Course report 2022

Subject	Administration and IT
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.

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Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	4420

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	34.8	Cumulative percentage	34.8	Number of candidates	1540	Minimum mark required	73
B	Percentage	25.6	Cumulative percentage	60.4	Number of candidates	1130	Minimum mark required	61
C	Percentage	19.8	Cumulative percentage	80.2	Number of candidates	870	Minimum mark required	49
D	Percentage	12.1	Cumulative percentage	92.3	Number of candidates	540	Minimum mark required	37
No award	Percentage	7.7	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	340	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.

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Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper followed the same format we have had for a few years. It is worth 50 marks and candidates are expected to answer all questions. There are a range of questions and command words to allow for differentiation. Essentially, three questions (questions 2, 10 and 11) proved more challenging than intended and this was taken into account when setting the grade boundaries..

Assignment

Modifications reduced the assignment by 10 marks to 60 (rather than 70). The assignment performed as expected and the average mark was in line with previous years.

The reduction in IT marks tipped the weighting slightly towards the question paper, which was taken into account when setting the grade boundaries. Normally, the assignment is 58% of the total marks; this year it was 55%.
Database report

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 1

Most candidates picked up on the issues outlined in the case study and were able to give answers that gained marks. Many gave more than four solutions.

Question 3

Candidates were able to give four good points for this question and it was obvious that their knowledge was very good. Many gained development marks with their depth of knowledge.

Common responses were 'the ability to see everyone's diary', 'the ability to send out invites to all and for them to automatically respond', and 'documents can be attached'.

Question 4

Candidates had very good knowledge of the different areas of the HASAW Act. Many were able to describe the responsibilities for both parties.

Question 5

Many candidates gave a couple of good justifications and mentioned meeting deadlines and decreasing stress.

Question 6

Many candidates were able to write about using specific forms of social media and give their advantages in different situations. Knowledge was good across the different forms of social media. Many candidates gained development marks when discussing either the advantages or disadvantages. Many spoke about the negative aspects of poor reviews being public, or malicious reviews being posted.

Question 7

This question was well done, with most candidates being able to give detailed information, about focus groups in particular. In some cases, it was possible to award 4 marks for focus groups, and the candidate then just needed one point about surveys and one about suggestion schemes to gain full marks.

Question 8

This question was very well done, and most candidates found it easy to come up with four justifications. Most mentioned time taken to find files, improved security, and the most up-to-date information being available.

Question 9

Gantt charts were a common answer this year and many candidates gained development marks for them. Meetings with managers, buddies, mentors and colleagues were all discussed.

Candidates only needed to write about two ways, and one way could account for 5 marks, which suited candidates who had an in-depth knowledge.

Other candidates wrote one sentence about six ways and could achieve full marks for this approach.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 1

A notice of meeting was not accepted as a solution. Given that the attendees were waiting at the door in the case study, we decided that had not been an issue.

Some candidates gave too many solutions under what could be classed as the same issue; for example, suggestions about booking a room, checking a room, and using a diary or booking system. It is hard to know if this is because these candidates did not understand the 'outline' command word and that there are no development marks, or because they felt comfortable writing about this and found it hard to rein in their response.

Question 2

There seemed to be a few reasons why candidates found this question challenging:

♦ lack of knowledge of minutes
♦ inability to structure an answer highlighting differences between the two
♦ not using the similarities between the two documents to create an answer

Question 3

This question was not demanding as such, but some responses still refer to the e-diary not allowing double-booking rather than it giving an alert.

Question 4

There was no need for candidates to structure this answer as a compare — this approach may have constrained some candidates as they were trying to find an opposing statement for each point they made about the employer.

Candidates must limit the number of times they list similar features of the Act; for example, suitable ventilation, suitable desk/chair/mouse/screen, and suitable light. The marks for these similar statements can be capped.

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Question 5

Candidates found it hard to come up with more than two justifications and started to repeat themselves.

Some candidates drew on issues in the case study and made statements like 'she will not be late for meetings' or 'she will have her paperwork ready'. Some candidates took their justifications to the extreme; for example, 'the company would fail and have to close.'

Question 6

A few candidates wrote about online meetings for staff and companies using Facebook or Twitter to give employees instructions. This was not what the question was asking.

We did not accept comments about the technology not working or not having a signal. Neither did we accept any comment about older people being excluded because of their inability to use the different platforms.

Question 9

Some candidates wrote about the individual's targets — for example, to-do lists, priorities lists and personal development plans — rather than the organisation's.

While they were not accepted in this case anyway, many candidates wrote about both priorities lists and to-do lists and we have always only accepted a maximum of one of these.

Question 10

This question proved to be very difficult for most candidates. Some candidates confused the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act with GDPR. Others had limited knowledge and maybe gained 1 mark.

Question 11

Candidates had good knowledge about reliable sources of information; however, they found it difficult to outline any other features of reliable information apart from sources.

Some of the features are hard to expand on and we accepted very short responses; however, candidates still had to write in sentences.

Areas that candidates performed well in

Assignment

Database report

The calculation was well done by most, as was the new field heading and showing the value as currency. Most of the criteria were correctly applied. Inserting a heading and logo also gained most candidates a mark.

Spreadsheet task

Both the lookups were well done, as were the other formulae on the first sheet. Inserting the amount and calculating the percentage difference was also well done in the second sheet.

Presentation task

Candidates created presentations that were of a high standard with no real issues. The smart art proved successful and finding out the minimum wage was accessible to most.

Pivot table

This was very well done, and few candidates were unable to carry out the functions required.

Spreadsheet task

The COUNT IF and the SUM IF were very well done with few errors.

Word-processing task

The front cover was well done by most. The table of contents was better done than in other years, including the sub-headings. The little table was created and well presented by most, as was the footnote.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Database report

The double wild card was challenging for some. Other candidates did not gain the mark for the level, but this was maybe down to carelessness rather than it being difficult; for example doing 'less than' rather than 'greater than'.

Some candidates did not put in a label and overall total.

Some candidates calculated the new wage rather than just the increase.

The database task had a lot going on in it. Some candidates had been trained to print out the query results even if they could not do the report. This is good practice.

Spreadsheet task

There were no issues apart from carelessness in picking up cells or not extending the column containing a formula so that it is all visible.

There seemed to be a trend for picking up a wider range of cells than was required when doing a lookup. This may be something that candidates have self-taught.

Presentation task

A few candidates did not gain marks for obvious reasons such as text covering up the design template or forgetting to put in the slide number.

Pivot table

Typical errors were poor spelling or capitalisation. This was mitigated where candidates typed all headings in capitals and cut out the worry about small words such as 'of'.

Spreadsheet task

The conditional statement proved challenging to many candidates. Greater and less than caused confusion in the formulae. The logical tests needed to be in a specific order otherwise the formulae did not work. Some candidates did not multiply by 100.

The issues with this could have been solved if candidates looked at their answers and checked to see if they were realistic. The arithmetic was not complex, and most candidates should have been able to tell that some amounts had zero discount.

Word-processing task

Page numbering can still cause problems for some candidates, especially with other text in the footer. Most candidates did not indent the right-hand margin; only the left was indented. Some candidates missed out on marks for keying in, especially capital letters.

The shapes chosen for the text on page 5 were often too shaded to be able to see the text.

For layout, there was either too much of a gap at the top of the page, large empty space at bottom of the page, or a heading at the bottom of a page and the paragraph on the next.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

There are still some candidates who seem unsure of the command words and how to structure their answers. Either too much information is given for an 'outline' or too little is given for a 'discuss'. Candidates can find it hard to write succinct statements for an outline response. They can spend a lot of time giving much more detail than is required, which may have an impact on whether they have time to finish the paper.

When responding to a 'compare' question, you should emphasise to candidates how much easier it is to write about similarities; for example, both types of minutes can be referred back to at a later date.

Where a question asks for advantages and disadvantages, there is no need for an equal number of advantages and disadvantages as long as both are covered; for example, there could be five advantages to one disadvantage.

Some candidates did not pick up on the issues in the case study and wrote about issues they thought might arise. Candidates need to read the case study carefully.

Section 2 does not relate to Section 1. Picking up issues from the case study and reusing them in other answers is not going to gain marks.

Some candidates seem to believe that the junior administrative assistant is pivotal in the success of what might be a multi-national organisation. Statements such as 'sales decrease, share price falls and company then is forced to close' are not uncommon. Candidates need to find more to say about how the junior administrative assistant's actions can realistically impact the organisation.

It was disappointing to observe the lack of knowledge regarding minutes, the FOI Act and features of reliable information. We have frequently tested meeting documentation. We frequently have a legislation question, and although we have never asked about FOI, it was left in the course content with GDPR and Computer Misuse Act removed. Sources of information is maybe an old-fashioned Higher question but it is in the course and is assessed at National 5. These three questions did have the effect of lowering the average mark for the question paper and were very much part of the discussions regarding lowering the grade boundaries.

Some candidates have very poor handwriting and there is a concern that markers are unable to decipher some scripts. These scripts are passed to the senior marking team but sometimes remain difficult to read. Candidates can opt to key in their answers, and it may be that is something that centres could implement, if resources allow. Our candidates are used to keying in.

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Assignment

As mentioned already, the assignment was well done and standards were on a par with previous years. Common errors were not unusual.

In the presentation task, some design templates were very dark, and it was difficult to read text in the smart art or the rates of pay. Candidates should experiment with a simple design template that has minimal impact on the content, and pay close attention to the printout legibility before they submit.

There seemed to be several candidates who did not submit all tasks or all parts of the task, for example:

♦ no formula view for spreadsheet tasks
♦ part (b) of a spreadsheet handed in but not part (a)
♦ a task missing

The end of the IT assignment can be a stressful time for both centre staff and candidates, with conflicting priorities; for example, helping someone who has a technical issue or putting paper in a printer. Candidates must ensure all their printouts are submitted, and in the correct order. Centres should consider how to best manage the end of the assignment to ensure all printouts are sent to SQA.

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.

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