



## Course Report 2016

Subject	Economics
Level	Advanced Higher

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**

The question paper performed well. The extended case study and compulsory Micro Economics essay both challenged and discriminated in a positive manner, with strong candidates scoring highly across the paper.

Some candidates were unable to match a strong performance on the case study with a similar level of attainment on the essay questions. This would indicate that more practice is needed of essay style questions. All the essays in Section 3 were fairly equally chosen, indicating that the choice offered to candidates was wide enough and necessary to ensure that candidates could choose the essay they felt best prepared for.

### **Component 2: Project**

The Project was successful at discriminating between candidates who attained across the mark range. The new marking instructions applied to the project allowed for all levels of response to be rewarded, which led to lower marks for descriptive rather than analytical and evaluative pieces of work. Not all candidates chose an appropriate title and area of research for their project, which led to some low marks being awarded.

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

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

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

Generally, the compulsory Micro Economics essay was done well. Many candidates were well-prepared and demonstrated good understanding of the areas tested. In the best answers, diagrams were accurate and explained fully in the text.

The best candidates performed well on the case study, demonstrating in-depth knowledge and understanding and the ability to apply their economic knowledge.

#### **Component 2: Project**

Candidates who performed best produced fully researched projects that were well-structured, using appropriate chapters and subheadings. They also fully referenced and footnoted their resources. Clear evidence of synthesis, analysis and evaluation were readily identifiable in the projects that scored top marks.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

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

The questions in Section 1 on productivity were challenging to some candidates who had little understanding of the distinction between productivity and production.

The command words 'evaluate' and 'discuss' were ignored by some candidates, who produced descriptive answers. Some weaker candidates listed points with little attempt to directly relate them to the question.

### **Component 2: Project**

Some candidates scored low marks because there was a mismatch between the title of their project and the content covered. Some candidates who wrote descriptively scored very little for analysis and evaluation. To score more highly, candidates must analyse short-run and long-run implications, and consequences for different stakeholders; make comparisons; rank factors; compare differing viewpoints; criticise sources, etc.

Candidates must base their analysis/evaluation on the evidence gathered and not make unsubstantiated generalisations.

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

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

Candidates should practise writing extended answers that follow command words. Those candidates who read widely and follow current economic news are best placed to use relevant knowledge and examples.

Candidates should be familiar with economic terminology and be able to read complex economic texts with understanding.

Candidates should be able to accurately reproduce microeconomic diagrams and explain them.

### **Component 2: Project**

Centres should support candidates in selecting a suitable issue and question. Questions that are too narrow or too wide tend to be problematic for candidates. Some titles did not lend themselves to discussion because there was only one simple answer.

Once a title has been selected, candidates should be encouraged to read widely enough to appreciate the most significant issues and then concentrate on them. It is best to analyse fewer factors in depth rather than cover too many in a superficial manner.

Good referencing is vital to the production of a strong project.

Chapter headings should relate to the subject of the project, not to the marking instructions.

Due to the specific instructions for the project, centres should be cautious about allowing a candidate to update a Higher project without sufficient revision to ensure it meets the rigour and particular requirements of the Advanced Higher specification.

## Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	0
Number of resulted entries in 2016	96

### 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	38.5%	38.5%	37	84
B	33.3%	71.9%	32	72
C	20.8%	92.7%	20	60
D	4.2%	96.9%	4	54
No award	3.1%	-	3	0

## 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.