Course Report 2018

Subject	Business Management
Level	National 5

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 is worth 90 marks and has two sections. This is an increase of 70 marks from the previous year. The time allocated has also increased to 2 hours.

Section 1 is worth 40 marks and requires candidates to apply their knowledge of the course to the stimulus material provided, including using additional exhibits. This was handled well.

Section 2 is worth 50 marks and assess the application of knowledge and understanding, sampling from the five different areas of study.

The question paper covered a good breadth of course content. Feedback from the marking team and statistics show that the paper was accessible for candidates. There was an expected spread of attainment from the range of ability presented and candidates used the time well.

Component 2: assignment

The assignment is worth 30 marks and is now 25% of the course assessment. Marking instructions have been revised to reflect this and the changes to the course assessment structure.

The assignment performed as expected, with almost all candidates submitting reports within the word count. Reports were well-presented, using a wide variety of topic areas and a range of businesses from different sectors of the economy.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper

Overall, candidates provided good responses to the higher-order command words, for example ‘explain’ and ‘compare’.

Section 1

Questions 1(a), 2(a) and 2(d)(i)): Many candidates could identify or interpret the case studies.

Question 1(c): Candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the factors affecting the choice of supplier.

Question 2(b)(i): Most candidates showed a sound knowledge of the costs and benefits of staff training.

Question 2(b)(ii): Candidates responded very well, with many gaining full marks.

Question 2(d)(ii): Candidates gave good descriptions of the impact of technology.

Section 2

Question 3(a): Many candidates showed a sound knowledge of the purpose of market research.

Question 4(b): Candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the factors affecting the choice of production methods.

Question 5(b)(i): Candidates responded well when identifying methods of selection.

Question 6(c): Candidates responded well when identifying internal factors that could affect an organisation.

Question 7(a): Candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of breakeven costs and most candidates calculated the costs accurately.

Component 2: assignment

Markers commented that candidates performed strongly in the assignment. Most assignments were well-structured and followed the guidelines closely. In general, candidates did well in the following areas:

- background
- research methods and sources
- collating and reporting

There was also evidence of improvements in candidates interpreting findings.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

Candidates did not always respond to the command words ‘describe’ or ‘outline’ appropriately, with many just ‘identifying’.

Section 1

Question 1(b)(i):	Some candidates found the word ‘trend’ problematic.
Question 1(d):	Most candidates only identified methods of promotion, even though the command word was ‘describe’.
Question 2(a)(ii):	Some candidates compared the features instead of the objectives.

Section 2

Question 3(b):	Responses to the stages of product development were very poor. Many candidates mistakenly outlined the product life cycle.
Question 4(a):	Candidates showed some knowledge of quality methods, but many gave descriptions with wrong labels and very few showed depth of knowledge in this area.
Question 5(b)(ii):	Although candidates identified selection methods in question 5(b)(i), many were unable to explain the benefits of these methods.
Question 6(a):	Candidates showed some knowledge but, in many cases, their responses were very generic or vague and were not specific to a private limited company.
Question 6(b):	Some candidates described the influence but used the generic term stakeholder. The influence had to relate to a specific stakeholder, for example employees, shareholders, managers. If candidates did not provide a label with the description of the influence, they did not gain the mark.
Question 7(b):	Candidate descriptions were very poor. Many candidates gave very general responses and some descriptions related to other functional areas. Many candidates described generic uses in finance, but did not identify a type of technology, for example spreadsheets. Where this was the case, candidates did not gain the mark.
Question 7(c):	Candidates showed poor knowledge of terms associated with an income statement. Many candidates gave vague answers, for example money made.

Component 2: assignment

Research methods and sources

Some candidates gained few marks, as they gave a list of generic, theoretical points, which did not clarify how the research method was beneficial to their own assignment. Some candidates continued to identify values of information and only gained a maximum of 1 mark of the 6 marks available.

Findings, analysis and interpretation

Most candidates could list what they had found out from their research, but gave little or no interpretation of their findings. Some candidates also listed points that were unrelated to their research topic.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations often lacked justifications or links to evidence from research. If a conclusion or recommendation had no justification, no marks were awarded. Some candidates gave recommendations which were not linked to the purpose of their report.

Collating and reporting

Some candidates submitted work with no graphics and many did not use the four headings accurately. Several submissions were longer than the 1,300 word limit.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper

Candidates must read questions carefully, taking account of the command words and number of marks allocated to each question. They must ensure that their answers are legible.

Candidate should be familiar with all areas of content, as listed in the course specification, and aware that technology can be tested across all functional areas.

Section 1 asks candidates to use the case study and any additional exhibits provided, for example graphs. You should practise this style of questioning.

Candidates should try to avoid using the generic term ‘money’, especially if using in place of sales and/or profit.

Word-processed responses should be printed in double-line spacing and the end of the script clearly highlighted. Pages should be numbered.

Component 2: assignment

You should continue to follow the updated guidelines when preparing for the assignment.

You can provide centre-generated templates with pre-set fonts, sizes and footers, but the template should not include the headings. Candidates gain 1 mark for appropriate use of headings, therefore, it must be their own work. There is no need to provide title pages or contents pages.

It is important to note that the headings differ slightly between National 5 and Higher.

When choosing a topic, candidates should avoid using double or overly complex topics. This can make it challenging for candidates to collect information and, more importantly, difficult for them to interpret. When choosing a business, candidates who select a private sector organisation tend to perform better.

If candidates use their own questionnaires, they should ensure that the questions are all relevant to the topic, so that their findings also relate to the topic.

Candidates should state a finding then interpret it by stating the positive or negative impact of what they have found out, rather than repeating the finding. Candidates should avoid using the generic term ‘money’ especially if using in place of sales and/or profit.

It is important that conclusions and recommendations are justified. Candidates should state their conclusion and/or recommendation and then say why they are stating it. It must be able to be linked back to the research they used in the analysis and interpretation section. If the justification is new information, then no marks are awarded.

Candidates should not exceed the 1,300 word limit and they must declare the word count accurately on the flyleaf. Appendices do not contribute towards the word count.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	8015

Number of resulted entries in 2018	7411

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	38.7%	38.7%	2866	84
B	21.2%	59.9%	1574	72
C	19.4%	79.3%	1436	60
D	11.7%	91.0%	869	48
No award	9.0%	-	666	-

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.