



Course Report 2017

Subject	Economics
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

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: Question paper

Overall candidates seemed well prepared for the question paper. The Grade Boundary was adjusted to reflect the difficulty a significant number of candidates appeared to have answering question 3 (c) about surplus supply.

Almost all candidates completed the paper within the time allocated.

Component 2: Assignment

In general candidates did less well in the assignment this year than in 2016. There were a broad range of topics, the most popular being Brexit, Sugar Tax, Oil Prices and Immigration.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

Overall, most candidates performed well in questions on personal economics, multinationals, taxation and aid.

Most candidates drew accurate and correctly labelled diagrams in question 1 (f) on the circular flow of income, and in question 4 (c) on demand and supply.

Component 2: Assignment

In general candidates gained good marks for the introduction and research sections of the assignment.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

Many candidates failed to gain full marks for 'explain' questions.

Question 1 (b) — many candidates found it hard to explain real income.

Question 1 (e) — many candidates could not identify returns to factors of production (possibly by not linking the concept to the circular flow diagram).

Question 2 (d) (i) — several candidates found it hard to gain a second explanation mark about the effects of a strong currency on exports.

Question 2 (e) (ii) — most candidates explained the benefits of EU, rather than Eurozone, membership.

Question 3 (c) — most candidates failed to draw a surplus of supply diagram.

Question 4 (a) — several candidates used output, rather than sales, in their description of total and average revenue.

Question 4 (b) — many candidates drew a diagram showing total costs, rather than average costs.

Question 5 (d) — several candidates suggested measures to attract foreign investment that were outwith the purview of the Scottish Government.

Question 6 (b) — several candidates described disadvantages of international trade to firms and governments, rather than to individuals.

Question 6 (c) — many candidates found it hard to explain more than one benefit of introducing barriers to trade.

Component 2: Assignment

Candidates found the analysis and interpretation, conclusions/recommendations and economic theory sections the most challenging.

In the analysis and interpretation section, several candidates stated findings but did not follow through with any analysis of the point.

In the conclusions/recommendations section some candidates merely repeated an analysis point rather than explaining and developing it, or explaining how a recommendation could improve the situation.

Many candidates did not integrate theory points into the body of their work.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

Centres should get candidates to practise 'explain' questions where to gain the mark an answer must contain a 'what and a why', a 'what and a how' or a 'what and a so what'. See questions 1(c), 1€ 2(d) and 5(a) (ii) in the Specimen Question Paper for examples.

Centres should also ensure that when using old past paper questions as homework, classwork or prelims, that the mark allocation and Marking Instructions have been updated to reflect the current usage of each command word.

In session 2017–18, the question paper will have two 20-mark questions in Section 1, and five 10-mark questions in Section 2. Centres should ensure that candidates have an opportunity to complete a practice exam following the new format.

The Specimen Question Paper is available on the National 5 Economics page of SQA's website: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/47437.html>

Component 2: Assignment

The distribution of marks for each section of the assignment is changing from session 2017–18. Centres should familiarise themselves with the new conditions of assessment.

Details of the changes can be found on the SQA website in an audio presentation as well as revised Marking Instructions and Candidate Assessment Task instructions. These are all available on the National 5 Economics page of SQA's website:

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/47437.html>

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	289
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Number of resulted entries in 2017	292
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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	56.8%	56.8%	166	69
B	21.6%	78.4%	63	59
C	11.6%	90.1%	34	49
D	2.4%	92.5%	7	44
No award	7.5%	-	22	-

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.