



# **Course report 2024**

## **Advanced Higher Economics**

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: 125

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 120

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

<b>A</b>	Number of candidates	64	Percentage	53.3	Cumulative percentage	53.3	Minimum mark required	84
<b>B</b>	Number of candidates	37	Percentage	30.8	Cumulative percentage	84.2	Minimum mark required	72
<b>C</b>	Number of candidates	13	Percentage	10.8	Cumulative percentage	95.0	Minimum mark required	60
<b>D</b>	Number of candidates	5	Percentage	4.2	Cumulative percentage	99.2	Minimum mark required	48
<b>No award</b>	Number of candidates	1	Percentage	0.8	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 very much in line with expectations.

Section 1 provided a level of demand that allowed those candidates who had kept abreast of current economic news to access all questions. Those candidates who had shown clear engagement with current economic news were able to draw on specific knowledge that allowed them to score highly in this section by offering well-informed contextual analysis.

Most candidates performed well in section 2, and there was evidence of good preparation for this section. Many candidates also showed excellent theoretical understanding of market structures and interventions and were able to produce correct diagrams to support their answers.

All the essays in section 3 were chosen, with questions 9 and 10 being the most popular choice of question.

## **Project**

The performance of the project this year was good, with a few candidates producing excellent work. Very few candidates produced projects that were descriptive in nature, and most projects had clear evidence of analysis and evaluation taking place.

The breadth of topic choice presented by candidates was really pleasing to see, particularly given the dominance of media attention directed towards monetary policy throughout the academic year. A number of candidates produced projects that were highly original and focused on economic issues that had a global perspective beyond the UK economy. This is very pleasing to see and one that is to be encouraged by centres

Most candidates, on the whole, attempted to answer the question or title that they chose.

## **Section 2: comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas that candidates performed well**

#### **Question paper**

In section 1, question 3 was very well answered by most candidates, who were able to clearly state the key features of UK Inheritance Tax. Question 5 was also done to a very high standard, with most candidates able to provide excellent answers on the possible advantages and disadvantages of raising the highest rate of income tax.

Section 2 of the question paper was done very well. Many candidates were well prepared and demonstrated a very good understanding of an oligopoly market.

In section 3, many candidates who chose question 9 were able to successfully describe inflationary and deflationary pressures currently impacting the UK economy.

Many candidates who chose question 10 were able to describe the possible economic advantages and disadvantages of building High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) in good detail.

Many candidates who chose question 11 were able to provide excellent answers on why some economists believe that the 'triple lock' on state pensions should end.

Many candidates who chose question 12 were able to provide very strong current analysis of the economic implications of de-globalisation and the reasons for the slowing rate of growth of China's economy.

#### **Project**

Candidates generally produced well-researched projects. Most candidates made effective use of their introduction to provide context for the topic and clearly state the intended aims.

Where candidates achieved a very high mark it was due to their ability to present an in-depth analysis and evaluation of their chosen economic issue. Where candidates had a specific focus on the question and had used their research findings effectively to apply depth to their analysis and not breadth, they scored very highly.

Many candidates also made very effective use of sub-sections, and section conclusions before reaching an overall conclusion at the end.

### **Areas that candidates found demanding**

#### **Question paper**

In section 1, questions 1(a), it was very common for candidates to not be able to correctly describe economic growth. A few candidates misinterpreted question 3 and provided information on the arguments for and against abolishing Inheritance Tax, not the key features of the tax. For question 7, a few candidates evaluated more than two policies that a government could introduce to achieve a greener economy, when the question clearly stated

that two policies were to be evaluated. Only an evaluation of two policies could be awarded marks.

In section 2, a few candidates struggled to discuss the view that price wars only lead to negative consequences. (Q8(a)ii)

In section 3, it was not uncommon for candidates to not gain full marks for question 9(b) on the arguments that could be made to justify raising or lowering interest rates.

It was also not uncommon for candidates not to gain full marks for question 10(b) on the possible economic implications of increasing spending on the NHS.

## **Project**

When making an analytical and/or evaluative point from a finding, some candidates did not reference their finding in either a footnote or endnote. No marks were awarded if the finding was not fully referenced.

Very few candidates were able to provide a clear and consistent line of argument that was signposted in the introduction and then referred to throughout the project.

Many candidates did not fully integrate and interpret relevant supporting data, tables, infographics, diagrams, charts and/or graphs within the body of their project.

## **Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment**

### **Question paper**

It remains of critical importance that candidates continuously engage with current economic news and analysis presented by the media. This should not be limited to just the UK economy but should include the broader global economic climate as well. The content of the question paper is driven by the current economic landscape (which is becoming ever more changeable), so it is of paramount importance that candidates should be attuned to various media commentaries and their analyses of current economic issues.

Those candidates who can demonstrate knowledge of ongoing and current economic trends are far more likely to acquire the 2 marks for use of current economic statistics in section 3 of the question paper.

### **Project**

Candidates should choose a topic that is contemporary. If candidates choose an issue which is contentious or where there is clear debate it may help them to engage in the various arguments or discussions surrounding the topic.

Candidates do not need to set out and stick to their intended line of argument at the very early stages of their investigative research. Indeed, extensive researching of a topic may reveal sub-issues not immediately apparent at the initial inception. Candidates who undertake extensive research may also find that the sub-issues they explore will help them with their in-depth analysis. Most importantly, the quality and depth of research presented will heavily determine the level of analysis and evaluation contained in the project.

A candidate's analysis and evaluation should always be based on research and referenced in a footnote or endnote. Although not obligatory, footnotes are preferred to endnotes.

Candidates should make sure that they provide a detailed economic justification for the choice of issue in the introduction

Candidates should also integrate and interpret any table, infographic, diagram, chart or graph used anywhere in the project. Candidates should be asking themselves, what does this information show? And why is this information important to the issue? Graphs, tables, infographics etc, should also be readable and centred. It is very common for candidates to present graphs, tables, and infographics that are minimum sized and too small for any reader to clearly interpret.

Recommendations should only be reserved for the final conclusion section. Any recommendations should be linked to specific information presented in the main body of the project.

Candidates must always remember to include a bibliography at the very end of their project.

## 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](#).