Course report 2022

Subject	Politics
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	1935

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	31.2	Cumulative percentage	31.2	Number of candidates	605	Minimum mark required	55
B	Percentage	26.3	Cumulative percentage	57.5	Number of candidates	505	Minimum mark required	46
C	Percentage	20.7	Cumulative percentage	78.2	Number of candidates	400	Minimum mark required	37
D	Percentage	12.5	Cumulative percentage	90.7	Number of candidates	245	Minimum mark required	28
No award	Percentage	9.3	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	180	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](https://sqa.my/).

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Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper 1

Overall, the question paper was positively received.

As part of the modifications to assessment for session 2021–22, Section 2: Political systems sampled all three content areas.

Some candidates did not address the questions set, particularly in Section 2: Political systems.

Question paper 2

Overall, the question paper performed as expected, however, some candidates did not make full use of the sources provided when making an evaluation of the viewpoint in question 2.

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

Question 1(a)
Many candidates produced very well-structured responses that addressed the central issue in the question. Many candidates produced detailed responses that compared the key features of direct and representative democracy.

Almost all candidates referred to the work of relevant theorists.

Good quality responses used relevant terminology well to provide detailed responses with, in particular, supporting detailed exemplification.

Many candidates provided analytical comments that either compared the key features of both forms of democracy or examined implications of some of these key features.

Some candidates provided well-argued conclusions that evaluated the central issues in the question.

Question 1(b)
Many candidates produced well-structured responses that addressed the central issue in this question.

The most popular comparisons focused on Socialism and Conservatism.

Many candidates' responses provided detailed descriptions of the key features of different ideologies, which were then developed with supporting exemplification or explanations.

Many candidates benefitted from well-structured responses that supported further analytical comments focusing on either implications of ideological positions or identifying similarities and differences between their chosen ideologies.

Question 2(a)
Almost all candidates who provided responses to this question chose the UK and the USA as the context for their responses.

Some candidates provided well-structured responses that clearly addressed the issue of the flexibility of the constitutional arrangements in the political systems they had studied.

Good quality responses provided detailed descriptions that were supported by explanations or exemplification and tended to provide analytical comments on three aspects of the question.

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Question 2(b)

Almost all candidates who responded to this question chose the UK and the USA as the context for their responses. Good quality responses focused accurately on the issue outlined in the question (limits on the power of the executive) and provided well-structured comparative responses. This approach supported candidates in providing relevant analytical comments.

Question 2(c)

Almost all candidates chose the UK and the USA as the context for their responses. Some candidates provided very detailed descriptions with highly detailed exemplification of the role of the legislature in scrutinising the executive branch. Good quality responses provided analytical comments comparing the effectiveness of the scrutiny function of the executive across the two political systems.

Question 3(a)

Candidates who performed strongly in this question addressed all the key mandatory campaign management strategies (grassroots, new technology, and media strategies). Good quality responses were supported with detailed exemplification and analytical comments that examined the relative importance of different strategies.

A few candidates provided highly analytical comments and/or conclusions that identified the interrelationship between the uses of different campaign strategies.

Question 3(b)

Many candidates produced well-structured responses that addressed all three models outlined in the 'Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment' section of the course specification. The coverage of this content then supported candidates to address and evaluate the issue identified in the question.

Good quality responses provided detailed descriptions. Most of these responses also then developed their knowledge and understanding by providing very detailed and specific exemplification.

Well-structured and detailed responses enabled candidates to address the central issue relating to the importance of the sociological model of voting behaviour.

Question paper 2

Question 1

Most candidates accurately identified three points of comparison between Sources A and B. Many candidates provided some supporting analytical comments based on the identified comparisons.

Many candidates provided well-structured responses that attempted to identify three comparisons, provided an analytical comment based on each comparison, and then tried to provide an overall conclusion.

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Some candidates provided a detailed overall conclusion. These often focused on a specific area, for example a conclusion about the power of the executive branch in the two political systems.

Question 2

Many candidates provided highly structured responses that sought to address all components of the viewpoint.

Many candidates sought to make evaluations of the viewpoint as they examined each of the components of the viewpoint in turn. These candidates often addressed all relevant aspects of the viewpoint.

Most candidates identified each of the components of both parts of the viewpoint.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper 1

Question 1(a)

Some candidates provided limited responses that were overly descriptive and did not make analytical comments that could have, for example, identified similarities or differences or examined implications of some of the key features of different forms of democracy.

A few candidates did not refer to relevant theorists or they only named theorists without referring to their works. These candidates were unable to access the full range of marks available for this question.

Question 1(b)

A few candidates provided limited responses that were overly descriptive or did not refer to relevant political theorists associated with the chosen ideologies.

A small number of candidates provided inaccurate descriptions or did not attempt to make analytical comments.

Question 2(a)

Some candidates either did not address the central issue in the question, namely the flexibility of the constitutional arrangements, or did not attempt to answer this question.

Question 2(b)

A few candidates failed to address the issue raised in the question (limits on the power of the executive), instead attempting to compare the powers of the executive in their responses.

A few candidates provided extensive conclusions for this response although an evaluative conclusion is not required for 12-mark extended-response questions.

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Where candidates did make analytical comments, these tended to be straightforward and did not extend to developed analytical comments.

Question 2(c)

A few candidates attempted to outline opportunities for scrutiny of the executive that were not within the realm of the question. For example, some of these candidates included reference to the media in scrutinising the executive, but this was not within the scope of the question (which focused on the actions of the legislature in scrutinising the executive).

Where candidates made analytical comments, they often did not extend to developed analysis. As a result, few candidates were able to access full marks for their response.

Question 3(a)

A few candidates did not cover the mandatory content for this question, usually by making a comparison between media strategies and either grassroots strategies or new technology.

Although some candidates provided detailed exemplification for different campaign strategies, descriptions and explanations provided by a few candidates were weak and lacked detail, occasionally including very simplistic explanations for the use of these strategies.

Question 3(b)

A few candidates included information about dominant ideologies in their responses despite this question being about voting behaviour. Some responses suffered from poor structure or did not cover the mandatory content, usually by failing to address the party identification model.

Descriptions and exemplification tended to be weaker for this question than in other 20-mark extended-response questions.

Question paper 2

Question 1

A few candidates made inaccurate comparisons, which attempted to link unrelated information from the sources.

Some candidates provided weak points that merely repeated information from the sources or provided a very general comment that identified if a comparison was similar or different. They did not attempt to identify the nature of the difference or similarity.

Some candidates provided simplistic and straightforward conclusions. A few candidates provided conclusions that merely repeated each of the comparisons rather than identifying a conclusion based on the information.

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Question 2

Although most candidates provided well-structured responses, many candidates did not refer fully to the different sources and aspects of data. As a result, they did not access a second mark for interpreting the information from each source.

A few candidates did not identify relevant terms in the viewpoint that may or may not have been supported in the evidence. This affected the ability of these candidates to gain marks for evaluation. Some candidates failed to synthesise information across or within sources. They either stated what each of the sources showed in isolation or attempted to link information without outlining how this information might have linked, supported, or opposed other data from the sources. Where this occurred, candidates failed to fully evaluate the viewpoint with justification.

A few candidates provided evaluations for elements of the viewpoint but did not provide justifications for these evaluations, so could not access marks.

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Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Centres should be clear about the allocation of marks for the course assessment and ensure candidates understand this. This applies particularly to the 12-mark extended-response question in question paper 1 and the 20-mark electoral data question (question 2) in question paper 2.

Mark allocations are in the marking grids included in the marking instructions. Candidates may also find these grids helpful.

Centres should note that the question papers can sample from all aspects of the course content. Centres and candidates should avoid attempting to identify patterns or making assumptions based on previous question papers. Centres should discourage candidates from attempting to use pre-prepared answers.

Markers this year identified that more responses than previously lacked detailed analytical comments. Exemplification of detailed analysis is provided on the Understanding Standards website.

More candidates than usual failed to complete the question papers in the allocated time. Centres should encourage candidates to pay greater attention to the time allocation for each paper.

Further information to support centres can be found in the Understanding Standards section of SQA's website, where exemplar materials and audio presentations are available. Additional candidate exemplars and commentaries from the 2022 question paper will be made available during this session.

Question paper 1

Centres should make it clear to candidates that their responses for Section 1 must refer to the works of relevant political theorists. Merely mentioning the name of relevant theorists without reference to their works or ideas is not adequate to meet the criteria outlined in the detailed marking instructions.

Centres should make sure their candidates understand the coverage expected for questions in Section 3.

Question paper 2

Centres should remind their candidates that sources can feature content not included in the 'Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment' section of the course specification.

Centres should explain to candidates what the second interpretation mark for question 2 is awarded for.

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.

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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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