Course report 2024

National 5 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:   490

Number of resulted entries in 2024:   446

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	311	Percentage	69.7	Cumulative percentage	69.7	Minimum mark required	84
B	Number of candidates	59	Percentage	13.2	Cumulative percentage	83.0	Minimum mark required	72
C	Number of candidates	28	Percentage	6.3	Cumulative percentage	89.2	Minimum mark required	60
D	Number of candidates	25	Percentage	5.6	Cumulative percentage	94.8	Minimum mark required	48
No award	Number of candidates	23	Percentage	5.2	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 expected.

Assignment
The assignment performed as expected.

Given the main thrust of economic news in the preceding year, it was unsurprising that most candidates chose to base their assignments on the cost of living, including inflation and interest rates.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

♦ Q1(b) — describing methods of measuring unemployment
♦ Q1(c) — describing causes of unemployment
♦ Q1(d) — describing effects of unemployment
♦ Q2(b)(i) — describing factors which increase demand for electric cars
♦ Q2(e)(ii) — describing types of aid given to developing economies
♦ Q4(a) — describing and giving examples of costs
♦ Q5(a) — drawing a circular flow diagram
♦ Q6(a)(ii) — describing benefits Scottish entrepreneurs may bring to the UK economy
♦ Q7(a)(i) and (ii) — describing and giving examples of a multinational

Assignment

Most candidates followed the report structure given in the coursework assessment task. The most accessible sections remain Introduction; Research; the findings element of Findings, Analysis and Interpretation; and the Structure and Presentation section.

Candidates generally performed better when making recommendations than when drawing conclusions.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

♦ Q1(a)(ii) — describing a recession: some candidates gave vague descriptions
♦ Q1(e)(i) — explaining the reason for firms having to make choices: some candidates did not give both the choice and the opportunity cost
♦ Q1(f) — suggesting ways to measure a fall in living standards: some candidates did not give a way of measuring a fall
♦ Q2(e)(i) — explaining reasons for UK families being more likely to own cars: some candidates could not think of reasons other than affordability
♦ Q3(b) — suggesting determinants of supply: some candidates included determinants that related to demand
♦ Q3(c) — explaining reasons for the supply curve to slope upwards: some candidates found it difficult to articulate this concept
♦ Q5(b) — explaining the effects of a decrease in government spending: some candidates described, rather than explained, the effects
♦ Q5(c)(i) and 5(c)(ii) — explaining demand-pull and cost-push inflation: some candidates found it difficult to fully develop their answers
♦ Q6(d) — describing disadvantages of global trade to UK exporters: some candidates gave answers relating to consumers rather than to UK exporters

Assignment

A few candidates did not explain the value of their sources. A few candidates are using 'relevant' as the value of a source which will not attract marks as all sources that candidates use should be relevant to the report.

Several candidates could have benefitted from reviewing their final report to ensure the findings and analysis, and/or conclusions and recommendations match the title of the report.

A few candidates did not present clear findings, as their finding included analysis from the original source, for example, analysis by a journalist when the finding was taken from a newspaper article.

A few candidates did not include any economic theory in their report, whilst others did not put their theory points in the Finding, analysis and interpretation (FAI) section.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Candidates are encouraged to use up-to-date terms, for example Universal Credit rather than Job Seekers' Allowance.

Question paper

Candidates should be given the opportunity to practise 'think' questions, ie questions in different contexts that they will not have seen before in past papers as these types of questions can be more challenging.

When looking at costs, candidates should be encouraged to give examples that are definitely fixed or variable, rather than costs which could be seen a semi-fixed or semi-variable.

When looking at increasing profits by increasing the price of a product, candidates should include reference to the fact the sales volume will be impacted. For example, profits might fall if raising the price reduces sales volume significantly.

When asked to describe or define terms, candidates should not use the label words in the definition. For example, candidates should not say 'variable costs vary with output' or 'education aid is providing education'.

Candidates should ensure that they read the question carefully and answer the question that is asked. For example, when asked to describe trade barriers, candidates should give a description of a trade barrier rather than give the impact of it (for example 'a tariff is a tax on imports', rather than 'a tariff makes imports more expensive').

Candidates may be used to drawing small diagrams in class as a paper saving measure, however, during the exam candidates should produce diagrams that are large enough to make the labels easy to read. Diagrams should ideally be about a third to a half of an A4 page with any explanatory text below (rather at the side of) the diagram.

Candidates should clearly label each answer with the question number, particularly those that are included as additional answers at the end of the script.

Candidates should be encouraged to space their work out. Candidates with handwriting that is difficult to read, should consider submitting word processed scripts. These should be printed in 1.5 or double line spacing for ease of marking.

Assignment

Candidates should proofread their assignment carefully to ensure that the contents and the title match. If necessary, candidates should 'tweak' their title at the end of the writing process.

Candidates should check their core notes to ensure that they give accurate theory points, as marks cannot be awarded for incorrect or incomplete economic theory. Candidates could use bold and/or italics for their theory points to highlight these.

Candidates should use full URLs to detail their sources rather than embedded links which cannot be accessed by markers.

It would be helpful if candidates highlighted their findings, for example by using inverted commas to indicate each finding. This would clarify what the finding is and help to ensure that candidates are not using journalists' analysis as part of their finding.

Candidates should try to provide detail in their analysis and not 'leap' from A to Z without showing the steps that have taken place to get there. For example, candidates should give the steps that lead from 'an increase in production costs' to 'an increase in unemployment'.

If practical, candidates should print their reports double sided, although this is not mandatory.

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](#).