



Course report 2022

Subject	Geography
Level	Higher

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	7175
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	39.3	Cumulative percentage	39.3	Number of candidates	2820	Minimum mark required	49
B	Percentage	24.6	Cumulative percentage	63.9	Number of candidates	1765	Minimum mark required	39
C	Percentage	18.5	Cumulative percentage	82.4	Number of candidates	1325	Minimum mark required	30
D	Percentage	11.9	Cumulative percentage	94.3	Number of candidates	855	Minimum mark required	20
No award	Percentage	5.7	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	410	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 1: physical and human environments

This question paper largely performed as expected. Feedback from the marking team and professional bodies indicated that it was comprehensive in terms of coverage. It was positively received as fair and accessible for candidates.

Most candidates understood what was required and completed the question paper in the time available. A combination of changes in the level of demand had an effect on the grade boundary, and the C grade boundary was set lower than intended.

Question paper 2: global issues and geographical skills

In this question paper, the most commonly-chosen questions were question 2 (Development and Health) and question 3 (Climate Change).

This question paper performed in line with expectations and was positively received as fair and accessible for candidates. Very few candidates answered all options, and the vast majority were able to complete the question paper in the time allocated.

A noticeable increase in entries, compared with previous examination diets, was noted.

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 1: physical and human environments

Question 1

Most candidates were well prepared for this question. Candidates demonstrated a secure understanding of glacial erosion processes, with most gaining full marks for this, and some were able to give a correct named example.

Question 2

Most candidates performed well in this question. They demonstrated a detailed level of understanding of coastal erosion processes, and many gained full marks for this. Most were able to give a named example of a stack. A few candidates made excellent use of well annotated diagrams in this question.

Question 4

While this is a soil type that many find more challenging, many candidates were able to explain the formation of this soil well.

Question 5

Many candidates demonstrated a secure knowledge of the characteristics of the two air masses in part (a). In part (b), many candidates used the resource well; descriptions were, in the main, specific, and detailed. Markers commented that responses to this question were an improvement on previous years.

Question 6

Most candidates were able to give good explanations in this question. Most gained the 2 marks available for correct named examples, which supported their answer. It was encouraging to see candidates include references to contemporary issues such as issues facing those from LGBTQ+ communities in this context.

Question 7

Most candidates were able to provide a range of reasons for a contemporary migration flow, with some providing very up-to-date information on current flows, for example, the Rohingya people fleeing Myanmar for Bangladesh.

Question 8

Many candidates provided detailed explanations of methods to improve housing, and some made good use of named examples from current and recent strategies.

Question 9

Those candidates who wrote about semi-arid areas, in general, provided stronger answers than those opting for a rainforest area.

Question 10

Many candidates were able to describe detailed conflicts specific to their case study areas. Some candidates made excellent reference to current and contemporary conflicts specific to their case study areas. This applied to both glaciated and coastal areas.

Question paper 2: global issues and geographical skills

Question 1

Some candidates were able to explain a range of impacts of a water control project, with those answers focusing on more recent impacts of projects, for example the Grand Renaissance Dam, scoring more highly.

Question 2

Many candidates were able to describe a range of strategies and comment appropriately on their effectiveness.

Question 3

Most candidates made good use of current examples in part (b) of this question.

Question 5

Markers commented on the continuing improvement in answers to this question, with good use made of grid references and map evidence.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1: physical and human environments

Question 1

Most candidates did not give a named example of an arete. Some candidates gave named examples for features other than an arete, for example, names of corries or tarns.

Question 2

Some candidates gave named examples for features other than a stack, for example, names of arches.

Question 3

Many candidates were unable to describe the hydrological cycle beyond a list of undeveloped terminology. A few candidates used incorrect terminology.

Question 4

Some candidates confused this answer with a podzol soil. A few candidates drew an annotated profile with only descriptive points.

Question 5

A few candidates did not attempt part (a) of this question. Some candidates were unable to provide explanations for part (b) of this question.

Question 7

A few candidates gave vague answers which, in a few cases, reinforced negative stereotypes. A few candidates referenced historical, rather than contemporary, migration flows.

Question 8

Some candidates struggled to comment on the effectiveness of strategies, with a few repeating points, such as cost, throughout their answers. A few candidates referred to developed world cities in their answers.

Question 9

A few candidates made points very specific to deforestation rather than land degradation. While many aspects are relevant to both, candidates should take care to ensure that answers are directly related to the question. Most candidates did not mention named examples in this question.

Question 10

A few candidates referred to solutions in this question. Some candidates made repeated references to the same conflict, for example noise, with no real development of this. Many candidates did not refer to named examples in this question.

Question paper 2: global issues and geographical skills

Question 1

A few candidates discussed the suitability of the site for a water management project, rather than the consequences.

Question 2

A few candidates referenced very outdated methods of management, which are no longer used in the management of malaria.

Question 3

A few candidates explained the physical causes of climate change, rather than the human causes. A few candidates gave vague, simplistic impacts of climate change.

Question 5

Some candidates did not read the 'scenario' carefully and discussed the building of a new swimming pool and theatre. Some candidates struggled to use road names from the map, instead referencing the road names on the OS key.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper 1: physical and human environments

Centres are reminded to familiarise themselves with the changes to the course specification in 2019, and the associated changes to the method of marking.

Centres should use the range of materials available including past papers, Understanding Standards resources and specimen question papers to help prepare candidates for the range of questions, command words, and mark allocations used. Centres should note the marks available for named examples, particularly in paper 1, as most candidates did not take full advantage of this, which is disappointing given it was explicitly referenced in the revision support.

Centres should ensure that when candidates are presented with resources such as graphs, that they can make full use of these resources by reading accurately from them. Centres should ensure that all case studies are up-to-date and relevant; those candidates who scored most highly in case study-type questions were those referencing contemporary issues in today's world.

It is essential that candidates read questions carefully, and that they understand and respond to both the command word and any other key words in the question. Advice relating to this was provided in the revision support. Answers that are generic and vague will not gain full marks, and answers that are not linked to the question will not gain marks.

Question paper 2: global issues and geographical skills

Centres should ensure that when candidates are presented with resources such as graphs, maps or additional text, they can make full use of these resources by reading accurately from them.

Centres should ensure that all case studies are up-to-date and relevant; those candidates who scored most highly in case study-type questions were those referencing contemporary issues in today's world.

Centres should use the range of materials available including past papers, Understanding Standards resources and specimen question papers to help prepare candidates for the range of questions, command words, and map scales used.

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](#).