

Scottish Government - HIGHERS SUMMARY

ENGLISH

Changes to assessment in Higher courses from session 2018-19 onwards

Subject	Changes to coursework?	Changes to question paper(s)?	Current course assessment	Revised course assessment	Reasons for change / additional information
English	<p>Yes – new coursework component</p> <p>A new performance-spoken language component will be introduced to assess the skills of talking and listening. It will be assessed as achieved/not achieved and candidates will need to achieve the minimum requirements of this component to gain the course award.</p> <p>There are no changes to the portfolio-writing.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>There are no changes to the question papers.</p>	<p>Marks Question paper 1: 30 Question paper 2: 40 Portfolio-writing: 30</p> <p>Weightings Question paper 1: 30% Question paper 2: 40% Portfolio-writing: 30%</p>	<p>Marks Question paper 1: 30 Question paper 2: 40 Portfolio-writing: 30 Performance-spoken language: Achieved/Not achieved only</p> <p>Weightings Question paper 1: 30% Question paper 2: 40% Portfolio: 30% Performance-spoken language: Not applicable</p>	<p>The new performance-spoken language component will assess the skills of talking and listening, which are currently assessed through the units. This mirrors the structure of the National 5 course and will ensure that candidates continue to be assessed on these skills once the units are removed from the course from session 2018-19.</p>

Higher results

Higher	2014 ^b	2015 ^b	2016	2017	2018	2019	2014-2019		2018-2019	
							change	%change	change	%change
Entries	31,582	35,354	36,356	35,716	36,185	35,461	3,879	12.3%	-724	-2.0%
Passes (A-C)	23,702	27,902	28,666	27,609	27,482	25,967	2,265	9.6%	-1,515	-5.5%
Pass Rate	75.0%	78.9%	78.8%	77.3%	75.9%	73.2%	-1.8pp	n/a	-2.7pp	n/a

b. 2014 - Previous Higher only, 2015 - Previous Higher and New Higher combined

ENGLISH

SQA course report summary

English	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slight dip in performance in Paper 2 (Critical Reading) in terms of extended writing. Candidates need to ensure they are fully addressing all aspects of a question, and they are demonstrating complex analysis, rather than assertion of opinions.• Slight dip in Portfolio coursework performance, but not dramatic, and not specific to a genre/type of writing. Candidates should be advised to develop their creative and discursive ideas fully. In discursive writing, care should be taken to integrate research and evidence into a line of thought.
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Education Scotland summary

- The modest rise in entries at Higher level, coupled with a small decline in the pass rate, over the five years, 2014-19 suggests that centres are consistent in their presentation policies but may still be presenting a small proportion of candidates inappropriately.
- Difficulty with the Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (RUAE) paper *may* be an explanation for the drop in the pass rate as last year's principal assessor's report for last year's National 5 English indicated that this cohort found the RUAE paper challenging; a proportion of candidates tackling this year's Higher would fit into this group.

MATHEMATICS

Changes to assessment in Higher courses from session 2018-19 onwards

Subject	Changes to coursework?	Changes to question paper(s)?	Current course assessment	Revised course assessment	Reasons for change / additional information
Mathematics	Not applicable – this course does not include a coursework component.	Yes Question paper 1 (Non-calculator) will be extended by 10 marks. The exam time will increase by 20 minutes, to 1 hour 30 minutes. Question paper 2 will be extended by 10 marks. The exam time will increase by 15 minutes, to 1 hour 45 minutes.	Marks Question paper 1 – Non-calculator: 60 Question paper 2: 70 Weightings Question paper 1 – Non-calculator: 46.2% Question paper 2: 53.8%	Marks Question paper 1 – Non-calculator: 70 Question paper 2 - 80 Weightings Question paper 1 – Non-calculator: 46.7% Question paper 2: 53.3%	Extending the question papers will ensure that a greater number of skills are assessed, following the removal of units from session 2018-19. Both question papers will assess operational and reasoning skills and will include both short answer and extended response questions.

Higher results

Higher	2014 ^b	2015 ^b	2016	2017	2018	2019	2014-2019		2018-2019	
							change	%change	change	%change
Entries	21,851	21,074	18,868	18,861	18,753	18,626	-3,225	-14.8%	-127	-0.7%
Passes (A-C)	15,757	15,169	13,863	13,953	13,973	13,481	-2,276	-14.4%	-492	-3.5%
Pass Rate	72.1%	72.0%	73.5%	74.0%	74.5%	72.4%	0.3pp	n/a	-2.1pp	n/a

b. 2014 - Previous Higher only, 2015 - Previous Higher and New Higher combined

MATHEMATICS

SQA course report summary

Mathematics	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Candidates could use many standard techniques effectively but struggled in novel contexts.• Candidates need to be familiar with the entire course given the longer papers.• Candidates' weak algebraic manipulation skills can undermine performance.• Candidates need to be able to use and apply their mathematics in a range of contexts.• Weak numeracy skills continue to undermine the performance of many candidates.
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Education Scotland summary

- Decline in entries has continued. This is first decline in pass rate (-2.1% to 72.4%) since 2014, however pass rate still higher (0.3%) than the last pre-CfE Higher examination.
- **Higher Mathematics** entries fell by 0.7% however this still represents a rise in the percentage of the S5/6 cohort as this fell by 1.2% between 2018 and 2019. The fall of 2.1% in the pass rate is within reasonable year on year fluctuations.

HISTORY

Changes to assessment in Higher courses from session 2018-19 onwards

Subject	Changes to coursework?	Changes to question paper(s)?	Current course assessment	Revised course assessment	Reasons for change / additional information
History	<p>No</p> <p>There will be no change to the assignment task.</p> <p>Following the extension of the question paper, the assignment will now have a 27% weighting.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>The current question paper will be extended by 20 marks and the assessment time will increase by 40 minutes. The question paper will be split into two question papers, with a break in between.</p> <p>Question paper 1 will include two sections on British, and European and World contexts. It will be worth 44 marks will have a duration of 1 hour 30 minutes.</p> <p>Question paper 2 will include one section on Scottish contexts. It will be worth 36 marks and will have a duration of 1 hour 30 minutes.</p>	<p>Marks Question paper: 60 Assignment: 30</p> <p>Weightings Question paper: 67% Assignment: 33%</p>	<p>Marks Question paper 1: 44 Question paper 2: 36 Assignment: 30</p> <p>Weightings Question papers 1 and 2: 73% Assignment: 27%</p>	<p>Extending the question paper will allow more skills, knowledge and understanding to be sampled following the removal of units and unit assessments from the course.</p> <p>In question paper 1, candidates will answer one extended response question in each section. The extended response questions will increase from 20 marks to 22 marks.</p> <p>In question paper 2, candidates will answer source-handling questions and a knowledge question. This will include a new 'explain' question that requires candidates to explain events, rather than describe them.</p>

Higher results

Higher							2014-2019		2018-2019	
	2014 ^b	2015 ^b	2016	2017	2018	2019	change	%change	change	%change
Entries	10,881	11,281	11,168	10,760	10,296	9,987	-894	-8.2%	-309	-3.0%
Passes (A-C)	9,309	9,645	9,682	8,888	8,506	7,267	-2,042	-21.9%	-1,239	-14.6%
Pass Rate	85.6%	85.5%	86.7%	82.6%	82.6%	72.8%	-12.8pp	n/a	-9.9pp	n/a

b. 2014 - Previous Higher only, 2015 - Previous Higher and New Higher combined

HISTORY

SQA course report summary

History	H	<p>Question paper 1 — British, European and world history</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many candidates did not link their evaluative comments to build a line of argument and were unable to access the full range of marks.• A relative judgement between the different factors is essential to access the three marks available for the conclusion.• Candidates must answer the question as it appears in the question paper and not give a pre-prepared answer.• If a candidate is choosing to answer an evaluation question by selecting another factor, they must still address the question. <p>Question paper 2 — Scottish history</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centres should ensure they prepare candidates with specific Scottish historical knowledge.• Centres should note that the 'How fully' and 'Explain' questions will come from the key issues in the Higher History course specification. The 'two source interpretation' and the 'Evaluate' questions will assess more in-depth knowledge from the description of content.• Candidates are required to identify the overall interpretation in each source.• Candidates should carefully select the relevant points from the sources and interpret why the selected points are important to the issue being discussed.• Candidates must attempt the overall interpretation in each source to access the 6 source marks. <p>Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Best practice was reflected in those candidates who used the resource sheet as an essay plan, providing a summary of the factors, key knowledge points and detailed referencing such as author, textbook (or website) and full quote.• Some website references demonstrated poor practice. References should not include factual evidence.• References used to support the analysis and/or evaluation exemplified best practice.
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Education Scotland summary

- History has shown a drop of almost 10% in A-C grades. ES is in discussion with subject networks to explore the reasons behind this.

PSYCHOLOGY

Changes to assessment in Higher courses from session 2018-19 onwards

Subject	Changes to coursework?	Changes to question paper(s)?	Current course assessment	Revised course assessment	Reasons for change / additional information
Psychology	<p>Yes</p> <p>Candidates will no longer be required to describe their method, materials and sample. Instead, they will be asked to justify their choice of method and sampling technique.</p> <p>The assignment will now contribute 33% of the overall marks available for assessment.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>The question paper will be extended by 20 marks. The research section will be removed, however research will be more widely sampled within the remaining sections of the question paper. Candidates will also continue to be assessed on their research skills within the assignment.</p> <p>The duration of the exam will increase by 40 minutes, to 2 hours 40 minutes.</p>	<p>Marks Question paper: 60 Assignment: 40</p> <p>Weightings Question paper: 60% Assignment: 40%</p>	<p>Marks Question paper: 80 Assignment: 40</p> <p>Weightings Question paper: 67% Assignment: 33%</p>	<p>Extending the question paper will allow more skills, knowledge and understanding to be sampled, following the removal of units from the course.</p>

Higher results

Higher	2014 ^b		2015 ^b				2014-2019		2018-2019	
	2014 ^b	2015 ^b	2016	2017	2018	2019	change	%change	change	%change
Entries	3,479	3,672	3,591	3,666	3,495	3,410	-69	-2.0%	-85	-2.4%
Passes (A-C)	2,383	2,457	2,357	2,311	2,012	1,520	-863	-36.2%	-492	-24.5%
Pass Rate	68.5%	66.9%	65.6%	63.0%	57.6%	44.6%	-23.9pp	n/a	-13pp	n/a

b. 2014 - Previous Higher only, 2015 - Previous Higher and New Higher combined

PSYCHOLOGY

SQA course report summary

Psychology	H	<p>Question Paper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The majority of Higher Psychology candidates are new to the subject. Therefore, centres should carefully consider the ability of potential candidates to study a subject with highly abstract content.• Candidates cannot rely on rehearsal alone to do well in the exam and therefore, will need to apply higher order skills to the knowledge they have gained.• Candidates will benefit from being given guidance and practise on developing the skills required by the course, particularly those of evaluation, analysis and application.• Candidates showed little evidence of skills' development, particularly evaluate, analyse and apply.• Many candidates provided evidence of their knowledge but found it difficult to use that knowledge appropriately.• Many candidates gave a narrative account of research studies instead of using them to respond to the question asked. <p>Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Candidates will benefit from support and guidance in the development of the skills of 'justify' and 'apply', particularly when making decisions about their method, testing their hypothesis and choice of statistics.• Guidance and practise with operationalisation of hypotheses and variables will help candidates.• Ethical treatment of participants is essential. Candidates must be able to explain how their procedures are ethical.
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Education Scotland summary

- Increase in entries at N5, decrease at H; Attainment at both levels has shown reductions.
- Significant % of psychology candidates come from college sector where there are often large cohorts of students studying psychology. SQA achievement data does not distinguish between this and school data.
- Varying models of delivery of psychology can have varying effects on outcomes (e.g. 'traveling column' pupils, consortia approaches etc.)
- Psychology often seen as an attractive option by candidates, but this can lead to candidates underestimating the difficulty of the subject.
- The absence of explicit psychology study in the BGE may lead to centres having weaker prior attainment data upon which to select appropriate entry levels for candidates.
- Appropriately qualified psychology teachers are now more readily available since the introduction of the PGDE at Strathclyde University: However, levels of qualification and expertise across the system may still show variability.
- The teacher support network for psychology is strong with ATPS, BPS and the European Federation of Psychology Teaching Associations (EFPTA) all providing good levels of support. There is also a robust and supportive email network in place.