



Course report 2023

Higher Graphic Communication

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 in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022: 3,169

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 3,087

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	471	Percentage	15.3	Cumulative percentage	15.3	Minimum mark required	80
B	Number of candidates	864	Percentage	28	Cumulative percentage	43.2	Minimum mark required	66
C	Number of candidates	948	Percentage	30.7	Cumulative percentage	74	Minimum mark required	52
D	Number of candidates	593	Percentage	19.2	Cumulative percentage	93.2	Minimum mark required	38
No award	Number of candidates	211	Percentage	6.8	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

Please note that rounding has not been applied 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 more statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper was more demanding than expected, mainly because of how candidates responded to 'explain' questions. The questions were valid, but many candidates did not detail cause and effect in their responses. Many candidates also did not use appropriate terminology to answer 3D CAD modelling questions.

The grade boundaries were adjusted to account for this.

Assignment

The assignment performed as expected. Candidate performance has improved since last year.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Many candidates answered question 1(b)(iii) well. They demonstrated a clear understanding of the purpose of an exploded isometric drawing.

Many candidates answered question 1(c) well. They described how to use sweep along a path or extrude along a path.

Many candidates answered question 2(c) fairly well. However, many candidates did not achieve the mark for completing the helix because they used incorrect terminology.

Many candidates demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of CAD illustrations (question 3(b)) and sited environments (question 3(c)).

Most candidates attempted questions about desktop-publishing terms, such as emphasis (question 5(a)(ii)), depth (question 5(b)(i)), and shape (question 5(b)(iv)), well.

Assignment

Many candidates performed well in task 1 and accessed the A-grade marks.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

As with the 2022 question paper, many candidates' responses to 'explain' questions did not meet the required standard.

Most candidates did not attempt question 1(a)(i) well. Most candidates did not use correct terminology or fully describe how to constrain the components. The course specification lists the correct terminology on page 12, in the 'assembly' bullet point.

Many candidates did not answer questions that involved interpreting information from graphic items to the required standard, particularly questions 2(b)(ii), 4(c)(i), and 4(c)(ii). Higher candidates should be able to extract information from technical graphics.

In question 3(d), most candidates did not explain why raster graphics are used for CAD illustrations.

In question 3(e), most candidates gave answers about cloud storage instead of cloud computing and did not access the marks.

Most candidates did not answer questions about the uses of Higher desktop-publishing features, design elements, and principles well. Only a few candidates achieved full marks for the questions about proportion (question 5(b)(ii)), rhythm (question 5(b)(iii)), and mass (question 5(b)(v)).

Assignment

Although most candidates attempted task 2(a) well, the overall quality of this year's desktop-publishing work was not of a Higher standard. Some candidates did not use design elements and principles effectively. Some candidates did not consider the overall structure of their work and the context of the café menu.

Most candidates attempted task 3 well and only a few candidates gave no response. Although most candidates interpreted the given graphic items and attempted to produce, in (a), a pictorial view and, in (b), an orthographic view, the quality of sketches varied. Many candidates did not produce sketches of a Higher standard. Many candidates did not produce the proportion in both types of drawings well.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates should have a sound understanding of the command words used in the question paper, especially 'explain'. For 'explain' questions, candidates must relate cause and effect and/or define relationships. This must be in the context of the question, or a specific area in the question, for example:

- ◆ In the question, 'Explain the purpose of a detail view', candidates should give details of what a detail view is and then go on to give a reason why this is important. The response, 'A detail view gives a larger view of a specific area allowing for greater clarity in the view' features both cause and effect. 'Gives a larger view of a specific area' is the cause, and 'allowing for greater clarity in the view' is the effect.
- ◆ In the question, 'Explain, giving two reasons, why a limited colour palette and simple graphics have been used for the travel app layouts', candidates could respond with, 'The use of only two colours, blue and orange, makes the layout easier to follow because the parts in orange stand out against the blue.' Mentioning the use of the two colours is the cause and noting that these colours stand out against each other is the effect. This response is worth 1 of the 2 marks available for this question.

In 3D CAD modelling questions, candidates do not need to describe the 2D CAD commands used to draw the sketches. They will not gain marks for this. Recreating a simple profile with all relevant dimensions is sufficient for any 2D aspects of the response.

Candidates must always refer to specific examples when responding to questions in a desktop-publishing context. For 'describe' or 'explain' questions, candidates must refer to something in the related graphic item.

This course will return to full assessment requirements from session 2023–24 onwards. This means that the question paper can sample the knowledge and understanding content detailed on pages 5 to 14 of the course specification. Appendix 2 to the course specification contains specific terminology for drawing standards, conventions, and protocols. Candidates must use this terminology.

Assignment

In 3D CAD modelling, candidates should take care when interpreting the model and the order of the commands. Completing the commands in an incorrect order, leads to an incorrect solution. Teachers and lecturers could take some time before the assignment to emphasise the importance of thinking logically about the order in which candidates should make models.

Candidates must make sure they read and carry out all instructions set out for them in desktop-publishing tasks. Task 2(a) had a specific set of instructions. Candidates must follow these instructions to achieve a high quality of visual impact and to make effective use of design elements and principles. Candidates should consider the overall structure of their

work, and the context it is in, for example a café menu (2023), a display stand for children's toys (2022), or a leaflet for a speaker (2019). Higher candidates should consider the wider use of desktop-publishing features, design elements, and principles, and how they can apply them to create effective layouts.

Candidates' pictorial sketching tends to be weaker than their orthographic sketching. Teachers and lecturers should focus on developing candidates' skills in proportion and construction of more complex features. For example, candidates can find it difficult to present arcs or circles in the same manner as the rest of their sketch. They often produce freehand sketching arcs in an isometric sketch with the resulting construction not being in isometric.

Common features of the question paper and assignment

Candidates could improve their understanding of the design principle of rhythm. Candidates can confuse rhythm with unity. Rhythm is the repeated use of structural elements that make a desktop-published document easier to follow, for example the same styling for subheadings, typeface, font size, and position (as in the supplementary sheets). While any one of these commonalities would create unity, the combination of elements repeated across a document creates rhythm.

Candidates can also confuse alignment with text justification. In a text box, choosing left, centre, right, or full justification is not alignment because it only applies to one text box. Alignment as a design principle must be in reference to two or more elements on the layout, for example the text box with left-justified text may be left-aligned with an image above it.

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.

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 was developed to support learners and centres. This included modifications to course assessment, retained from the 2021–22 session. This support was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic while recognising a lessening of the impact of disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic. The revision support that was available for the 2021–22 session was not offered to learners in 2022–23.

In addition, SQA adopted a sensitive approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining

standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams continue to do so in different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019 and 2022.

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 2023 and the ongoing impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on learners. 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 the removal of revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2023 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 2023 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).