



Course report 2024

Accounting Advanced 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. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2024 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 59

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 44

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	15	Percentage	34.1	Cumulative percentage	34.1	Minimum mark required	140
B	Number of candidates	8	Percentage	18.2	Cumulative percentage	52.3	Minimum mark required	120
C	Number of candidates	11	Percentage	25.0	Cumulative percentage	77.3	Minimum mark required	100
D	Number of candidates	8	Percentage	18.2	Cumulative percentage	95.5	Minimum mark required	80
No award	Number of candidates	2	Percentage	4.5	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

We have not applied rounding 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 statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper performed as intended. Candidates made a good attempt at all questions. There were no questions that appeared to present a significant challenge, or that impacted negatively on candidate performance.

Project

The project performed as expected. Candidates made a good attempt at both aspects covered within the project assessment task, although candidates tended to score slightly more marks for the section focused on the usefulness of company annual reports.

The writing was, in general, of a good standard and candidates worked to the prescribed word count. Almost all candidates adhered to the current candidate guidance.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Candidates performed steadily across all areas of the course that were assessed in this component. The income statement (Q1a) was well done, as was the Dissolution of Partnership (Q2 Part B). Candidates were also adept at handling much of the Investment Appraisal information in Q2 Part A. The style of candidate response to this question necessitated an additional, alternative marking instruction to be added to the marking instructions. This was done to show centres how marks could be earned when responding in such a way.

Project

Annual reports: application

Most candidates were able to successfully evaluate the usefulness of the annual report from the perspective of two stakeholders, citing evidence from the relevant sections of the annual report of their chosen company.

International Accounting Standards: theory

Most candidates were able to complete this section of the project to a good standard, following the candidate instructions clearly.

Conclusion

Most candidates were able to successfully draw conclusions which referenced the original quotes in the assessment task.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

There were no widespread issues with any questions across this assessment component. However, candidates were a little more inconsistent in their approach to the Consolidated Statement of Financial Position (Q3). Additionally, there were low scores across most theory-based questions. This appears to be an ongoing issue, with many candidates not responding to the theory questions throughout the paper.

Project

International Accounting Standards: application

Candidates who did not score high marks in this section tended not to engage in a detailed analysis of how the company being investigated correctly adopted the guidance in the relevant International Accounting Standard (IAS). Some candidates opted to research standards which were not listed in the candidate guidance. This, in most cases, made the analysis and interpretation of their implementation much more difficult, as these standards

are of a much more technical and complex nature. Thus, a small number of candidates found it difficult to access the marks available in this part of the project.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are well prepared in all aspects of the course and that they have good recall of all relevant layouts and processes. It is also worth noting that, whilst theory questions represent a small proportion of the marks available, marks gained through accurate responses to theory-based questions could make a significant impact on a candidate's ability to attain a higher mark, perhaps even being the difference between grades. It is therefore recommended that teachers and lecturers encourage thorough preparation in this area of study.

As this is the highest level of qualification in Accounting, only the most accurate work will be rewarded with full, or near to full, marks. Candidates should also ensure that they provide clearly annotated workings, where applicable.

Project

Candidates who found accessing marks challenging had often opted for a more obscure stakeholder, such as a director or lender. Interrogating the annual report in enough depth to gain full, or close to full, marks was harder for these candidates than for those who opted to look at the report from the point of view of an employee or investor.

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to think of questions, queries or concerns that a stakeholder may have, then go to the annual report to find the evidence they would need to allay or confirm their concerns.

Where contact time with candidates is restricted, teachers and lecturers should set deadlines for discussions with candidates in order to check fundamental aspects of the task. These could include ensuring the company is on the FTSE100, and that word count and referencing requirements are met.

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.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in [March 2024](#) and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).