

Advanced Higher Economics Draft Course/Unit Support Notes



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Please refer to the note of changes at the end of this document for details of changes from previous version (where applicable).

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Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance on approaches to delivering and assessing the Advanced Higher Economics Course. They are intended for teachers and lecturers who are delivering the Course and its Units. They should be read in conjunction with the *Course Specification*, the *Course Assessment Specification* and the *Unit Specifications* for the Units in the Course.

These support notes cover both the Advanced Higher Course and the Units in it.

Draft

General guidance on the Course/Units

Aims

At Advanced Higher level, Economics provides learners with a wide range of contexts that will enable them to analyse, interpret, predict and explain the economic actions of consumers, businesses, governments and other organisations.

The aims of the Course are to enable learners to develop:

- ◆ an in-depth understanding of current economic issues relating to the Scottish, UK and global economies
- ◆ an in-depth understanding of a range of market structures and reasons for government intervention when markets fail
- ◆ independent learning techniques and a range of economic research, analytical and evaluative skills
- ◆ an ability to critically assess and discuss the effectiveness of economic policies
- ◆ an ability to interpret complex economic data from a wide range of sources
- ◆ an ability to assess, discuss and communicate complex economic ideas and opinions in a coherent manner and to make reasoned conclusions

At Advanced Higher level, the contexts of study are complex and challenging, particularly in terms of the application of economic concepts and theories to current economic situations. Undertaking this Course will require a more sophisticated level of numeracy and communication skills as learners are required to interpret complex economic statistics and graphs, consider alternative economic viewpoints and present logical and reasoned arguments relating to current economic issues.

Development of research and investigative skills is a key focus of this Course, and this encourages learners to think independently and use their initiative, but also provides opportunities for working as a team. The Course will strengthen learners' understanding of economic models, issues, policies and opinions, and will develop their decision making skills by enabling them to evaluate and/or justify any economic actions taken.

Advanced Higher Economics is, therefore, instrumental in developing learners' higher-order thinking skills. It provides an in-depth knowledge and understanding of concepts that underpin economic decisions made by individuals, businesses, governments and other organisations.

Progression

In order to do this Course, learners should have achieved the Higher Economics Course.

Learners who have achieved this Advanced Higher Course may progress to further study, employment and/or training. Opportunities for progression include:

- ◆ Progression to other SQA qualifications:
 - Progression to other qualifications at the same level of the Course, for example Professional Development Awards (PDAs), Higher National Certificates (HNCs)

- ◆ Progression to further/higher education:
 - For many learners a key transition point will be to further or higher education, for example to Higher National Certificates (HNCs)/Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) or degree programmes. Examples of further and higher education programmes that learners doing the Course might progress to are Economics and Business Economics.

 - Advanced Higher Courses provide good preparation for learners progressing to further and higher education, as learners doing Advanced Higher Courses must be able to work with more independence and less supervision. This eases their transition to further/higher education. Advanced Higher Courses may also allow 'advanced standing' or partial credit towards the first year of study of a degree programme.

 - Advanced Higher Courses are challenging and testing qualifications: learners who have achieved multiple Advanced Higher Courses are regarded as having a proven level of ability which attests to their readiness for higher education in HEIs in other parts of the UK as well as in Scotland.

- ◆ Progression to employment:
 - For many learners, progression will be directly to employment or work-based training programmes. Employment opportunities and training programmes are available in a wide range of trainee programmes within the private, public and third sectors.

This Advanced Higher is part of the Scottish Baccalaureate in Social Sciences. The Scottish Baccalaureates in Expressive Arts, Languages, Science, and Social Sciences consist of coherent groups of subjects at Higher and Advanced Higher level. Each award consists of two Advanced Highers, one Higher and an Interdisciplinary Project which adds breadth and value and helps learners to develop generic skills, attitudes and confidence that will help them make the transition into higher education or employment.

Hierarchies

Hierarchy is the term used to describe Courses and Units which form a structured progression involving two or more SCQF levels.

This Advanced Higher Course is not in a hierarchy with the corresponding Higher Course or its Units.

Skills, knowledge and understanding covered in this Course

This section provides further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding that could be included in the Course.

Teachers and lecturers should refer to the *Course Assessment Specification* for mandatory information about the skills, knowledge and understanding to be covered in this Course.

The development of subject-specific and generic skills is central to the Course. Learners should be made aware of the skills they are developing and of the transferability of them. It is the transferability that will help learners with further study and enhance their personal effectiveness.

The skills, knowledge and understanding that will be developed in the Advanced Higher Economics Course are:

- ◆ analysing market structures and assessing the assumptions and limitations on which they are based
- ◆ analysing why market mechanisms might not always allocate resources based on efficiency and/or equity
- ◆ analysing current national and global economic issues and their impact on the Scottish, UK and global economies
- ◆ evaluating the effectiveness of economic policies used in recent years to meet the economic aims of government
- ◆ investigating and critically evaluating complex economic issues
- ◆ evaluating complex economic data from a wide range of sources
- ◆ communicating economic reasoning and conclusions fully and effectively
- ◆ researching a current economic topic independently and producing a coherent and logical report

For more information, see Appendix 1.

Approaches to learning and teaching

Advanced Higher Courses place more demands on learners as there will be a higher proportion of independent study and less direct supervision. Some of the approaches to learning and teaching suggested for other levels (in particular, Higher) may also apply at Advanced Higher level but there will be a stronger emphasis on independent learning.

For Advanced Higher Courses, a significant amount of learning may be self-directed and require learners to demonstrate a more mature approach to learning and the ability to work on their own initiative. This can be very challenging for some learners, who may feel isolated at times, and teachers and lecturers should have strategies for addressing this. These could include, for example, planning time for regular feedback sessions/discussions on a one-to-one basis and on a group basis led by the teacher or lecturer (where appropriate).

Teachers and lecturers should encourage learners to use an enquiring, critical and problem-solving approach to their learning. Learners should also be given the opportunity to practise and develop research and investigation skills and higher order evaluation and analytical skills. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) can make a significant contribution to the development of these higher-order skills as research and investigation activities become more sophisticated.

Learners will engage in a variety of learning activities as appropriate to the subject, for example:

- ◆ researching information for their subject rather than receiving information from their teacher or lecturer
- ◆ using active and open-ended learning activities such as research, case studies and presentation tasks
- ◆ making use of the internet to draw conclusions about specific issues
- ◆ engaging in wide-ranging independent reading
- ◆ recording in a systematic way the results of research and independent investigation from different sources
- ◆ presenting findings/conclusions of research and investigation activities in a presentation
- ◆ participating in group work with peers and using collaborative learning opportunities to develop teamworking
- ◆ participating in informed debate and discussion with peers where they can demonstrate skills in constructing and sustaining lines of argument to provide challenge and enjoyment, breadth, and depth to learning
- ◆ drawing conclusions from complex information
- ◆ using sophisticated written and/or oral communication and presentation skills to present information
- ◆ using appropriate technological resources, eg web-based resources

- ◆ using appropriate media resources, eg video clips
- ◆ demonstrating development, improvement and refinement of techniques and practices in practical/performance-based subjects
- ◆ using real-life contexts and experiences familiar and relevant to young people to meaningfully hone and exemplify skills, knowledge and understanding
- ◆ participating in field trips and visits

Teachers and lecturers should support learners by having regular discussions with them and giving regular feedback. Some learning and teaching activities may be carried out on a group basis and, where this applies, learners could also receive feedback from their peers.

Teachers and lecturers should, where possible, provide opportunities to personalise learning for learners, and to enable them to have choices in approaches to learning and teaching. The flexibility in Advanced Higher Courses and the independence with which learners carry out the work lend themselves to this. Teachers and lecturers should also create opportunities for, and use, inclusive approaches to learning and teaching. This can be achieved by encouraging the use of a variety of learning and teaching strategies which suit the needs of all learners. Innovative and creative ways of using technology can also be valuable in creating inclusive learning and teaching approaches.

Centres are free to sequence the teaching of the Outcomes, Units and/or Course in any order they wish.

- ◆ Each Unit could be delivered separately in any sequence.

Or:

- ◆ All Units may be delivered in a combined way as part of the Course. If this approach is used, the Outcomes within Units may either be partially or fully combined.

There may be opportunities to contextualise approaches to learning and teaching to Scottish contexts in this Course. This could be done through mini-projects or case studies: for example, candidates investigating different Scottish local governments' policies, eg on housing or their spending on education, and reporting back to others.

Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

The following skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work should be developed in this Course.

Literacy

Learners should be encouraged to develop extended writing skills and to take time to interpret and respond to questions. Emphasis should be placed on written work, for example structured responses to essay questions, reports. This will be supported by:

- ◆ watching news updates
- ◆ reading newspapers (media)
- ◆ communicating through presentations/working in groups
- ◆ doing mini-investigations
- ◆ self/peer evaluation
- ◆ listening to economic radio broadcasts or podcasts
- ◆ outside speakers
- ◆ attending lectures
- ◆ writing in a clear, concise and discursive manner

Numeracy

Learners' understanding of numeracy and its relation to economics in selecting, organising and interpreting diagrams and data should be developed. This will be supported by:

- ◆ completing calculations, eg fractions/percentages, eg inflation and unemployment, RPI, CPI
- ◆ graphical and numerical understanding of economic markets and externalities
- ◆ interpreting diagrams and constructing graphs
- ◆ gathering numerical information from a range of economic sources and interpreting it
- ◆ presenting economic information in tables, graphs and charts

Employability, enterprise and citizenship

Learners' employability and citizenship should be developed through research, debate and discussion of economic issues which affect their own and others everyday life. This could be supported by:

- ◆ encouraging autonomy/initiative through personal research
- ◆ enhanced time management and organisational skills
- ◆ improved IT skills for a technology-driven society
- ◆ increased economic and political awareness (watching news reports, reading newspapers)
- ◆ exploring different 'real-life' topic areas (inflation, unemployment, economic growth)

- ◆ working with others
- ◆ increased knowledge of the local/Scottish economy
- ◆ development of critical thinking skills

Thinking skills

Learners should be encouraged to think critically about given economic scenarios and to analyse them to reach economic conclusions or to make economic decisions based on that analysis. Learners should be encouraged to apply the skills they have learned to different contexts, emphasising their understanding of the key concepts of economics. This could be supported by:

- ◆ setting concepts in real-life examples
- ◆ personal research to undertake a project and produce a report
- ◆ applying economic concepts and theories to real-world economic events and issues
- ◆ the ability to critically appraise economic information and reach valid conclusions based on evidence
- ◆ the ability to evaluate competing economic arguments or rank/prioritise economic factors

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that learners have opportunities to develop these skills as an integral part of their learning experience.

It is important that learners are aware of the skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work that they are developing in the Course and the activities they are involved in that provide realistic opportunities to practise and/or improve them.

At Advanced Higher level it is expected that learners will be using a range of higher-order thinking skills. They will also develop skills in independent and autonomous learning.

Approaches to assessment

Assessment in Advanced Higher Courses will generally reflect the investigative nature of Courses at this level, together with high-level problem-solving and critical thinking skills and skills of analysis and synthesis.

This emphasis on higher-order skills, together with the more independent learning approaches that learners will use, distinguishes the added value at Advanced Higher level from the added value at other levels.

There are different approaches to assessment, and teachers and lecturers should use their professional judgement, subject knowledge and experience, as well as understanding of their learners and their varying needs, to determine the most appropriate ones and, where necessary, to consider workable alternatives.

Assessments must be fit for purpose and should allow for consistent judgements to be made by all teachers and lecturers. They should also be conducted in a supervised manner to ensure that the evidence provided is valid and reliable.

Unit assessment

Assessments must ensure that the evidence generated demonstrates, at the least, the minimum level of competence for each Unit. Teachers and lecturers preparing assessment methods should be clear about what that evidence will look like.

Sources of evidence likely to be suitable for Advanced Higher Units could include:

- ◆ meaningful contribution to group work and/or discussions (making use of log books, blogs, question and answer sessions to confirm individual learners have met the required standards)
- ◆ presentation of information to other groups and/or recorded oral evidence
- ◆ exemplification of concepts using (for example) a diagram
- ◆ interpretation of numerical data
- ◆ practical demonstration with commentary/explanation/narrative
- ◆ investigations
- ◆ answers to multiple choice questions
- ◆ short written responses
- ◆ extended response essay-type questions

Evidence should include the use of appropriate subject-specific terminology as well as the use of real-life examples where appropriate.

Flexibility in the method of assessment provides opportunities for learners to demonstrate attainment in a variety of ways and so reduce barriers to attainment.

The structure of an assessment used by a centre can take a variety of forms, for example:

- ◆ individual pieces of work could be collected in a folio as evidence for Outcomes and Assessment Standards
- ◆ assessment of each complete Outcome
- ◆ assessment that combines the Outcomes of one or more Units
- ◆ assessment that requires more than the minimum competence, which would allow learners to prepare for the Course assessment

Teachers and lecturers should note that learners' day-to-day work may produce evidence which satisfies assessment requirements of a Unit, or Units, either in full or partially. Such naturally occurring evidence may be used as a contribution towards Unit assessment. However, such naturally occurring evidence must still be recorded and evidence such as written reports, recording forms, PowerPoint slides, drawings/graphs, video footage or observational checklists provided.

Combining assessment across Units

Units will be assessed on a pass/fail basis. All Units are internally assessed against the requirements shown in the *Unit Specification*. Each Unit can be assessed on an individual Outcome-by-Outcome basis or via the use of combined assessment for some or all Outcomes.

A combined approach to assessment will enrich the assessment process for the learner, avoid duplication of tasks and allow more emphasis on learning and teaching. Evidence could be drawn from a range of activities for a combined assessment. Care must be taken to ensure that combined assessments provide appropriate evidence for all the Outcomes that they claim to assess.

Combining assessment will also give centres more time to manage the assessment process more efficiently. When combining assessments across Units, teachers/lecturers should use e-assessment wherever possible. Learners can easily update portfolios, electronic or written diaries and recording sheets.

For some Advanced Higher Courses, it may be that a strand of work which contributes to a Course assessment method is started when a Unit is being delivered and is completed in the Course assessment. In these cases, it is important that the evidence for the Unit assessment is clearly distinguishable from that required for the Course assessment.

Preparation for Course assessment

Each Course has additional time which may be used at the discretion of the teacher or lecturer to enable learners to prepare for Course assessment. This time may be used near the start of the Course and at various points throughout the Course for consolidation and support. It may also be used for preparation for

Unit assessment, and, towards the end of the Course, for further integration, revision and preparation and/or gathering evidence for Course assessment.

For this Advanced Higher Course, the assessment methods for Course assessment are a question paper and a project. Learners should be given opportunities to practise these methods and prepare for them.

Examples of activities to include within this preparation time include:

- ◆ Preparing for the components of Course assessment, for example:
 - preparing for non-question paper components: selecting topics, gathering and researching information, evaluating and analysing findings, developing and justifying conclusions, presenting the information (as appropriate)
 - practising and refining practical skills
 - practising and refining performance skills
- ◆ Practising question paper techniques, revising for the question paper, for example:
 - encouraging candidates to take time to interpret questions
 - teaching candidates how to develop points fully, eg by giving extra evidence to support the point made
 - exemplifying use of command words to assist learners in developing their responses

In relation to preparing for the project, teachers and lecturers should explain requirements to learners and the amount and nature of the support they can expect. However, at Advanced Higher level it is expected that learners will work with more independence and less supervision and support.

Authenticity

In terms of authenticity, there are a number of techniques and strategies to ensure that learners present work that is their own. Teachers and lecturers should put in place mechanisms to authenticate learners' evidence.

In Advanced Higher Courses, because learners will take greater responsibility for their own learning and work more independently, teachers and lecturers need to have measures in place to ensure that work produced is the learner's own work.

For example:

- ◆ regular checkpoint/progress meetings with learners
- ◆ short spot-check personal interviews
- ◆ checklists which record activity/progress
- ◆ photographs, films or audio records

Group work approaches as part of the preparation for assessment can be helpful to simulate real-life situations, share tasks and promote teamworking skills.

Group work approaches are acceptable as part of the preparation for assessment and also for formal assessment. However, there must be clear evidence for each learner to show that they have met the Evidence Requirements.

For more information, please refer to SQA's [Guide to Assessment](#).

Added value

Advanced Higher Courses include assessment of added value which is assessed in the Course assessment.

Information given in the *Course Specification* and the *Course Assessment Specification* about the assessment of added value is mandatory.

In Advanced Higher Courses, added value involves the assessment of higher-order skills such as high-level and more sophisticated investigation and research skills, critical thinking skills and skills of analysis and synthesis. Learners may be required to analyse and reflect on their assessment activity by commenting on it and/or drawing conclusions with commentary/justification. These skills contribute to the uniqueness of Advanced Higher Courses and to the overall higher level of performance expected at this level.

In this Course, added value will be assessed by means of a question paper and a project.

The question paper is used to assess whether the learner can retain and consolidate the knowledge and skills gained in individual Units. It assesses knowledge and understanding and the various different applications of knowledge such as reasoning, analysing, evaluating and solving problems.

The project is used to assess a wide range of high-order cognitive and practical skills and to integrate assessment. For example, the project develops a number of high-order skills and brings them together, such as skills relating to planning, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and report writing. The learner will carry out a significant part of the work for the project independently with minimal supervision.

In this Advanced Higher Course, the project is an investigation. This provides continuity with the Advanced Higher Course being replaced.

Equality and inclusion

It is recognised that centres have their own duties under equality and other legislation and policy initiatives. The guidance given in these *Course/Unit Support Notes* is designed to sit alongside these duties but is specific to the delivery and assessment of the Course.

It is important that centres are aware of and understand SQA's assessment arrangements for disabled learners, and those with additional support needs, when making requests for adjustments to published assessment arrangements. Centres will find more guidance on this in the series of publications on Assessment Arrangements on SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html.

The greater flexibility and choice in Advanced Higher Courses provide opportunities to meet a range of learners' needs and may remove the need for learners to have assessment arrangements. However, where a disabled learner needs a reasonable adjustment/assessment arrangements to be made, you should refer to the guidance given in the above link.

Appendix 1: Further information on Units in the Course

The following activities could support the delivery of the Units in this Course. These approaches include extensive use of case studies, team working exercises and role plays, which will enable learners to explore first-hand issues concerning a variety of economic topics.

Economic Markets: Structures and Intervention

Market Structures

- ◆ Using group work to prepare a price survey in an oligopolistic market to explore price stability across firms, eg supermarkets/coffee chains.
- ◆ Asking learners to bring in articles relating to competition issues in a particular market and use them to help apply theory to the real world, eg gas prices.
- ◆ Use games based on game theory to illustrate strategic behaviour in oligopoly, eg red-blue game.
- ◆ Use objects such as potatoes/carrots to illustrate the extent of homogeneity in agricultural markets.
- ◆ Do a survey of a stretch of a high street to analyse similarities and differences between firms in a monopolistically competitive market structure.
- ◆ Groups can research on the internet price discrimination in rail travel/cinema tickets.
- ◆ Individuals can prepare a report on cartels and their impact on consumers and businesses.
- ◆ Researching, in groups, a list of markets — the markets should have different degrees of contestability, eg computer software ... window cleaning. The groups should discuss how easy it would be for a new firm to enter each market — and why. Responses can be used to explain barriers to entry and their importance for monopolies.

Market Intervention

- ◆ Groups can prepare presentations on the OFT, Competition Commission and regulators, using official sites and critical articles.
- ◆ Mini case studies on positive and negative externalities. For example — minimum pricing for alcohol, major sports events, anti-congestion measures and environmental issues.

- ◆ Use the Budget to identify the UK Government's policies on externalities.
- ◆ A mini-project on initiatives to reduce environmental issues with an emphasis on renewable energy sources.

National and Global Economic Issues

The following examples are designed to stimulate ideas and help in planning and are for illustrative purposes only and not meant to be comprehensive or exhaustive.

- ◆ To develop the ability to interpret graphical and numerical data, groups can research information on current economic trends, using interactive websites such as the Bank of England, BBC News, etc. They can also suggest reasons for significant changes and report back to the class.
- ◆ Class or group debates on major issues such as the Eurozone crisis or budget cuts can be useful in exploring arguments on both sides of an issue.
- ◆ The Bank of England YouTube channel has useful resources on QE and monetary policy.
- ◆ Mini case studies or presentations on a variety of low-income countries to explore their diversity and different developmental issues. The World Bank website is useful for this.
- ◆ Researching the different political parties' websites for information on their economic policies to compare and critically analyse similarities and differences.
- ◆ Learners can produce a wiki jigsaw/blog weekly/monthly on current economic news, focusing on the effectiveness of government policies.
- ◆ Learners can peer-teach by producing a lesson on a set topic, eg the role of the World Bank, IMF and WTO.
- ◆ Discussing a number of topics throughout this Unit, for example the causes and constraints on economic growth in various countries, trends in unemployment, effectiveness of government policies.
- ◆ The class can adopt the role of the Monetary Policy Committee and hold meetings where the current state of the UK economy and monetary policy are discussed and then a vote taken as to what should happen to interest rates for that month. The Bank of England's Target 2 competition resources can be used to help this activity.

Researching an Economic Issue

- ◆ Brainstorming ideas for titles in groups or as a class and discussion of the suitability of each suggestion. Titles are best phrased as questions.
- ◆ Research skills using the internet, libraries media should be developed/encouraged in a range of contexts.

- ◆ Poor questionnaires can be used to exemplify the qualities of a good questionnaire.
- ◆ Mini projects can be helpful to develop research and referencing skills such as footnotes and bibliographies.
- ◆ Structured deadlines can be useful in helping candidates to plan and execute their work.
- ◆ Reflection on the adequacy and relevance of resources should be encouraged by a literature review before commencing the project.
- ◆ Field visits to academic libraries, financial institutions, firms where appropriate.
- ◆ Independent study skills should be encouraged throughout the process.
- ◆ Provide articles which students analyse and critically evaluate to develop evaluation skills.
- ◆ Peer review using SQA project guidelines.
- ◆ Provide a 'cut up' report to learners and ask them to re-assemble it in a logical order.

Appendix 2: Reference documents

The following reference documents will provide useful information and background.

- ◆ Assessment Arrangements (for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs) — various publications are available on SQA's website at: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html.
- ◆ Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work
- ◆ Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment
- ◆ [Course Specifications](#)
- ◆ [Design Principles for National Courses](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ [Overview of Qualification Reports](#)
- ◆ Principles and practice papers for curriculum areas
- ◆ [SCQF Handbook: User Guide](#) and [SCQF level descriptors](#)
- ◆ [SQA Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#)
- ◆ [Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work: Using the Curriculum Tool](#)
- ◆ [Coursework Authenticity: A Guide for Teachers and Lecturers](#)

Administrative information

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History of changes to Advanced Higher draft Course/Unit Support Notes

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date

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