Course Report 2016

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

Component 1: Question paper

The question paper mainly performed as expected. The grade boundary was adjusted to take account of the slightly lower level of demand in some of the identify/suggest/outline questions.

Almost all candidates completed the paper in the time allocated.

Component 2: Assignment

The assignment performed as expected. Popular topics included oil prices, EU membership and immigration; all of which have been headline news this year.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

Overall, most candidates performed well in questions on international trade, unemployment and the Scottish economy.

Most candidates drew accurate diagrams in Question 1(e) and Question 4(a).

Component 2: Assignment

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

A very broad range of topics were chosen by candidates.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

Overall, significant numbers of candidates are not accessing the full range of marks available for ‘explain’ questions.

Question 1 (d): Many candidates found it hard to define average revenue.

Question 1 (e): Several candidates drew the correct graphs, but wrongly labelled the axes.

Question 2 (e) (ii): Many candidates appeared not to understand the concept of ‘redistribution of income’.

Question 3 (b): Several candidates failed to give both the choice and the opportunity cost for firms and individuals.

Question 5 (d): Many candidates found it hard to explain a second effect of inflation on individuals.

Question 6 (d): Several candidates described features of the EU rather than the Eurozone.

Component 2: Assignment

Some candidates continue to find providing analysis and interpretation challenging.

A few candidates did not include any theory, and some were unable to gain good marks in the theory section because they did not expand their points.

In the conclusions section, some candidates merely repeated a point of analysis without any expansion.

Overall, candidates who picked 'theory-heavy' topics, rather than applied economics, did less well.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

Centres should encourage candidates to practise answering 'explain' questions. One mark is awarded for each double-barrelled answer containing a 'what and why', a 'what and therefore', a 'what and so what', etc.

Component 2: Assignment

From a presentational perspective it would be helpful if candidates submitted their work unstapled, with numbered pages, in 1.5 or double line spacing, with a name and title in the header and with any graphs given as appendices rather than as part of the four-page report.

In the research section candidates should be discouraged from giving 'because it is relevant' as the reason for choosing a source. The fact that the source is relevant is taken as a given and therefore does not attract marks.

In the viewpoint section there should be someone with an opinion, eg 'the government believes that …' or 'Mr X, the Chairman of ABC plc, said that …'. The candidate should then present facts that support or refute this opinion.

In the theory section, the candidate should state the theory and put it into context. For example, it is not appropriate to write a paragraph about unemployment and then give a definition of inflation.

In the conclusions, the candidate should offer a justified/explained statement or recommendation for each mark available.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	150

Number of resulted entries in 2016	289

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	65.1%	65.1%	188	72
B	23.5%	88.6%	68	62
C	8.3%	96.9%	24	52
D	1.7%	98.6%	5	47
No award	1.4%	-	4	-

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.