Course report 2024

Higher Graphic Communication

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: 3,087

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 3,171

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	505	Percentage	15.9	Cumulative percentage	15.9	Minimum mark required	89
B	Number of candidates	811	Percentage	25.6	Cumulative percentage	41.5	Minimum mark required	75
C	Number of candidates	907	Percentage	28.6	Cumulative percentage	70.1	Minimum mark required	61
D	Number of candidates	637	Percentage	20.1	Cumulative percentage	90.2	Minimum mark required	47
No award	Number of candidates	311	Percentage	9.8	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 more statistical reports on the statistics and information page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper generally performed as expected; however, the level of demand in some questions was higher than intended.

Questions about drawing standards, conventions and protocols; questions with the command word ‘explain’; and 3D CAD questions related to the assembly of components proved more demanding than expected.

We adjusted the grade boundaries to take account of this.

Assignment

The assignment performed mostly as expected.

The level of demand of task 3 was higher than intended. We adjusted the grade boundaries to compensate for this.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Most candidates answered question 2(a) well and accurately described how to model this component.

Most candidates answered question 2(b) well and described advantages for using cloud storage.

Most candidates answered question 2(f) well. There was an error in the spelling of 'top-down' in the question and, although this did not affect most candidates, a very small number noted this error. We adjusted the grade boundaries to ensure no candidate was disadvantaged.

Most candidates attempted parts (i), (iv) and (v) of question 3(f), on the desktop-publishing terms, emphasis, proportion and shape, well.

Most candidates answered question 4(c)(i), on CAD illustrations, and question 4(c)(ii), on sited environments, well.

Assignment

Many candidates performed well in task 1. All candidates attempted tasks 2(a) and (b) well.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

As with the 2023 question paper, most candidates did not answer 'explain' questions well.

In question 1(b), most candidates did not explain why raster graphics are used for images.

Many candidates did not demonstrate knowledge of drawing standards and conventions in question 2(e)(ii).

Most candidates did not answer question 2(g) well. They used incorrect terminology or did not fully constrain the components. Page 12 of the Higher Graphic Communication Course Specification contains the correct terminology (under the 'Assembly' subheading).

Almost all candidates did not answer the tangency questions, 2(h)(i) and 2(h)(ii), correctly.

Most candidates did not explain the use of the desktop-publishing features, design elements and principles specific to Higher. Almost all candidates did not answer question 3(f)(ii), on value, and question 3(f)(iii), on rhythm, correctly.

Assignment

All candidates attempted task 2(c) well; however, the overall quality of the DTP work did not meet the expected standard. Many candidates did not use design elements and principles effectively.

In task 2(c), many candidates did not continue the theme of their pull-up banner into the business card. Many candidates did not use grid structure well in layouts.

Many candidates did not complete task 3 well. The task proved to be more demanding than expected. We adjusted the grade boundaries to ensure no candidate was disadvantaged.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates understand how to answer ‘explain’ questions. Candidates must relate cause and effect and/or define relationships. This must be in the context of the question, or a specific area within the question.

For 3D CAD questions, like question 3(b) in the 2024 question paper, candidates do not need to describe the 2D CAD commands used to draw the sketches as no marks are attached to this. A simple recreation of a profile with all relevant dimensions is sufficient for any 2D aspects of the response.

When responding to questions in a desktop-publishing context, candidates must always refer to specific examples. For a ‘describe’ or ‘explain’ question, candidates must refer to something they see in the related graphic item.

Teachers and lecturers should advise candidates to use appendix 2 in the Higher Graphic Communication Course Specification to prepare for the course assessment.

Assignment

Candidates must make sure they read and undertake all instructions set out for them in DTP tasks. Following these instructions gives candidates the best chance of producing a high quality of visual impact and making effective use of design elements and principles.

Teachers and lecturers should remind candidates that they should not create a 3D model and subsequent computer-generated orthographic drawing to then replicate in a sketch. This does not assess the candidate’s abilities in interpreting an object.

Candidates should consider the overall structure of their work, and the context it is in, for example a pull-up banner to advertise a drone (2024 assignment), a menu for a café (2023 assignment), a display stand for children’s toys (2022 assignment), or a leaflet for a speaker (2019 assignment). At Higher, candidates should consider the wider use of desktop-publishing features, design elements and principles and how they can be used to create effective layouts.

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.