



Course Report 2018

Subject	Economics
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. 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 Post Results Services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: question paper

The question paper performed well and was 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, some candidates showed excellent theoretical understanding and were able to produce correct diagrams to support their answers.

All the essays in section 3 were chosen, with a fairly even spread between questions 8, 9, and 10. Only a few candidates chose question 11.

Component 2: project

Most candidates performed well with a few candidates producing work of outstanding quality. However, some candidates presented a project with a similar formatting to that of a Higher assignment, and in those cases candidates did not achieve high marks.

It was particularly pleasing to see such a wide range of topics chosen for the project. Markers commented that there was a broader range of topics this year, with some candidates researching highly original areas of interest.

Not all candidates answered the question or title that they chose. Some candidates presented a very short project.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper

In general, section 1 was done well. Candidates who had clearly kept abreast with current economic news were able to provide specific examples of government policy in relation to improving UK productivity.

In question 7(b) many candidates provided a correct and detailed diagram to show why monopolies are considered to be both productively and allocatively inefficient.

There were some very good answers to question 8(c). Some candidates had clearly followed the Brexit negotiations and provided very precise answers. For question 10(b) some candidates were able to provide quite technical and impressive answers on the economic arguments for raising interest rates.

Component 2: project

Candidates generally produced well-presented projects. Many candidates used the introduction effectively to provide context for the topic and stated clear aims. Some candidate also signposted their intended line of argument and this is good practice.

Most candidates made effective use of diagrams/charts/graphs etc. Referencing and the use of footnotes was also fairly consistent across the range of projects.

Where candidates achieved a very high mark it was due to their ability to present an in-depth analysis of the economic issue. Candidates with the ability to add insightful comments based on research throughout the project, building synthesis into their response and not just 'bolted-on' at the end achieved the very highest marks.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

In section 1 question 1(a) and question 1(b) some candidates could not properly define productivity or economic growth.

In section 2, some candidates did not draw the correct diagram showing negative externalities caused by consumption.

In question 9(b) some candidates did not understand what renationalisation meant.

Question 11 was generally answered to a low standard.

Component 2: project

Some candidates scored low marks because they did not either directly answer the specific title set or submitted a very short project.

Some candidates wrote in a descriptive, almost narrative, manner. There were very few candidates who were able to gain the highest marks available for analysis and evaluation.

Although candidates did include diagrams/tables/charts in their project, there was a common issue with candidates not fully providing supporting analytical comment. This further impacts the previous point about analysis and evaluation.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper

In order for candidates to be fully prepared for the question paper it is of paramount importance that they keep abreast of current economic news. Candidates are strongly encouraged to at least have a weekly digest of the current economic news items generated by the media. This can be achieved by using a variety of approaches — broadsheet newspapers, television news/documentaries, radio, or the internet. The question paper is shaped by current economic issues so that should provide candidates with the motivation to tune into topical issues.

Candidates should practise accurately reproducing microeconomic diagrams.

Component 2: project

There was a noted concern by markers that some candidates were adopting a similar 'formatting' to that of a Higher Economics assignment. This should not be encouraged. Analysis and evaluation should not be seen as a discrete section within the project but rather integrated throughout, demonstrating a coherent and sustained line of argument which is threaded into the project from introduction to conclusion.

Teachers and lecturers should discourage candidates from 'up-scaling' a Higher Economics assignment by simply adding more content. The project should be seen as an opportunity to consider a current economic issue. Markers felt that the best projects were those that had used research that was highly current and topical.

Overly complex titles can also sometimes hinder a candidate's ability to disentangle the chosen issue. Some titles this year were convoluted.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	82
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	96
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	43.8%	43.8%	42	84
B	25.0%	68.8%	24	72
C	25.0%	93.8%	24	60
D	2.1%	95.8%	2	54
No award	4.2%	-	4	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which 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.

Therefore SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.