Course report 2024

National 5 Sociology

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: 235

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 258

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	78	Percentage	30.2	Cumulative percentage	30.2	Minimum mark required	68
B	Number of candidates	48	Percentage	18.6	Cumulative percentage	48.8	Minimum mark required	58
C	Number of candidates	35	Percentage	13.6	Cumulative percentage	62.4	Minimum mark required	49
D	Number of candidates	34	Percentage	13.2	Cumulative percentage	75.6	Minimum mark required	39
No award	Number of candidates	63	Percentage	24.4	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, this component performed well. The reintroduction of the Social issues section meant a restoration of the full exam time, mark allocation and breadth of course sampling.

Questions 3(c)(i) and (ii) were not tackled by every candidate and therefore these questions had lower scores than might have been expected, however there was no evidence that this was a timing issue. It is more likely that candidates were not as well prepared for the questions on the second social topic.

Question 2(b) performed less well than expected. Question 2(c) performed better than similar questions have done in previous years.

Each section contained questions to enable candidates to secure an appropriate pass and to display deeper understanding. The paper overall was balanced and showed an appropriate range of command words.

Assignment

The assignment continued to perform as intended and provided an appropriate challenge while offering an opportunity for candidates to display their learning.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper

A few candidates answered question 1(d) as if participant observation could only be covert.

A few candidates had trouble using the structural perspective in question 1(f).

In question 2(b) there were a few candidates who were not able to state a culture and instead tried to use a sub-culture. Although there was some leeway in the marking of this question, there were a few candidates who were giving features which were shown as opposing the main culture and were therefore clearly part of a subculture. Candidates should be able to describe and explain features of a named culture and subculture.

Few candidates were not able to name a piece of research evidence for question 2(d).

Most candidates were familiar with the *Pygmalion in the classroom* study for question 3(b).

There were a number of candidates who did not attempt, or made a very poor attempt, at both parts of question 3(c). In particular, a few candidates could not describe findings from a piece of research related to their second social issue.

Assignment

The assignment continues to be a component where most candidates do well. The degree of difficulty of the different subsections has not changed for some time.

There were fewer examples of inappropriate topics, however there were a few which were not easily tackled by the candidate given the constraints of the assignment and the level of the qualification.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

There are a number of areas that teachers and lecturers may wish to consider in preparing candidates for the next session. For the assignment, the advice issued in previous course reports remains relevant.

♦ The answer template provides good scaffolding and should be used by all candidates.
♦ Care should be taken in the selection of sociological topic for the assignment.
♦ Care should be taken over the teaching of participant and nonparticipant observation and overt and covert approaches.

There needs to be a clear culture studied, not as a subculture and not as a comparison with other cultures. There is no cross-cultural study required for this qualification. The comparison should come when distinguishing the subculture from the mainstream culture within which it is found.

Teachers and lecturers should give due emphasis and time to research evidence in the Culture and identity section.

For the Social issues section, teachers and lecturers should give greater attention to preparing candidates in their second social issue. This must include two pieces of research evidence for this social issue.

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](#).