



Course report 2024

National 5 Classical Studies

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: 245

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 333

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	151	Percentage	45.3	Cumulative percentage	45.3	Minimum mark required	70
B	Number of candidates	57	Percentage	17.1	Cumulative percentage	62.5	Minimum mark required	60
C	Number of candidates	52	Percentage	15.6	Cumulative percentage	78.1	Minimum mark required	50
D	Number of candidates	34	Percentage	10.2	Cumulative percentage	88.3	Minimum mark required	40
No award	Number of candidates	39	Percentage	11.7	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

Overall, most candidates performed well across all sections of the question paper, however, many candidates struggled to explain the content of the source for questions 5, 13, and 19. Answers to these questions were often paraphrases of the source and did not offer explanations of the source content.

In the Classical literature section, candidates made reference to a variety of texts: Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone*, and Euripides' *Medea*. The most popular text was Homer's *Odyssey*. Some candidates struggled to select an appropriate text or episode from a text to address the fate question.

Some candidates chose to complete the Classical literature section at the end of the question paper.

Most candidates chose the Pompeii option for section 3, but the number of candidates opting for the Roman Britain section had increased from last year.

Candidates had enough time to complete the question paper and most candidates managed their time accordingly.

Candidate entries increased this year.

Assignment

This year the assignment was re-introduced as part of the overall course assessment.

This year, many centres presented candidates for the assignment for the first time as the presentation numbers have increased from just over 100 in 2019 to over 300 in 2024.

Candidates presented a large range of topics, indicating that most candidates were able to research and write about a topic of personal interest to them.

Candidates had enough time to complete the assignment and most candidates managed their time accordingly.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Life in Classical Greece

Candidates answered question 1 well, which asked them to describe the duties and responsibilities of an Athenian citizen.

Candidates answered question 2 very well. This question asked candidates to explain the reasons why the gods, such as Athena and Dionysus, would have been pleased with the people of Athens. Candidates explained, in detail, many aspects of Athenian religion that would have been pleasing to the gods.

Candidates answered question 4 well. This was the 'comparison' question, requiring candidates to discuss various aspects of the Athenian Assembly and to make meaningful comparisons with a modern parliament.

Classical literature

Candidates answered questions 7(b) and 7(c) well, with most candidates making meaningful comparisons with both the classical world and the modern world.

Candidates who had a strong knowledge of their chosen text answered question 8(b) well. They were able to contextualise the theme in the classical world and draw comparisons with the modern world.

The Roman world

Pompeii

Some candidates answered question 9, the 'describe' question, very well and demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the cult of Isis.

Candidates answered question 10 well. This question asked them to explain the reasons why Pliny's uncle's rescue attempt was unsuccessful. It was clear that candidates had a secure knowledge of Pliny's letter and were able to explain why Pliny the Elder's rescue attempt failed.

Candidates answered question 11, the 'to what extent' question, very well. Candidates structured their answer well and wrote, often at length, about both the bakery and snack-bar (thermopolium) before coming to a conclusion about which was more challenging.

Candidates answered question 13 well. This question asked candidates to explain the content of both a pictural and a written source. Candidates were particularly good at identifying and explaining various aspects of the changing room (apodyterium).

Roman Britain

Some candidates answered question 15, the 'describe' question, very well and demonstrated a thorough knowledge of Mithraism.

Candidates answered question 17, the 'to what extent' question, well. They demonstrated a secure understanding of different aspects of leisure and entertainment in Roman Britain before concluding on how violent it was. Candidates structured their answers well.

Candidates answered question 19 well. This question asked candidates to explain the content of both a pictorial and written source. Candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the picture of the roundhouse and were able to explain different aspects about the lives of native Britons.

Assignment

Candidates who had a clear focus in their question performed well in the assignment.

Candidates who had thought carefully about their resource sheet and the information included on it did well in the assignment.

Candidates who used primary sources, rather than secondary sources, made more meaningful comments about the usefulness of the sources. Candidates who recorded their sources on their resource sheet and referred to them in the body of their assignment, rather than copying the sources out again, gave themselves more time to comment on the usefulness of the sources.

Most candidates understood that just listing facts in their assignment did not gain marks as knowledge has to be used to explain and/or analyse their chosen topic or issue.

Candidates who had researched their topic thoroughly enough to make meaningful modern comparisons did well.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Life in classical Greece

For question 3, the 'to what extent' question, some candidates wrote at length about the lives of adult men and women in classical Greece, rather than girls and boys. A few candidates included information on the assembly and the juries in their response, which were not relevant to the question. Candidates are reminded to read the question thoroughly.

For question 4, the comparison question, some candidates included information on the law courts that was not relevant to the question.

For question 5, many candidates paraphrased the source content rather than explaining different aspects of the classical Greek house.

For question 6, some candidates made generic comments about the source that were not tied to the specifics of the question. Some candidates made two or even three comments relating to the content of the source when there is only 1 mark available for this.

Classical literature

For both question 7(a) and question 8(a), some candidates selected a text or an episode from a text that was not suitable for the theme and so struggled to write a meaningful description. Candidates should consider which examples from the text best illustrate the theme before writing their response.

The Roman world

Pompeii

For question 9, some candidates had not prepared for a question on a specific mystery religion and made general comments about ancient religious practices rather than describing the cult of Isis specifically.

For question 12, some candidates' answers lacked detail and were not linked to the shopping experience at the forum in Pompeii.

For question 14, some candidates made generic comments about the provenance and content of the source and did not tie their answers into the specifics of the question. A few candidates struggled to comment on the date of source B (1st century BC).

Roman Britain

For question 15, some candidates had not prepared for a 'describe' question on Mithraism and made general comments about religion in Roman Britain rather than describing specific details about Mithraism.

For question 16, some candidates wrote in detail about what happened to Boudicca rather than the causes of her rebellion.

For question 18, some candidates drifted into listing jobs at the settlement at Vindolanda rather than demonstrating an understanding of the work done in these jobs while drawing comparisons with the modern world.

For question 20, some candidates made generic comments about the authorship and content of the source and did not relate their answers to the specifics of the question.

Assignment

Some candidates presented topics or issues that either had too many components within the question or were too vague, which made it difficult for the marker to ascertain the line of argument.

Candidates who included modern comparisons within their question often integrated the modern comparison comments with their explaining and analysing. Candidates cannot gain marks twice for the same point.

Some candidates only provided a web link or website address for their sources on the resource sheet. This is not appropriate as the marker cannot access the sources. Candidates who used sources illustratively struggled to access the evaluation marks for the sources. Most candidates who used secondary sources did not make meaningful comments about the usefulness of the sources.

Candidates who chose to present a literature-based assignment often provided an excessive amount of detail about the plot of the text. Many of these candidates struggled to gain marks for explaining and analysing.

Some candidates struggled to make a meaningful conclusion within their assignment. For a few candidates, their conclusion did not agree with their explanations or analysis.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

In Section 1: Life in classical Greece and Section 3: Life in the Roman world, candidates should be reminded that merely paraphrasing the source for the 'explain the source' question does not gain marks. Candidates are expected to explain what the source tells us about a particular topic. This means highlighting specific points in the source and explaining what they mean. Some candidates quote from the written source, which can be a useful strategy for focusing their explanation, but it is not compulsory.

Teachers and lecturers should remind candidates that in the 'evaluate the usefulness of the source' question, there is only 1 mark available for each assessed aspect: who wrote it, when they wrote it, what they say, why they say it, and what has been missed out. For example, if a candidate makes two comments about who wrote the source, they can only gain 1 mark for that aspect.

Candidates should also be encouraged to prepare for questions that ask about specific topics or issues as detailed in the 'Course content' section in the [course specification](#).

In Section 2: Classical literature, centres should consider the appropriateness of their chosen text(s) for covering the themes. Candidates are reminded that they must prepare for all themes for this section as there is no optionality.

Assignment

Candidates should have a clear and manageable focus for their assignment and avoid trying to address too many factors within their chosen topic or issue. Candidates should also avoid a vague topic or issue as this can make gaining marks for explaining and analysing challenging.

Candidates should not include modern comparisons within their question or issue as there is a risk they might integrate these modern comparisons into their analysis and explanations, preventing them from gaining marks separately for modern comparisons or vice versa.

Candidates are reminded that to achieve all three modern comparison marks, candidates must show one similarity, one difference, and then one more similarity or difference. For example, a candidate who provides three similarities can only gain 1 mark.

Sources must be accessible from the resource sheet or from within the body of the assignment. Hyperlinks and websites are not appropriate.

Candidates are reminded that only two sources are needed to gain all the marks available for source evaluation. Using sources illustratively might make it more challenging for candidates to evaluate the usefulness of the sources.

Candidates are encouraged to evaluate the usefulness of primary sources.

Candidates who choose a literature topic or issue for their assignment should ensure that they are addressing the demands of their question and should avoid a narrative style or plot telling.

Candidates are reminded that their conclusion should match the line of argument from their assignment. For example, an assignment that predominantly argued that the processes of Athenian law courts were fair to the citizens of Athens but then concluded that the processes were unfair to the citizens of Athens would not gain marks for their conclusion as it does not agree with their line of argument.

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](#).