 academic year and includes data for the previous four years (where available).

Description

Grade boundaries are the marks needed to achieve an A, a B, or a C grade. They tell us the minimum marks needed to achieve a particular grade for a course.

During the global pandemic, SQA, in common with education systems around the world, had to use different approaches to assessment and certification. Examinations did not take place in 2020 and 2021 and no grade boundaries were set.

In 2022, Scotland returned to formal national exams, supported by a package of measures (course modifications and revision support, as well as wider support from across the education system at a national, regional, local and centre level). These measures were designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people experienced, while maintaining standards.

In 2023, awarding for graded National Courses 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 of disruption to teaching and learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic
- ◆ The impact of modifications to course assessment
- ◆ 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.

Grade D, like grades A to C, is reported on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate as a Course award in its own right. Grade D indicates that the learner has achieved all the National Units for the course at that level (if applicable) and has demonstrated sufficient knowledge to achieve the grade.

Notional grade boundaries are set at 50% of total marks for the course assessment for C, 70% for A and 85% for Upper A. SQA's assessments are developed with these notional or near notional grade boundaries in mind. They are therefore the starting point for discussion of the final grade boundaries for most courses in any year, and any adjustments are made from this starting point.

With the phased introduction of the Revised National Qualifications, grade D was extended from a notional 45 to 49% to a notional 40 to 49%. No Award was reduced from a notional 0 to 44% to 0 to 39% as a result of this change to grade D. These changes were implemented for National 5 from the 2017 to 2018 academic year, for Higher from the 2018 to 2019 academic year, and for Advanced Higher from the 2019 to 2020 academic year.

Source of data

Grade boundary data are collected throughout awarding meetings where grade boundary decisions are made. These data are collected and held directly by SQA.

Methodology

Grade boundaries for National Course subjects are required to be set for grade C, grade A and upper A. All other grade boundaries are automatically calculated using the following formulas:

$$B(3) = c + \left\lfloor \left\{ \frac{3(a - c) + 1}{4} \right\} \right\rfloor$$

$$B(4) = c + \left\lfloor \left\{ \frac{2(a - c) + 1}{4} \right\} \right\rfloor$$

$$C(5) = c + \left\lfloor \left\{ \frac{1(a - c) + 1}{4} \right\} \right\rfloor$$

$$D(7) = \max \left\{ c - \left\lfloor \left\{ \frac{2(a - c) - 1}{4} \right\} \right\rfloor, 0 \right\}$$

$$\text{No Award}(8) = \max \left\{ c - \left\lfloor \left\{ \frac{4(a - c) - 1}{4} \right\} \right\rfloor, 0 \right\}$$

$$\text{No Award}(9) = 0$$

Revisions and corrections

Once published these statistics are not usually subject to revisions. [Further information about revisions and corrections is available in our policy document.](#)

Related publications

For any related publications for qualifications offered in Wales, Northern Ireland and England please contact the respective awarding bodies [AQA](#), [Pearson](#), [OCR](#), [WJEC](#) and [CCEA](#).

Useful links

- ◆ [data tables accompanying this release](#)
- ◆ [attainment statistics 2023](#)
- ◆ [component marks 2023](#)
- ◆ [assessment arrangements 2023](#)
- ◆ [equalities monitoring report 2023](#)

Feedback

We welcome your feedback on our publications. Please [contact the team](#) with any comments about ways we can improve a publication to meet your needs.