



Course report 2022

Subject	Economics
Level	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	780
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	50.3	Cumulative percentage	50.3	Number of candidates	390	Minimum mark required	84
B	Percentage	19.7	Cumulative percentage	70.0	Number of candidates	155	Minimum mark required	69
C	Percentage	11.5	Cumulative percentage	81.5	Number of candidates	90	Minimum mark required	55
D	Percentage	10.3	Cumulative percentage	91.8	Number of candidates	80	Minimum mark required	40
No award	Percentage	8.2	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	65	Minimum mark required	N/A

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 sampled the course content listed in the session 2021–22 modification summary document. The revision support for learners helped to ensure the accessibility of the question paper.

The question paper performed largely as expected, allowing candidates to effectively use the knowledge and skills they had gained in the topics included in the paper. Feedback from the marking team confirmed this and all analysis suggested that the paper had the appropriate level of demand.

Although a wide range of marks were attained in the question paper, candidates seemed to be largely well-prepared for the assessment. There were some questions where candidates were required to apply their theoretical economic knowledge to a specific situation, such as policies to assist newly unemployed workers access alternative employment and examples of assistance to enable an economy to achieve economic growth. Some candidates did not appreciate the importance of only using theory which directly related to these scenarios, and therefore were unable to gain marks as they made irrelevant points as they had not answered the question being asked.

Challenges such as these, and the ongoing difficulties some candidates will have faced in preparing for assessment in the 2021–22 academic session, was taken into account when setting the grade boundaries.

Assignment

The assignment performed largely as expected, with many candidates achieving very good marks.

Most candidates structured their assignment well and attained high marks in the introduction and research sections.

There was a wider range of marks in the sections where candidates were expected to analyse, evaluate, and draw conclusions from their findings.

Those candidates who selected suitable up-to-date topics and included relevant findings which they were able to analyse, evaluate and draw conclusions from, scored highly.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Section 1

Question 1(a): Most candidates were able to attain high marks when asked to describe a key economic term.

Question 1(e): Many candidates were able to attain high marks in this question by drawing a well labelled and correct diagram. However, it should be noted that no extra written explanation is required when the command word simply asks candidates to 'Draw'.

Question 2(c): Many candidates were able to successfully apply the concept of balance of payments to the scenario given.

Question 2(e): Many candidates scored highly when asked to describe key trade barriers.

Section 2

Question 3(a): Most candidates could effectively distinguish between the two key economic terms.

Question 3(b): Many candidates were able to attain high marks and successfully draw and explain the correct diagram and economic concept.

Question 3(c)(i): Most candidates were able to accurately describe and exemplify this key economic term.

Question 4(a): Most candidates attained high marks by correctly describing two appropriate economic aims.

Question 4(d): This question was very well answered with most candidates attaining most of the marks available.

Question 4(e): Candidates were well prepared for this topic, with most candidates achieving a high mark.

Question 5(c): Many candidates attained a high mark as they could effectively describe these economic characteristics.

Assignment

Introduction: Most candidates scored very highly as they included a clear aim for their assignment, which matched their title but went beyond repeating their title, along with some relevant background information on their chosen topic.

Research: Many candidates scored very highly as they effectively explained the suitability of at least two of their research sources. It should be noted that there is no need for primary research to be conducted, two or more carefully selected secondary sources are sufficient for the marks available in this section.

Structure: Almost all candidates attained this mark as they used the appropriate headings, font size and line spacing.

Application and understanding: Many candidates attained a good mark for this section as they applied relevant theory to at least two viewpoints.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Section 1

Question 1(c): Some candidates described examples of market failure rather than explaining the market failures themselves.

Question 1(d): Some candidates struggled to describe suitable devolved economic powers and instead described more general differences between Scotland and the rest of the UK, such as the different legal and educational systems.

Question 2(b): Some candidates did not apply their answers specifically to workers accessing alternative employment after losing their job, and instead referred to more general supply-side policies to reduce unemployment.

Section 2

Question 3(c)(ii): Some candidates were not able to accurately define joint supply and did not use appropriate examples to illustrate this technical economic concept.

Question 3(d): A few candidates were not able to accurately explain reasons for a demand curve being upward sloping. They referred to products where the demand tends to be relatively unchanged, and consumers still demand the product as the price increases rather than products where demand specifically increases as the price increases.

Question 5(d): Some candidates did not apply their answers to methods directly related to assisting developing economies achieve economic growth. They instead described methods of aid with no explanation of the way in which this would assist the economy in achieving growth.

Assignment

Analysis and evaluation: Some candidates found it challenging to access the highest marks in this section. This was due to them not including enough content in this section, and therefore limiting their maximum mark, and/or not linking their analysis and evaluation to the theoretical points they had made in the previous section. Some findings were also not adequately sourced or not sourced at all making it unclear where each finding was from.

Conclusions and recommendations: Some candidates struggled to gain the highest marks in this section as they did not make enough justified conclusions and recommendations and/or did not develop the points they were making sufficiently. A few candidates also brought in new information to this section which will not achieve marks.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres and candidates should ensure that the requirements of diagram questions are fully understood. Diagrams should always be fully labelled as this is vital to achieve full marks in these questions. For example, in question 1(b) many candidates did not label their demand curve as such. It should also be noted that diagram questions using the command word 'draw' require no written response.

Candidates should be encouraged to always read questions carefully to ensure they apply their knowledge in the correct way. This is an important skill for candidates to develop, such as in questions 2(b) and 5(d) where marks were not awarded due to candidates repeating theoretical points they had learnt rather than applying these points to the economic scenario given.

Assignment

Titles should be framed as a question to enable candidates to answer the question throughout their assignment. Titles should also not be too broad, such as 'Inflation', as this does not lend itself to earning analysis and conclusion marks. Other broad topics such as 'impacts of a change in the interest rate' should be avoided as they encourage repetition and 'flip' points as the candidate covers both the increase and decrease.

In the introduction the aim should be more than a restatement of the title. The background information given should include specific data about the topic such as date(s) or values or other statistics, for example the date a tax was introduced and the level the tax is levied at.

Candidates should be discouraged from using their own surveys and questionnaires.

All findings must be clearly sourced to enable markers to be able to validate the authenticity of the research the candidates have undertaken. This may be through using footnotes and/or a bibliography, for example 'In source 1 I found...' with source 1 clearly listed in the bibliography.

The points made in the analysis and evaluation section should link back to the points made in the previous application and understanding section. Good practice is for candidates to use phrases such as 'this backs up the theory', 'this contradicts the theory' to ensure that their analysis and evaluation links back to their theory.

Candidates should ensure that in the conclusions and recommendations section they answer the original question posed in their title and aim.

This session was the first with a mandatory SQA template. Candidates are encouraged to print double-sided and use 1.5 or double-line spacing. The word count and title must be clearly written on the reverse of the flyleaf. Candidates who write beyond the prescribed word count are penalised.

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](#).