



National
Qualifications

Economics

Assignment

General assessment information

This pack contains general assessment information for centres preparing candidates for the assignment Component of Higher Economics Course assessment.

It must be read in conjunction with the specific assessment task for this Component of Course assessment, which may only be downloaded from SQA's designated secure website by authorised personnel.

This edition: September 2016 (version 1.1)

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Introduction

This is the general assessment information for Higher Economics assignment.

This assignment is worth 30 marks. The marks contribute 30% of the overall marks for the Course assessment. The Course will be graded A-D.

Marks for all Course Components are added up to give a total Course assessment mark which is then used as the basis for grading decisions.

This is one of two Components of Course assessment. The other Component is a question paper.

This document describes the general requirements for the assessment of the assignment Component for this Course. It gives general information and instructions for assessors.

It must be read in conjunction with the assessment task for this Component of Course assessment.

Equality and inclusion

This Course assessment has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to assessment. Assessments have been designed to promote equal opportunities while maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

For guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs, please follow the link to the assessment arrangements web page: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html

Guidance on inclusive approaches to delivery and assessment in this Course is provided in the *Course Support Notes*.

What this assessment covers

This assessment contributes 30% of the total marks for the Course.

The assessment will assess the skills, knowledge and understanding specified for the assignment in the *Course Assessment Specification*. These are:

- ◆ selecting an appropriate economic topic or issue
- ◆ applying knowledge and understanding of economic concepts to explain the key features of the topic or issue
- ◆ collecting information/evidence relating to the context of the assignment from a range of sources
- ◆ analysing and evaluating the economic information/evidence relating to the context of the assignment
- ◆ drawing valid economic conclusions and/or making justified recommendations relating to the context of the assignment and based on the evidence gathered
- ◆ producing a report using economic terminology which clearly communicates findings

Assessment

Purpose

The purpose of this assessment is to generate evidence for the assignment Component of added value of this Course.

The assignment will address challenge and application by assessing the candidate's ability to apply higher order cognitive skills within an Economics context drawn from the Course. It will require candidates to apply their planning, research, analytical, evaluative and decision-making skills to produce a report.

Assessment overview

The assignment has a planning and gathering evidence stage and a report production stage. It is sufficiently open and flexible to allow personalisation and choice.

The assignment is designed to allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to work independently, apply economic knowledge and understanding and use higher order cognitive skills. Candidates should choose an area of study from the Course which allows them to analyse an economic topic/issue. This should be current, so that up-to-date research material can be obtained.

Stage 1 – Planning and gathering evidence (approximately 6.5 hours)

- ◆ Researching sources of information relating to the chosen topic/issue, selecting the appropriate information to use from these sources and analysing the information in preparation for the second stage.

Stage 2 – Report production (approximately 1.5 hours)

- ◆ Producing a report based on the research evidence and using appropriate headings that allows analysis and conclusions to be made. This should be linked to economic knowledge and understanding of the topic/issue from more than one point of view.

Choosing a suitable economic topic/issue can be daunting for some candidates. It may be helpful for candidates to issue details of the assignment early on in the Course; this will allow them time to assimilate all the information and to start thinking about options they may wish to consider as the Course progresses. If candidates choose a wide ranging topic/issue ensure they can limit it to the requirements of up to six A4 pages.

Assessors can, however, provide reasonable assistance in supporting candidates to select an appropriate economic topic/issue to focus their report on. They may also guide candidates to the likely availability and accessibility of resources for their chosen topic/issue.

Examples of topics/issues could include:
Decline of retail shops in the local high street
Why are fuel costs higher in rural areas?
The effect of the Commonwealth Games on the Scottish/Glasgow economy
How does increasing EU membership affect the UK economy?

Assessment conditions

Assessors must exercise their professional responsibility in ensuring that evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work. The assignment should be done at a time when the candidate is ready to undertake this piece of work.

It will be carried out over a period of time and may be undertaken alongside the learning and teaching of the Units or, alternatively, once the Units have been completed. The research and report production is best completed once the majority of the Course has been taught.

This assignment has two stages; a planning and gathering evidence stage, and a report production stage. These two stages may run concurrently.

For example, the candidate could prepare their findings after each section of research and analysis is complete and build-up their report over time. Alternatively, the report may be completed once all of the research and analysis has been done.

While the assessor may offer guidance during the research and analysis stage, the candidate should be working with no assistance during the report production stage.

The planning and research for the report will be carried out under some supervision and control. However, the production of the report should be completed in class time and under a higher degree of control, compared to the planning and research stage. Candidates should be given sufficient time to carry out their research to complete the report for submission.

Conditions relating to conducting the assignment will vary at each stage.

Stage one – Planning and gathering evidence

During this stage there are no restrictions on the resources which candidates can access.

Although candidates should be given sufficient time to carry out their research, analysis and preparation for producing their report, it is recommended that this stage be completed within approximately 6.5 hours.

Reasonable assistance may be provided to try to balance the need for support, with the need to avoid giving too much assistance. Reasonable assistance may be given on a generic basis to a class or group of candidates but can also be given to candidates on an individual basis. When reasonable assistance is given on a one-to-one basis in the context of something the candidate has already produced or demonstrated, there is a danger it becomes support for assessment and assessors need to be aware that this may be going beyond reasonable assistance.

During this stage, reasonable assistance may include:

- ◆ advising candidates on the choice of a topic/area to research
- ◆ advising candidates on possible sources of information
- ◆ clarifying instructions/requirements of the assignment
- ◆ checking on interim progress

Although this stage is completed under some supervision and control, it is possible for candidates to complete part of this stage outwith the learning and teaching setting. Assessors should put in place mechanisms to authenticate the candidate's work and ensure that plagiarism has not taken place. For example:

- ◆ regular checkpoint/progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ short spot-check personal interviews
- ◆ checklists which record activity/progress

Stage two – Producing the report

This stage should be carried out under a high degree of supervision and control. Candidates must not communicate with each other and must be in sight of the assessor during the time they are producing their report. The assessor must not give any assistance during this stage.

The report should be a maximum of six A4 pages in length and may be completed at the end of stage one or at appropriate points during stage one. Overall, this should take no longer than 1.5 hours.

During the report production stage, candidates will be permitted to access any of their research evidence. However, candidates can only submit a maximum of four A4 pages of research evidence, attached as an appendix to the report, in support of their findings.

Candidates must make reference to their research evidence in their report. This evidence will support the analysis/evaluation and conclusion sections of the report and give candidates the opportunity to achieve all the marks available for these sections.

When producing the report stage of the assignment, assessors may not:

- ◆ direct candidates to which research findings or resources they should use
- ◆ provide feedback on drafts, including marking
- ◆ provide model responses

Evidence to be gathered

The following candidate evidence is required for this assessment:

- ◆ The report of up to six A4 pages produced by the candidate
- ◆ Appendices of up to four A4 pages to support the report. Examples of appendices may include:
 - statistical, graphical or numerical data
 - survey results
 - interview questions and/or responses
 - questionnaire and/or results
 - list of internet search results
 - newspaper articles or extracts of newspaper articles
 - notes taken from a visit or talk
 - notes taken from a written or audio-visual source
- ◆ Overall, your submission should not exceed 10 pages (ie up to six pages for the report and up to four pages of appendices).

General Marking Instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following general marking instructions are addressed to the marker. They will also be helpful for those preparing candidates for Course assessment.

Evidence will be submitted to SQA for external marking.

All marking will be quality assured by SQA.

General Marking Principles for assignment

This information is provided to help you understand the general principles you must apply when marking candidate responses to this assignment. These principles must be read in conjunction with the detailed Marking Instructions, which identify the key features required in candidate responses.

- (a) Marks for each candidate response must always be assigned in line with these General Marking Principles and the Detailed Marking Instructions for this assessment.
- (b) Marking should always be positive. This means that, for each candidate response, marks are accumulated for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding: they are not deducted from a maximum on the basis of errors or omissions.
- (c) In producing their report, candidates will be awarded marks for specific skills, knowledge and understanding as follows:

Providing an introduction to the report

Marks will be awarded to candidates for stating the purpose of the economic report and giving some detailed background information on the choice of the topic/issue.

Evaluating the usefulness and reliability of a range of sources of information

Marks will be awarded for explaining the suitability of the research sources used. At least two research sources must be used to gain full marks for this section.

Applying knowledge and understanding of the topic/issue from more than one point of view

Marks will be awarded for applying economic understanding related to the context of the assignment.

Analysing and evaluating information from a range of sources

Marks will be awarded for making analytical and/or evaluative comments which are based on the information/evidence collected. More than one comment may be made from each piece of evidence/findings.

Analysis will involve the review and evaluation of relevant information to make a comment, draw out and relate implications or to provide an explanation.

Reaching a conclusion supported by the evidence gathered

Marks will be awarded for drawing appropriate justified conclusions and/or making justified recommendations based on the research, evidence and analysis and linked to purpose of the report.

Using a suitable structure to collate and report on findings

Marks will be awarded for accurately and concisely summarising findings under appropriate headings, making use of relevant diagrams and for consistent use of economic terminology.

Administrative information

Published: September 2016 (version 1.1)

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
1.1	'Conclusions' changed to 'conclusions and/or recommendations' throughout the document.	Qualifications Manager	September 2016

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