Course report 2022

Subject	Drama
Level	National 5

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	4570

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	63.6	Cumulative percentage	63.6	Number of candidates	2905	Minimum mark required	70
B	Percentage	20.7	Cumulative percentage	84.3	Number of candidates	950	Minimum mark required	60
C	Percentage	10.1	Cumulative percentage	94.4	Number of candidates	460	Minimum mark required	50
D	Percentage	3.8	Cumulative percentage	98.2	Number of candidates	175	Minimum mark required	40
No award	Percentage	1.8	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	80	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

Overall, many candidates performed well in the question paper. The 2022 question paper provided appropriate balance with a range of A and C type questions. Most of the questions were answered accurately, with candidates demonstrating a clear understanding of what had been asked.

There were a mixture of production and acting roles chosen for section 1 responses, with the majority choosing acting.

In section 2, all three stimuli were used equally. Candidates developed an assortment of dramas in response to their chosen stimulus. Many candidates did not use the space provided for rough working to note down and develop their ideas.

Candidates responded well to the released stimuli and were able to form creative ideas, many of which had been pre-planned. Some candidates had created quite complex dramas for section 2.

The majority of candidates developed a response to their chosen stimulus that was entirely suitable for a live theatrical performance.

The majority of candidates completed the paper in the allotted time.

Performance

Overall, candidates performed very well in the performance. Most centres had prepared candidates well and chosen appropriately challenging texts. Most centres presented candidates that represented the full range of ability across the cohort from the sample of 12 jointly assessed by the visiting and centre assessor.

Visiting assessors commented on the high standard of performances and the positive experience they had visiting centres, under challenging circumstances at times. The collaborative marking model continues to be a very positive experience for both markers and centres.

A wide variety of plays were used. Where appropriate texts had been chosen that reflected the personality and range of ability within the group, and candidates had been suitably cast, acting candidates managed to access the full range of marks.

Candidates who chose production roles were in the minority, but many of those presented achieved an excellent standard. Visiting assessors were impressed by not only their imagination and skills in their chosen area, but the knowledge these candidates displayed through research on their text.

Many centres took the option to film their sample of candidates in order to be able to engage fully with the post-results services.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Question paper

Question 1(a): Most candidates answered this question well and clearly identified a suitable target audience, with justification.

Question 1(b): Most candidates answered this question well and gave two reactions they wanted the audience to have, with justification.

Question 2: Many candidates fully described two practical activities another drama student carried out to prepare for their performance, although some candidates described a group activity and not an individual one.

Question 3(a): Most candidates identified a genre and gave a reason.

Question 4(a): Most candidates identified the purpose of their drama with a reason.

Question 4(b): Most candidates answered this question well and described a key moment which highlighted their purpose.

Question 4(c): Most candidates answered this question well and described two reactions they wanted the audience to have when watching their drama at the key moment, with justification.

Question 5(a): Most candidates answered this question well and identified the main character, with a reason.

Question 5(b): Most candidates answered this question well and clearly described feelings the main character had towards one other character.

Question 6(a): Most candidates answered this question well and described a scene which the actors may have found difficult to perform.

Question 6(b): Most candidates answered this question well and gave reason(s) why the actors would find the scene difficult to perform.

Question 6(c): Many candidates described two rehearsal activities that could be used to help the actors overcome these difficulties, with justification.

Question 7: Most candidates answered this question well and described two conventions they would use in their drama.

Question 8(a): Most candidates answered this question well and described the mood and atmosphere at the beginning of their drama.

Question 8(b): Most candidates answered this question well and described the mood and/or atmosphere at the end of their drama.

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Performance

Acting

Candidates who had been cast appropriately and had a suitable character, in terms of creativity, age appropriateness and challenge, managed to achieve depth and reference textual clues. Most candidates applied skills with appropriate and effective use of voice and movement. Lines and cues were remembered well, relationships were conveyed through interaction, and characterisation was sustained. Some candidates had a superb impact on the audience. Many candidates achieved high marks and had been directed very well by teachers, demonstrating a depth of understanding about their character.

Centres that had chosen appropriate and interesting texts specifically for their candidates, which allowed for creativity and challenge, did better than centres where scenes were repeated by a number of candidates, or where candidates had been allocated unsuitable roles. It was, however, entirely understandable in this year's circumstances that there was a need to have smaller groups and double casting.

Production

Candidates who had clearly documented the process of developing ideas and/or designs and had researched their skill and/or design concept(s) achieved higher marks than those who hadn't. Many candidates had developed effective ideas and demonstrated a high level of skills.

Many production candidates were technically knowledgeable and executed their role with a good level of skill. Many candidates with appropriately chosen texts showed a flair for design, creativity, originality and imagination.

Centres that had chosen texts that enabled design candidates to make a significant creative impact did better than those that had chosen scenes specifically for the acting candidates, with limited opportunity for input by designers, as they did not always allow for the most creativity.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 1(c): Many candidates didn't achieve marks as they did not evaluate the effectiveness of their individual contribution to the final performance, but instead just stated/described their concepts. Some candidates also failed to use appropriate theatrical terminology in the description of their performance/design concepts and were therefore unable to access the available marks.

Question 2: Some candidates only achieved 2 marks as they did not fully describe the activities another drama candidate had carried out to prepare for their performance. Some candidates described the activities from a group perspective, and therefore couldn't access the full range of marks.

Question 3(b): Many candidates didn't achieve marks as they did not describe the ways in which another candidate's contribution to the performance highlighted the genre but instead just stated or described their contribution. As with question 1(c), some candidates also failed

to use appropriate theatrical terminology in the description of another candidate's performance and/or design concepts and were therefore unable to access the available marks.

Question 5(c): Many candidates didn't achieve marks due to a lack of correct voice and movement terminology in their answers. Some gave general answers which were not linked to the previous response.

Question 6(c): Some candidates only achieved 2 marks as they did not fully describe the rehearsal activities or only justified the ways in which they would help the actors overcome the difficulties stated in their previous answer.

Question 7: Some candidates did not access the full range of marks for this question due to a lack of understanding of what a convention is. A few candidates failed to answer this question.

Question 9: Many candidates did not access the full range of marks for this question due to a lack of correct theatre production terminology used in their answers (props, sound, lighting and costume). Candidates also failed to explain how their ideas would help to highlight the mood and/or atmosphere in their drama.

Question 10(a): Many candidates did not access the full range of marks for this question as they were unable to describe their set design for end-on staging. A few candidates failed to answer this question.

Question 10(b): Many candidates did not access the full range of marks for this question as they gave generic advantages (not linked to their drama or set design). A few candidates failed to answer this question.

Performance

The length of some acting pieces varied from the recommended duration. A few pieces were too long. Many were reported to be too short and didn't meet the minimum 6-minute requirement. Some centres had chosen to present candidates in duologues due to the current health situation, but on occasions this led to the minimum time requirement not being met.

Some candidates who had been cast in duologues often failed to achieve sufficient depth in their performance and were unable to access the full range of marks. Also, in some duologues lack of interaction with other characters was disadvantageous to the acting candidates involved. Some centres repeated two or three-hander texts which was detrimental to candidates in offering them the opportunity to develop their own individual performance/design concepts, but again this is understandable due to the current health situation.

At times, direction of blocking and movement was weak, with lack of consideration to character interaction or understanding of character motivation.

Some texts with larger casts were challenging to mark as some actors with smaller parts were not on stage for the required time and lacked adequate interaction with others, meaning their roles gave significantly less opportunity to access the full range of marks.

Some production candidates did not cover the minimum requirements for their role, for example, designs not created for all characters or cue sheets without specifically required information (duration on sound cue sheets, for example), no ground plans or elevations, or lack of suitable/appropriate resources to fulfill their role, especially make-up and hair — cosmetic make-up cannot be solely used by candidates being assessed in make-up and hair, this does not allow them to access the full range of marks.

A small number of technical candidates were prepared to demonstrate their skills, but there was no performance of the text they had designed for. This meant marks were affected as the skills must be applied as part of a performance.

A few texts chosen were unsuitable for National 5 and were too challenging for candidates.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

In section 1, for questions on self and others, candidates should be prepared to evaluate both the process and the performance. At this level, all answers are expected to use correct drama terminology throughout.

When evaluating their own work, candidates should be able to comment on their individual preparation and/or final performance. Candidates must make an evaluative statement on their preparation and/or final performance. Candidates who do not make an evaluative statement will not be able to access the full range of marks.

When commenting on preparation, candidates should be able to provide a description of the activity in which they participated (answers written from a group perspective will not access the full range of marks).

When commenting on performance, candidates should refer to their performance concepts or design concepts using appropriate terminology for their role.

When evaluating someone else, candidates can choose another candidate they have worked with in their own group, or a candidate they have observed within another group. Candidates must be able to evaluate the student's individual contribution and/or final performance. Answers written about a group will not access the full range of marks.

Responses should always be written from an individual, and not from a group perspective.

In section 2, candidates should be encouraged to use the space provided for rough working to note down their ideas in response to their chosen stimuli, for example with mind maps or plot ideas or character information. A basic 'time, place and action' summary for each scene in the candidate's drama makes it clear they have fully realised how their response to the stimulus would be performed live onstage. This allows them time to formulate and work through their ideas and transfer this information into their answers. Candidates who did not utilise this, tended to have less detailed or fluid answers in section 2.

Candidates should be encouraged to read all the questions in section 2 before attempting to respond to the stimulus. This allows them to see the through-line of the questions and avoid repetition. Most questions have more than one part — (a), (b), (c) etc, and each element will be connected to the previous question. Candidates should be encouraged to read all parts of a question to avoid duplication and consider the question as a whole.

Many candidates did not understand the command words used in questions — describe, explain, identify, evaluate. Reasons and justification were given when description had been asked for. Many candidates did not use the wording of the questions, making their answers more ambiguous and at times not addressing the question asked.

Candidates are expected to use drama terminology and would benefit from increased knowledge and understanding of all terminology. Although some candidates answered using terminology, it was clear in many answers that they did not fully understand the vocabulary,

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concept or language they were using. Some candidates used very little or no terminology in their answers, especially in section 2. Candidates also used inaccurate adjectives in relation to voice, movement, mood and atmosphere. Lack of terminology for production roles and understanding of the practical application of technical equipment or resources was especially apparent in these cases.

General
Overall, there was a lack of understanding demonstrated of role play, improvisation and conventions. There was also a lack of production, voice and movement terminology used in answers throughout the paper. Some candidates did not clearly read questions and relate their answers to the stem of the question, instead they offered generic answers.

The use of production terminology was, in some cases, not only poor, but incorrect. Many candidates supplied generic answers with no real understanding of the application of the production role. Candidates should remember that the drama must be suitable for a live theatrical performance, therefore their ideas must be able to be realised, for example sound cannot be described as wind and rain or sad music; this achieves no marks as the answer does not specify whether the sound effect is live or pre-recorded and does not state the level to be played at or the title of the 'sad music'. Similarly, lighting cannot be described as bright or dull, as this does not indicate how such an effect would be created, for example the type of lanterns used, specific colour and how this would be achieved, or specific intensity.

Although some candidates understood end-on staging most could not give a clear description of their set. Candidates lacked the vocabulary, including specifying areas of the stage, to describe what was on their stage and many confused set and props.

Some candidates were unable to provide an imaginative response to the stimuli, many had very simple plots with only two characters that lacked any depth. Some simply continued to answer on the performance they had identified in section 1. Some copied stories from television or films — these are not suitable for a live theatrical performance.

There was evidence that many candidates had responded well to the released stimuli and had developed creative ideas, although a few were not suitable for a live theatrical performance and were more cinematic.

Performance
The selected text must be published and be of a suitable standard for National 5. Again, some iconic Higher and Advanced Higher texts were used, and this was not always appropriate for National 5 candidates. Some visiting assessors commented on candidates struggling to interpret their role adequately where these texts had been used. A list of recommended texts is given in appendix 3 of the course specification and could be used as a starting point for centres selecting texts.

Centres that had selected suitable texts and cast appropriately, provided candidates with opportunities to achieve excellent marks. Many centres had selected texts from the recommended list.

Some productions were too short. Centres should make sure minimum and maximum time limits are adhered to. The current recommended timings can be found in the National Course Modification Summary on the [Drama subject page](#).

Some centres chose to repeat texts, especially duologues. Repetition of scenes with similar or same blocking is disadvantageous to candidates, although this was entirely understandable in this year's circumstances.

Acting candidates should be cast in only one role.

Some production candidates had prepared PowerPoints or presentations to share with the visiting assessor. While these were excellent this is not a requirement of the course assessment.

General
The candidate mark sheets and sample sheet should be completed before the visiting assessor arrives. It is useful to have copied the mark sheets before the assessment so centre staff can complete their own copy.

Centre assessors should have a copy of the detailed marking instructions from the course specification when assessing candidates.

Preparation for performance responses can be written or typed and should not exceed 400 words. Reviews that are not relevant and concise will not be able to access the top 9–10 marks. It is good practice for candidates to state the word count on their preparation for performance.

Preparation for performance should be written in open-book conditions and must be completed and marked by the centre assessor before the visiting assessor arrives. Many centres had failed to mark the preparation for performance before the visiting assessor arrived. The Drama Visiting Assessment Information for Teachers and Lecturers document (issued to centres) clearly states; 'completed preparation for performance responses (approximately 400 words), that have been preliminary marked by the designated centre assessor before the VA visit'. These marks should also be shared with the visiting assessor at the point of review and not withheld by the centre assessor until the collaborative discussion. The visiting assessor should not be given a folio of work instead of the preparation for performance response.

A private, quiet space must be provided for the visiting assessor to read the preparation for performance responses, and for the visiting assessor and centre assessor to discuss national marking standards and decisions. This space should be for the sole use of the visiting assessor and centre assessor, ie not a school room accessed by others during the assessment process.

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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