



Course report 2025

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 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 16,252

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 16,552

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	6,253	37.8	37.8	69
B	2,974	18.0	55.7	59
C	2,596	15.7	71.4	49
D	2,083	12.6	84.0	39
No award	2,646	16.0	100%	Not applicable

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 or equal to 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. Overall, candidate attainment in the most popular options compared well with other options in each of the three sections.

The most popular options in the Scottish section were: The Era of the Great War, 1900–1928 and Migration and Empire, 1830–1939. The most popular options in the British section were: The Trade in Enslaved African People, 1770–1807, Changing Britain, 1760–1914, and The Making of Modern Britain, 1880–1951. In the European and World section, the most popular options were: Hitler and Nazi Germany, 1919–1939, Free at Last? Civil Rights in the USA, 1918–1968, and Red Flag: Lenin and the Russian Revolution, 1894–1921.

Some candidates did not attempt question 25 in the Scottish section: The Era of the Great War, 1900–1928. However, favourable attainment in other questions in Part E balanced candidate performance.

A few candidates found it challenging to demonstrate the required range of knowledge and skills in the time available. Across the question paper, a few candidates did not attempt all questions, which limited their overall marks. More candidates were presented at both National 4 and National 5 level this year, which raised concerns about whether candidates were presented at the correct level.

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 between candidates in sections B (references), E (evaluation) and G (conclusion).

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 British and European and World sections. They demonstrated secure understanding of skills and knowledge, writing well-structured responses.

Many candidates provided appropriate evaluative comments for author, type of source, purpose and timing in the 'Evaluate the usefulness' questions.

Many candidates performed well in the 'Compare' questions.

Assignment

Most candidates made effective use of their resource sheets.

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 evaluative 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 seemed to struggle with the literacy skills required for source interpretation. For example, a few candidates found it difficult to interpret source points in the 'How fully' questions. Instead of showing understanding of the relevant source point, a few candidates provided a generic link to the question.

A few candidates made statements of historical fact rather than reasons in the 'Explain' questions 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 demonstrate the skills of the introduction, balance between factors, conclusion, and supporting reason.

A few candidates provided an interpretation of the source points rather than an evaluative comment relating to the content of the source in the 'Evaluate the usefulness' questions. In addition, some candidates provided generic, rather than source specific, evaluative comments.

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 they then copied into their assignment. Where markers identified excessive copying in candidate assignments, they did not allocate marks to those sections.

A few candidates did not reference primary sources properly. For example, they gave a name but not the source or date of the quote.

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.

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

A few candidates did not make a relative conclusion in section G, preventing them from accessing the full range of marks for this skill.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Assessment

- Candidates must use the question numbering given in the question paper when providing their answers.
- Candidates should write their responses to the question paper in pen unless using digital answer booklets.

Course content

- You should advise candidates to familiarise themselves with the key issues and description of content in the course specification.
- You should ensure that candidates have a secure understanding of the required historical concepts in the sections you teach. For example, in The Era of the Great War, 1900–1928, candidates should understand the term ‘franchise’ in the same way that candidates doing Mary, Queen of Scots, and the Reformation, 1542–1587, should understand Calvinism and Presbyterianism.
- You should note the updated language (May 2024) for options such as The Trade in Enslaved African People, 1770–1807 and ensure that, wherever possible, candidates adopt a respectful and appropriate approach to analysing the past.

Knowledge and understanding

- You should ensure that you prepare candidates with specific historical knowledge (as detailed in the course specification).
- You 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: you should note the advice in the Understanding Standards section on the National 5 History subject page on the ways in which candidates can structure the 9-mark essay. The 2025 detailed marking instructions provide further exemplification.
- 'Evaluate the usefulness' questions: you should note the advice in the Understanding Standards section on the National 5 History subject page on the ways in which candidates can make evaluative comments on the content of the source and in relation to author, type of source, purpose and timing. The detailed marking instructions for 2024 and 2025, as well as Understanding Standards, provide exemplification of the standard expected.
- 'How fully' questions: you should note the advice in the Understanding Standards section on the National 5 History subject page on how candidates can make appropriate source interpretation comments and relevant recall points. The 2025 detailed marking instructions provide further exemplification.
- 'Explain' questions: you 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. The 2025 detailed marking instructions provide further exemplification.

Assignment

- Advice and support for candidates: you should note that the guidance on appropriate support does not prevent you from giving advice on appropriate issue-based questions on a topic of the candidate's own choice.
- Advice and support for candidates: you should advise candidates that the 'evidence' part of resource sheets should include a written plan with key words only, not full sentences. The key words can include specific historical facts, dates, or statistics.

- Candidates should avoid using non-standard abbreviations as these may lead to exceeding the resource sheet word limit.
- 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. For primary sources, candidates need to ensure that they provide the source and date of the quote. The instructions for candidates in the National 5 History coursework assessment task provide further advice.
- Section E: evaluation: you should communicate the advice on appropriate evaluative comments given in appendix 1 in the course specification.

Appendix: 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 is 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 to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of our 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. 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.

- 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.

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