



Course report 2022

Subject	Modern Studies
Level	National 5

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. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	13655
------------------------------------	-------

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	31.7	Cumulative percentage	31.7	Number of candidates	4325	Minimum mark required	56
B	Percentage	21.6	Cumulative percentage	53.3	Number of candidates	2955	Minimum mark required	46
C	Percentage	20.8	Cumulative percentage	74.1	Number of candidates	2845	Minimum mark required	36
D	Percentage	15.1	Cumulative percentage	89.2	Number of candidates	2050	Minimum mark required	26
No award	Percentage	10.8	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	1480	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

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 more statistical reports on the statistics page of [SQA's website](#).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper was accessible to the majority of candidates, however there was evidence that a number of candidates may have been presented at the wrong level.

While overall the question paper performed as expected, a number of knowledge and understanding questions proved challenging to candidates. There was evidence that a few candidates did not fully understand the questions and therefore gave incorrect answers. This was especially evident among candidates who may have been presented at the wrong level.

The 8-mark knowledge questions are the clear discriminatory questions in the paper and performance in them was mixed. Candidates had been informed in advance of the areas to be assessed and there was clear evidence of where this had been considered — in these situations a number of candidates were very well prepared and accessed the full range of marks available. Examples of excellent practice were found, however, the questions proved challenging to a few candidates.

For most candidates, performance in the source evaluation questions was strong. However, a few candidates struggled with certain elements of these questions. They made conclusions that were not relevant to the prompts given and often did not make conclusions at all, simply providing source evidence that they thought related to the prompts given. A few candidates also found it difficult to explain why they did not choose the other option in the 'options' question, which led to some very confused answers.

Candidates performed best in the 'support and oppose' source question, however there were candidates who attempted to make evaluative conclusions at the end of each paragraph, often repeating what they already stated from the source evidence. This does not warrant any further marks and may take up valuable time for some candidates.

A few candidates did not follow the rubric of the question paper and attempted all sections. Centres should ensure that candidates are prepared and fully understand the demands of the question paper — attempting all sections clearly hindered these candidates as it stopped them giving their full time and attention to the sections they had studied.

Assignment

The requirement to complete the assignment was removed for session 2021–22.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper

Section 1: Parts A and B — Democracy in Scotland and the United Kingdom

Candidate performance was generally the best in this section of the question paper. They appeared to be well prepared for the majority of the questions, with evidence of some excellent practice and some quality answers to questions, which were given full marks. While questions proved to be accessible for most candidates, the 'describe' questions proved challenging to a few candidates, which led to them underperforming in this section.

Questions 1 and 4

Some candidates did not answer these questions well, misinterpreting them as questions on devolved and reserved matters and failing to address the issue of 'key features of a democracy'. However, the candidates who did answer well gave excellent descriptions of the features of a democracy including regular elections, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. These answers were well developed and included relevant, up-to-date exemplification.

Questions 2 and 5

Some candidates struggled to answer these questions even though it is a core part of the Modern Studies curriculum. Candidates often described election campaigning rather than describing how MSPs or MPs represent their constituents. There was, however, evidence of candidates giving excellent responses, which detailed both the work representatives undertake in the Parliament and the constituency.

Questions 3(a) and 6(a)

Candidates, on the whole, managed these questions well. There was clear evidence that candidates understood both the additional member system and the first past the post system, and the advantages and disadvantages each electoral system generates. There was also evidence of excellent, relevant, and up-to-date exemplification. However, a few candidates should be more careful in relation to reading the instruction to explain either the 'advantages **or** disadvantages' as there were instances of candidates including both in their answer, which prevented them from accessing the full range of marks.

Question 3(b) and 6(b)

Candidates often gave vague, generic and incorrect answers to these questions, even though information was supplied in advance of the exam outlining the areas which would be assessed in the 8-mark 'explain' questions. Those who did perform well gave clear explanations in relation to voter apathy, disinterest in politics and mistrust of current elected representatives.

Section 2: Parts C and D — Social Issues in the United Kingdom

Part C

Both the 'describe' and the 'explain' questions proved challenging for the less well-prepared candidates. However, there was evidence of candidates giving detailed descriptions with exemplification for question 8, covering many of the more recent government attempts to reduce inequality.

Similarly, for question 9, some candidates were able to give clear, detailed descriptions in relation to the consequences of social and economic inequality on families. However, question 10 was performed poorly by those candidates who did not read the question carefully. The question required candidates to discuss a group they had studied. However, a number of candidates discussed more than one group — in these instances candidates were awarded marks for the group they had given the best explanation for.

Part D

As was the case for Part C, a few candidates underperformed in this part of the question paper.

Question 11

This question proved very challenging for some candidates, and it was evident that there was a lack of understanding of the children's hearing system. A few candidates did not attempt this question or gave extremely poor answers resulting in them being awarded no marks. Centres should ensure that this area of the course is covered and that candidates understand the role it plays within the criminal justice system.

Question 12

Candidates answered this question well and were able to clearly describe the consequences of crime on families, with detailed descriptions and references to families of both victims of crime as well as perpetrators. In future it would be advisable for centres to ensure that accurate, real-life exemplification is used rather than hypothetical situations.

Question 13

Many candidates gave excellent explanations to this question. These candidates made excellent comparisons between the benefits of alternatives to prison and custodial sentences. Real-life exemplification was evident however a few candidates gave generic, hypothetical exemplification, which should be avoided.

Section 3: Parts E and F — International Issues

Question 15

This question did not perform as well as expected. Some candidates were unable to differentiate between social and economic issues or did not state which area they were discussing. There was also evidence of candidates not interpreting the question accurately, giving answers relating to both social and economic issues. Centres should ensure that candidates can identify when there is a choice to be made.

Question 17

Candidates did not give an accurate explanation to this question, with a high number of candidates failing to acknowledge political influence, simply discussing military or economic influence instead. Candidates who were able to make connections between military and political or economic and political influence were awarded marks appropriately, however often candidates did not access marks because they made no reference to political influence.

Part F

This part was completed to almost the same standard as Part E. There was evidence that candidates who studied terrorism were well prepared. These candidates gave excellent descriptions and explanations throughout this part of the question paper. Centres should however ensure that candidates state clearly the international conflict or issue they have studied. Candidates often failed to access marks as a result of this, given the markers were unable to identify the conflict or issue they had studied.

Source evaluation questions

Questions 7, 14 and 21 were completed to a high standard. Most candidates demonstrated that they could meet the demands of all three source-based questions. 'A' grade candidates were able to give accurate and developed points with evaluation and analysis, especially in the conclusions question, which will prepare them well for the move to Higher. However, a few candidates completed their answers to the source questions in the format of a table — this has not been evident in prior years and centres should not instruct candidates to complete their answer in this way.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres should ensure that they are familiar with the National 5 course specification which is available on SQA's website. This details the mandatory content of the course which forms the basis of what is assessed in the question paper. Centres should also aim to ensure that candidates are presented at the correct level.

Centres should re-emphasise the importance of expanding knowledge answers using specific 'real world' current examples.

In the international issues world section, it is imperative that candidates state clearly the world power or international conflict or issue they have studied.

Candidates should be reminded that when knowledge questions ask, for example, for 'two ways' or 'a maximum of three reasons', writing more should be avoided as only the best two or three points in the answer will gain marks.

Candidates should be encouraged to compare statistics, show changes over time, show differences between ethnic groups, genders, countries; and to make evaluative comments such as 'significant increase or decrease' and 'showing similarities or differences' when analysing information in source evaluation questions. This will also allow candidates to gain further marks for evaluation or using evaluative terminology and will help to prepare them further for the transition to Higher.

Candidates should always explicitly state in their source evaluation answer which option they have chosen, which of the bullet-pointed conclusions they are addressing, and whether they are supporting or opposing a point of view. This will support the candidate in terms of giving a more structured response, allowing marks to be allocated accordingly.

Centres should also ensure that candidates understand the requirements of the 'options' question in relation to part (iii) ('Explain why you did not choose the other option'). It was evident that this often confused candidates and they consequently gave incorrect or irrelevant evidence.

Centres should avoid instructing candidates to answer source evaluation questions in the format of a table. Modern Studies is a language-based subject where continuous prose is expected. While some candidates will write their answer in a single sentence construct, this should be discouraged, with candidates being encouraged to link information within and between sources.

Further information to support centres can be found in the Understanding Standards section of SQA's website, where exemplar materials and audio presentations are available. Additional candidate exemplars and commentaries from the 2022 question paper will be made available during this session.

Appendix 1: 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.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2022 Awarding—Methodology Report](#).