



## Course Report 2016

Subject	Business Management
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

## **Section 1: Comments on the Assessment**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

Markers commented that the question paper covered a good breadth of course content and that candidates generally handled the paper well. Candidates seemed well prepared for section one, and coped very well applying the course content to the stimulus material.

The paper was accessible for candidates, and there was a spread of attainment from the range of ability presented.

### **Component 2: Assignment**

The assignment performed as intended, allowing most candidates to access an added value component that could improve their overall grade.

Most reports were well structured using the headings specified in the guidelines. However, some candidates still produced work which was too lengthy and exceeded the page limits — this should be avoided.

The marking instructions for the assignment were reviewed and implemented for session 2015–16. This allowed for better discrimination between candidates. Most candidates continued to achieve high marks in the background and collating and reporting sections.

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

### **Areas in which candidates performed well**

#### **Component 1: Question paper**

Question 1 (a): Candidates showed robust knowledge of the product life cycle, and most gained development marks due to the detailed answers provided for each of the stages.

Question 1 (b): Most candidates were able to identify the external factors from the case study.

Question 2 (a): Most candidates were able to identify a reason why the company was ethical from the case study.

Question 3 (c): Candidates showed strong knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of a sole trader.

Question 4 (b): The identification of industrial action was handled very well by the majority of candidates.

Question 5 (a): The majority of candidates were able to identify cash flow problems from the cash budget provided.

Question 5 (b): Candidates demonstrated robust knowledge of break-even terms, and were able to use this in the context of the cash budget.

Question 6 (a): Candidates showed sound knowledge of methods of production.

Question 6 (b): Candidates showed a good understanding of the factors that would need to be considered when choosing a supplier.

## **Component 2: Assignment**

Markers commented that they felt the performance in the assignment was strong again this year.

Candidates who followed guidelines closely produced good reports.

There was a much wider variety of topics chosen than in previous years.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

Question 1(b): Some candidates did not recognise that 3 marks were allocated, so they had to either give development of their impact or give a third impact of the factors identified in part (i) to gain full marks.

Question 1(d): Many candidates described sources of finance but did not justify them.

Question 2 (d): Sometimes candidates confused methods of selection with the stages in recruitment.

Question 2 (e): Candidates did not always show strong knowledge of quality, and some confused quality assurance with quality control.

Question 3 (b): Not all candidates took into consideration that the objectives were for a non-profit organisation, and some candidates merely identified objectives and did not outline.

Question 4 (a): Some candidates found it difficult to give a specific recruitment and selection use of the technology. Many only gave a generic use not relating to recruitment and selection.

Question 4 (c): This question asked for the impact of technology on working practices. A lot of candidates stated the impact of technology on an organisation but did not describe how it has changed working practices.

Question 5(c): Many candidates showed little understanding of the income statement; those that did found it difficult to gain 2 marks as they did not give enough development.

## **Component 2: Assignment**

Many candidates gave too much detail in the Background section of the report, often using a full A4 page for a section that is worth only 4 marks. Given the four-page limit, this can be a disadvantage as candidates use up valuable space that could be used for the Analysis and Interpretation section.

In the Research Methods section, a large number of candidates gave a list of points about their source but did not explain the value of the source. Some candidates did not gain credit for some of their sources as they merely repeated the same explanation given for the first source. In some instances, candidates did not state the purpose of the source used.

In the Analysis and Interpretation section, many candidates could list what they had found out from their research, but there was very little interpretation or development of their findings. Many candidates gave recommendations throughout their findings, which is not credited. Any analysis and interpretation has to come from, and refer back to, research evidence gathered.

Conclusions often lacked justifications or links to previous evidence. Candidates were able to put forward recommendations but again they were often unjustified.

## **Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates**

### **Component 1: Question paper**

Centres should encourage candidates to take the number of marks allocated to each question into account. This will ensure that they write adequate detail in their responses to allow the mark allocation to be reached, and also to allow development marks to be awarded.

Candidates should be given opportunities to continue to practise the use of command words so that they are applied effectively.

As far as possible, candidates need to make answers legible. Marks cannot be awarded for something that is impossible to read.

It is good practice for word processed scripts to be presented in size 12 font and double-line spacing.

### **Component 2: Assignment**

Centres and candidates are encouraged to follow the updated guidelines on the SQA website closely when preparing their assignment, and to use the Instructions to Candidates guidance as issued by SQA.

Candidates should only use the four main headings provided in the marking guidelines to structure their assignment. Lengthy background information is not required in the reports to

gain the full 4 marks available. In addition, it is important to stress that no marks will be awarded for Analysis and Interpretation if they present no clear link to the topic area chosen.

When using charts and graphs it would be more beneficial if these included appropriate labels. Candidates should have a minimum of two appropriate types of display material in their assignment, as per the published marking instructions.

Candidates, if possible, should try to use a small to medium-sized business to base their report on mainly because this is the focus of the National 5 Business Management Course.

Candidates should not exceed four pages for their assignment, and a maximum of two pages for appendices. The assignment should use a font size no smaller than 12 point, with 1.5 or double line spacing to enhance the clarity and legibility.

## Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	7602
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Number of resulted entries in 2016	7986
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### Statistical information: Performance of candidates

#### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	38.0%	38.0%	3032	74
B	26.6%	64.6%	2124	63
C	19.0%	83.6%	1517	52
D	6.9%	90.5%	555	46
No award	9.5%	-	758	-

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.