



Course report 2022

Subject	Philosophy
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	285
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	34.2	Cumulative percentage	34.2	Number of candidates	95	Minimum mark required	55
B	Percentage	16.9	Cumulative percentage	51.1	Number of candidates	50	Minimum mark required	45
C	Percentage	12.3	Cumulative percentage	63.4	Number of candidates	35	Minimum mark required	36
D	Percentage	14.4	Cumulative percentage	77.8	Number of candidates	40	Minimum mark required	26
No award	Percentage	22.2	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	65	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 performed as expected. Feedback from the marking team indicates that there was a good balance between straightforward and differentiated questions.

The detailed and focused nature of the revision support notes was well-received by centres and identified areas for revision.

The question paper saw a variety of performance, with some candidates achieving very high marks and some gaining very few marks.

Most candidates answered on Descartes rather than Hume in the 'Knowledge and doubt' section. The Descartes responses gained a slightly higher average mark.

The wording of two questions may have caused confusion for some candidates. The third bullet point in the scaffolding under question 2(b) prompted some candidates to respond using Gettier problems. This was not required, but credit was given to these responses where appropriate. Candidates also found question 5(d) more challenging than it was intended to be when the question was set. Account was taken of both these questions when grade boundaries were set.

Assignment

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

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Arguments in action

This is the section in which most candidates performed best. Most questions were well done, with many candidates gaining at least half the marks available in the section.

Knowledge and doubt

Most candidates performed well in questions 2(c), 2(d), 2(e) and 2(f). Candidates demonstrated a good understanding of Locke's metaphor of a blank sheet of paper, as well as Leibniz's metaphor of a block of veined marble.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Arguments in action

Questions 1(d)ii and 1(d)iii were not well done. Some candidates made no attempt at all to explain the fallacy of illegitimate appeal to authority, with many other candidates receiving 0 marks for their explanation of the illegitimate appeal to authority. Likewise, some candidates did not provide an example of the fallacy of illegitimate appeal to authority, with many other candidates receiving 0 marks for their example.

Knowledge and doubt

Question 3(c) on criticisms of Descartes was not well done. Some candidates made no attempt at all, and some candidates received 0 marks for their answer. This pattern was similar for question 4(c) on criticisms of Hume.

Question 4(b) on Hume's arguments to explain the origin of ideas was not well done. Many candidates gained less than half the available marks for their answer.

Moral philosophy

In question 5(g), many candidates gave their own views, rather than linking their comments to utilitarianism. Many candidates wrongly claimed that followers of utilitarianism would justify lying in the given scenario.

Some candidates did not attempt to answer question 5(g)ii and some candidates received 0 marks for their answer to this question. However, many candidates scored well in this question.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates should be entered appropriately and fully prepared to answer questions on all areas of the mandatory course content, as listed in the National 5 Philosophy Course Specification.

Arguments in action

Candidates should understand the correct explanations of the fallacies listed in the course specification. Guidance is provided in the course specification, appendix 3: glossary

Knowledge and doubt

After the 2019 exam diet, the 'Knowledge and doubt' mandatory content in the course specification was amended to provide more detailed guidance for centres. This includes information on what is meant by Hume's arguments on the origin of ideas. Centres should make candidates aware of this, to help them to identify what is being asked for in a question.

Arguments concerning the origin of ideas

Candidates should be prepared to answer questions on Hume's two arguments to support the claim that all ideas are copies of impressions:

- 1 All ideas can be traced back to earlier impressions.

Hume argues that any idea you can think of, no matter how complex, can always be traced back to impressions we have experienced. He gives the example of the complex idea of God. Candidates should be able to explain how the complex idea of God works.

- 2 If I don't have the impression, then I don't have the corresponding idea.

Hume argues that, when a person does not have an impression, they also don't have the idea: they lack the corresponding idea as they have not gained the impression to derive the idea from. Candidates should be able to describe Hume's three examples of this:

malfunctioning senses; absence of relevant experience; and absence due to species limitation.

Criticisms of Descartes and Hume

Questions that ask about criticisms are problematic for many candidates.

Candidates should be able to demonstrate their understanding of the mandatory content of Descartes and Hume listed in the course specification and explain criticisms (strengths and weaknesses) of these positions and theories.

It is important that teachers and lecturers discuss criticisms with candidates to ensure that they are prepared to answer questions on them. Published marking instructions can be used to support candidates.

The 'Knowledge and doubt additional support notes' provide guidance and can be found on the Higher Philosophy subject page on [SQA's website](#), under 'Course support'.

The 'National 5 Philosophy model questions' resource, which is available on the [Understanding Standards](#) website, is helpful for demonstrating how different types of questions (for all three sections of the course) can be answered, including questions on criticisms.

Moral philosophy

Candidates should clearly understand that utilitarianism is mandatory course content, and they must also study another moral theory of their own choice. In practice, this can mean that the teacher or lecturer chooses another moral theory for the whole class to study.

It is important that candidates know their 'other moral theory' in the detailed way that they know utilitarianism. When candidates see the term 'other moral theory' or 'another moral theory' in a question, they should know what to write about.

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](#).