



Course report 2022

Subject	Economics
Level	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. 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	125
------------------------------------	-----

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	[c]	Cumulative percentage	[c]	Number of candidates	75	Minimum mark required	79
B	Percentage	[c]	Cumulative percentage	[c]	Number of candidates	25	Minimum mark required	67
C	Percentage	[c]	Cumulative percentage	[c]	Number of candidates	15	Minimum mark required	55
D	Percentage	[c]	Cumulative percentage	[c]	Number of candidates	5	Minimum mark required	43
No award	Percentage	[c]	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	[c]	Minimum mark required	N/A

All figures are rounded to the nearest five. Figures between one and four inclusive have been suppressed to protect against the risk of disclosure of personal information. All percentage figures for a course have been suppressed where values between one and four inclusive have been suppressed. Cells containing suppressed figures are marked up with the shorthand [c].

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](#).

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper performed broadly in line with expectations.

Section 1 provided a level of demand that allowed those candidates who had kept abreast with current economic news to access all questions.

In section 2, many candidates showed excellent theoretical understanding and were able to produce correct diagrams to support their answers.

All the essays in section 3 were chosen. However, question 8 proved to be the most popular choice. Only a few candidates chose question 11.

Project

The performance this year was good, with a small cohort of candidates producing excellent work. However, many candidates presented a project that was either highly descriptive or one that was lacking in analysis and evaluation.

There was a very broad range of topics chosen this year, with some candidates researching highly original areas of interest. This is very pleasing to see and one that is to be encouraged by centres.

Most candidates attempted to answer the question or title that they chose. However, some candidates presented a very short project of less than 3,300 words. This greatly hinders a candidate's ability to provide a robust in-depth analysis of their chosen title.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Question paper

In general, section 1 was done well. Candidates who had clearly kept abreast of current national and global economic news were able to discuss the broader issues relating to productivity, the disadvantages of rising wages, and the reasons for recent shortages of goods and services in the UK.

Section 2 of the question paper was done very well. Many candidates were well prepared and demonstrated a very good understanding of perfect competition and monopolistic competition. Many candidates were also able to provide correctly labelled diagrams regarding externalities that were accurate and fully explained in the text.

There were some very good answers to questions 8(a), 8(b) and 8(c). Some candidates had clearly kept abreast with current news surrounding inflationary pressures in the UK economy. Some candidates were also able to provide an excellent analysis of the economic consequences of raising interest rates on the UK economy.

Project

Candidates produced well-presented projects.

Many candidates made effective use of their introduction to provide context for the topic and clearly stated the aims. Referencing, and the correct use of footnotes was very consistent across the range of topics.

If candidates achieved a very high mark, this was due to their ability to present an in-depth analysis and evaluation of their chosen economic issue. If 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. These candidates also made very effective use of sub-sections, and section conclusions before reaching an overall conclusion at the end. Some candidates also took advantage of the opportunity in the final conclusion to provide a couple of recommendations. This is to be encouraged by centres.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Question paper

In section 1, it was common for candidates to fail to see the distinction between productivity and production. Many candidates also found question 6 very demanding and were unable to provide a discussion on the UK government's view that labour shortages and rising wages will lead to higher UK productivity.

In section 2, some candidates mistakenly compared perfect competition with monopoly.

In section 3, candidates who had chosen to answer question 9 struggled to provide a full description of the circular economy.

Candidates who had chosen to answer question 10 struggled with question 10(c). They did not always fully describe the arguments for and against a wealth tax, with many candidates failing to see the distinction between wealth and income as two separate economic concepts.

Markers commented that some candidates seemed unable to answer questions that contained specific command words, which was possibly due to a lack of practice due to disruption throughout the academic year. This was a much more noticeable area of difficulty this year, compared to previously.

Project

Some candidates scored low marks because they submitted a very short project of less than 3,300 words which can limit the level of in-depth analysis of their chosen title.

Although many candidates had clearly researched their chosen topic, it was not uncommon to see projects that were heavily loaded with research findings in the bibliography or list of references, but those research findings were not used effectively to support analytical comments. As a result, many candidates did not manage to access marks that are awarded for in-depth analysis or evaluation.

In addition, 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.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

It remains of critical importance that candidates regularly engage with current economic news. This should not be limited to just the UK economic landscape but should include the broader global economic climate as well. The content of the question paper is driven by current economic issues, so it is of paramount importance that candidates should be attuned to media commentary and analysis of these issues.

It has become increasingly noticed that some candidates are writing answers in bullet point format. Teachers and lecturers should strongly advise candidates not to write in bullet points when answering questions.

Project

Candidates should choose a topic that is contemporary and contentious. However, titles that are overly complex can present candidates with the problem of disentangling an issue. This could result in the presentation of a project that is lacking in-depth analysis. Choosing an issue where there is clear debate also helps a candidate to engage in the various arguments or discussions surrounding the topic.

Candidates do not need to set out 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 outset. Candidates who adopt a dedicated approach to their research may also find that the sub-issues explored will help them with their in-depth analysis.

Candidates who can provide analytical commentary and critical evaluative judgements based on evidence are best placed to produce a strong project. The quality and depth of research presented will also invariably determine the level of analysis and evaluation.

Candidates should also explain the relevance of any tables, infographics, diagrams, charts or graphs to the issue under investigation. This will also assist in driving the analysis through.

It has also become apparent that candidates are highlighting where they feel they have applied the rubric of the marking instructions. For example, some candidates will bracket the words 'analysis', 'evaluation', 'in-depth analysis' or 'conclusion' at the end of a sentence. This is to be highly discouraged and is not good practice.

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.

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](#).