



Course report 2024

National 5 History

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 with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2024 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 16,264

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 16,252

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	6,359	Percentage	39.1	Cumulative percentage	39.1	Minimum mark required	70
B	Number of candidates	2,731	Percentage	16.8	Cumulative percentage	55.9	Minimum mark required	60
C	Number of candidates	2,454	Percentage	15.1	Cumulative percentage	71.0	Minimum mark required	50
D	Number of candidates	1,966	Percentage	12.1	Cumulative percentage	83.1	Minimum mark required	40
No award	Number of candidates	2,742	Percentage	16.9	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

We have not applied rounding 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 statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper performed as expected. There was appropriate differentiation, proportionate to the skill being assessed.

Overall, candidate attainment in the most popular options compared well with other options in each of the three contexts.

A few candidates found it challenging to demonstrate the required range of knowledge and skills within the time available. Across the question paper, a few candidates did not attempt all questions, which limited their overall marks. There were more candidates presented at both National 4 and National 5 level this year. Collectively, these issues raised concerns that candidates were not being presented at the correct level.

The above information was considered when determining the grade boundaries.

Assignment

The assignment performed as intended and allowed candidates to demonstrate their best work. Candidates were able to exercise personalisation and choice. Most candidates presented their assignments as well-structured, organised responses.

There was appropriate differentiation in sections D (references), E (evaluation) and G (conclusion) between candidates.

The above information was considered when determining the grade boundaries.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Most candidates coped well with the question paper, completing all questions in the specified time.

Some candidates demonstrated excellent breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding in their responses.

Overall, most candidates coped well with 9-mark essay questions in the Scottish and British sections. They demonstrated secure understanding of skills and knowledge, writing well-structured responses.

Many candidates demonstrated appropriate evaluative comments for provenance marks in the 'Evaluate the usefulness' question.

Many candidates performed well in the 'How fully does the source describe...?' questions.

Assignment

Most candidates made effective use of their resource sheets as a memory aid (further advice is given in the 'assignment' sections of this report).

Candidates chose a variety of questions with some candidates clearly enjoying the opportunity to explore a particular area of interest in more depth. Most candidates chose issue-based questions that allowed them to access the full range of marks.

Most candidates gave well-structured, organised responses.

Many candidates attempted and received marks for evaluation comments.

Most candidates were able to give a clear overall conclusion on their chosen question along with a supporting reason.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

A few candidates went outside the scope of the question when making historical points. For example, in the Migration and Empire section (question 13), a few candidates included recalled knowledge on why immigrants came to Scotland rather than their patterns of settlement — where immigrants settled and the jobs in which they worked. Another example is in the Changing Britain section (question 36), where a few candidates included social changes rather than improvements to health and public health. Likewise, in the Atlantic Slave Trade section (question 32), a few candidates discussed social rather than economic impacts on Britain.

A few candidates provided historical knowledge outside of the time period covered by the question. For example, in the Free at Last section (question 76), some candidates did not limit their answers to relevant knowledge before 1928.

A few candidates had not fully prepared all knowledge topics given in the course specification document. For example, in the Making of Modern Britain section (question 41), a few candidates were uncertain about the nature of the voluntary system.

A few candidates made statements of historical fact rather than reasons in the 'Explain' question and/or did not fully explain historical points in relation to the question asked.

A few candidates did not structure the 9-mark response as an essay. This made it difficult for them, in exam conditions, to ensure that they demonstrated the skills of the introduction, balance between factors, conclusion and supporting reason.

A few candidates did not interpret source points in the 'How fully' questions, therefore missing out on marks.

A few candidates were unable to provide relevant reasons for recalled knowledge in the 'How fully does the source explain the reasons why...?' question. This was because they stated facts rather than provided properly explained historical points.

A few candidates oversimplified detailed comparison points and/or truncated sources points in the 'Compare' question. This meant that candidates did not communicate the specific nature of agreement or disagreement or provide evidence to back up their overall statements, for example in the 'Hitler and Nazi Germany' section (question 62).

A few candidates interpreted source points rather than making evaluative comments relating to the content of the course in the 'Evaluate the usefulness' question.

Assignment

A few candidates did not submit a resource sheet with their assignment, leading to a 4-mark penalty.

A few candidates exceeded the word limit in their resource sheets or wrote full sentences in their plan, which were then copied into their assignment. Where excessive copying was identified, these sections of the assignment did not receive marks.

A few candidates chose questions that were not issue-based and/or had more than one issue to explore. This made it more difficult for candidates to access the marks for analysis, evaluation and a relative conclusion.

A few candidates had received excessive assistance in the formulation of their plans, using literacy mats, which structured the response for the candidate.

Some candidates did not implement the advice in appendix 1 of the National 5 course specification document on how to demonstrate the skill of evaluation.

A few candidates omitted to make a relative conclusion in section G, leading to them missing a mark.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates, teachers and lecturers should note the following:

Assessment

- ◆ Teachers and lecturers should advise candidates to use the question numbering given in the question paper when providing their answers.

Course content

- ◆ Teachers and lecturers should advise candidates to revise the full description of content for their sections as questions can be based on any part of the course specification.

Knowledge and understanding

- ◆ Teachers and lecturers should ensure that they prepare candidates with specific historical knowledge. This advice is important for questions like the 'Describe' knowledge question where the skill being assessed is the ability to demonstrate detailed knowledge of historical events, actions or attitudes.
- ◆ Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to use past paper questions as part of their revision for the question paper. This will help candidates stay focused on demonstrating knowledge relevant to the question asked. These resources are available on the National 5 History subject page.

Skills

- ◆ 9-mark essay questions: teachers and lecturers should note the advice in the Understanding Standards section on the National 5 History subject page on the variety of ways in which candidates can structure the 9-mark essay. Further advice is contained in the 2024 detailed marking instructions.
- ◆ 'Evaluate the usefulness' question: teachers and lecturers should note the advice in the Understanding Standards section on the National 5 History subject page on the variety of ways in which candidates can make evaluative comments on source content and provenance points. Further advice is contained in the 2024 detailed marking instructions.
- ◆ 'How fully' question: teachers and lecturers should note the advice in the Understanding Standards section on the National 5 History subject page on how to make appropriate source interpretation comments and relevant recall points. Further advice can be found in the 2024 detailed marking instructions.
- ◆ 'Explain' question: teachers and lecturers should note the advice in the Understanding Standards section on the National 5 History subject page on how candidates can ensure

that they provide valid explained reasons. Further advice is contained in the 2024 detailed marking instructions.

Assignment

Candidates, teachers and lecturers should note the following:

- ◆ Advice and support for candidates: teachers and lecturers should advise candidates that the 'evidence' part of resource sheets should contain a written plan containing key words only, not full sentences. The key words might include specific historical facts, dates or statistics.
- ◆ Section B: References: many candidates made good use of the 'references' section of the resource sheet to include the origin and full quotes. In the assignment, it is good practice to cite the author, title and quote. For websites, it is not necessary to cite the full URL in the assignment as the title of the web page is enough.
- ◆ Section E: Evaluation: teachers and lecturers should communicate the advice on appropriate evaluative comments contained in appendix 1 of the National 5 course specification document.

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.

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.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in [March 2024](#) and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).