Course report 2022

Subject	Economics
Level	N5

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	335

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	72.4	Cumulative percentage	72.4	Number of candidates	240	Minimum mark required	84
B	Percentage	15.0	Cumulative percentage	87.4	Number of candidates	50	Minimum mark required	72
C	Percentage	5.7	Cumulative percentage	93.1	Number of candidates	20	Minimum mark required	60
D	Percentage	2.7	Cumulative percentage	95.8	Number of candidates	10	Minimum mark required	48
No award	Percentage	4.2	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	15	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 performed as expected. The revision support for learners helped to ensure the accessibility of the question paper.

Assignment

The assignment performed as expected. There was a broad range of topics this year, some that appeared only once and some that were very popular. By quite some distance, the three most popular topics this year were the impact of COVID, the impact of rising oil/gas/energy prices, and the impact of a rising rate of inflation on various agents of the economy and industries.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 1(a) (i) and (ii) definition and descriptions of trade barriers
Question 1(c) (i) definition of a market
Question 1(c) (ii) market diagram
Question 1(d) main Scottish industries
Question 1(e) (ii) aims of the government
Question 5(b) definition of an exchange rate
Question 5(d) calculation of an exchange rate
Question 7(a) reasons for UK firms to locate abroad

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 1(b) the impact of border checks: this required candidates to apply their knowledge which proved difficult for some.

Question 2(a) defining an interest rate: this proved tricky for some candidates who did not make clear whether they were referring to interest on loans or on savings, or that interest was added to the loan, or the amount saved.

Question 2(g) (ii) giving examples of spending on health: some candidates failed to give examples relating to health spending.

Question 3(b) preparing a budget: many candidates confused preparing a document showing predicted income and spending with budgeting (ie keeping spending down, or saving for a future purchase or unexpected event).

Question 4(a) (i) and (ii) movement along the supply curve: candidates confused movement along the curve which changes the quantity supplied with shifting the curve which changes the supply.

Question 5(c) effect of a fall in the exchange rate on a UK importer: candidates wrote about the effects of a fall in the exchange rate in general, rather than specifically about UK importers.

Question 6(c) (iii) reason for government spending on defence: candidates confused defence spending (for example on the Armed Forces) with spending on public order (for example on policing).

Question 7(c) (iii) describing bilateral aid: candidates were unsure of what bilateral aid is.

Assignment

Almost all candidates structured their reports according to the guidelines 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.

In general, it appeared that the lack of practice with extended writing had a detrimental effect on the 'flow' of information presented in the assignment, although candidates were still making valid, mark-worthy points.

In the background section some candidates missed out on marks by 'telling a story', rather than by giving facts and statistics about their topic. Some candidates gave a different purpose in their title and their report. This was particularly true when confusing Scotland and the UK, for example by saying that the report would look at the impact of something in Scotland, but using research material that was about the UK, or about England, or England and Wales in particular.

In the research section there are marks available for stating reasons for choosing sources. Some candidates gave long descriptions of what they found, which is not necessary, a simple statement is all that is needed. Some candidates are still missing out on marks for failing to explain the value of their research sources.

In the findings, analysis and interpretation section some candidates repeated the same impact of something over and over again so were only awarded the mark for this impact the first time. Some candidates gave a finding from a newspaper article and also gave the analysis that the journalist had made in the article. In these cases, a finding mark was awarded, but the candidates did not get an analysis mark. Some candidates gave narrative statements which reworded their finding, rather than analysing the finding.

Candidates integrated their theory in the findings, analysis and interpretation section as instructed in the Coursework Assessment Task, although some of the theory points were weak or incomplete.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates should be discouraged from writing in bullet points. By using bullet points candidates are indicating to the marker that each answer is separate. This may disadvantage candidates, as in some cases by writing in full sentences markers may award additional marks for development points.

If candidates wish to add to an answer at the end of the booklet, or replace an answer at the end of the booklet, they should label the new text clearly.

Candidates should ensure that any diagrams they draw are large enough for a marker to see all the labels and curves clearly. This can be achieved by drawing diagrams that take up between a third and a half of an A4 page.

When asked to give examples of capital expenditure candidates should not for example, say 'hospitals'. They should say 'building hospitals' or 'refurbishing hospitals' to make it clear that it is capital expenditure, and the answer cannot be interpreted as 'cleaning hospitals' or 'staffing hospitals' which is current expenditure.

Candidates should be clear about the difference between 'supply' or 'demand' and 'quantity supplied/quantity demanded', as one refers to a shift in a curve and the other to movement along a curve.

When comparing developing and emerging economies candidates should be clear that in an emerging economy, indicators are changing for the better (for example rising growth or improving levels of infrastructure), rather than having arrived at a point (for example high levels of employment).

Assignment

When candidates give an URL for a source, it should be the precise link that is given, so that a marker can key in the URL and go to the information that the candidate is citing. For example, www.bbc.co.uk/news may be where a candidate starts, but it is not enough for markers to be able to find the information that the candidate used.

The information given in the findings, analysis and interpretation and the conclusions and recommendations sections must link to the purpose of the topic given at the start of the report. In their analysis, candidates may give a 'string' of consequences, but they must bring their analysis back to the topic of the report.

When giving a time period, candidates should use dates rather than using phrases such as 'last month'.

Candidates should be careful to use the correct terms, particularly in relation to disposable and discretionary income.

It is good practice for candidates to site their source before giving their finding.

Any definitions given as theory need to fit into the context of the paragraph in which they are given.

At the end of the process candidates should check that the title and the content of their report match, and if necessary adjust the title.

Centres should be aware that if the quality of the paper used for printing the final report is poor, then when candidate scripts are scanned for marking, the script can become difficult to read.

If possible, centres should print candidate reports double sided, although this is not mandatory.

If candidates use graphs, there are several things to consider:

- Candidates must refer to any graphs in the text and should not just ‘dump’ them into the report.
- Candidates should type in a title for any graph, in addition to any title that they ‘snip’.
- Reports are scanned in black and white, therefore some graphs, which are easily readable in colour, become somewhat meaningless in the version which markers see. Therefore, candidates should describe in words the information which is given in the graph.
- Graphs should be large enough for markers to see what is being shown, for example by taking up about a third of the page. It is helpful if candidates format their graphs ‘top and bottom’ rather than having text to the left or right of the graph.
- If candidates ‘stretch’ graphs to make them easier to read, they should be stretched in proportion (by using one of the corner tags) and not by stretching the side or bottom tags.

When scripts are scanned for marking, they are anonymised by removing the front of the flyleaf. To remain anonymous, candidates should not type or write their name on the script itself.

When writing their reports some candidates use ‘track changes’ to help them. These should be ‘accepted’ before submission, or candidates should print their report in ‘no markup’ so that the tracked changes cannot be seen by the marker.

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.