Course report 2025

Economics Advanced Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. 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. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024:   120

Number of resulted entries in 2025:   192

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	118	61.5	61.5	88
B	40	20.8	82.3	74
C	23	12.0	94.3	60
D	9	4.7	99.0	46
No award	2	1.0	100%	Not applicable

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- 'most' means greater than or equal to 70%
- 'many' means 50% to 69%
- 'some' means 25% to 49%
- 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

Evidence suggests that overall, candidates performed well in this question paper, showing improvement on the previous year.

Section 1 provided a level of demand that was less than previous years, as some questions were less demanding than anticipated. Grade boundaries were adjusted to reflect this. As with previous years, section 1 allowed those candidates who had kept abreast of current economic news to access all questions.

Most candidates performed well in section 2, and there was evidence of good preparation for this section. Many candidates also showed excellent theoretical understanding of monopolistic competition and positive production externalities and were able to produce correct diagrams to support their answers.

All essays in section 3 were chosen, with question 11 being the most popular choice of question.

Project

The performance of the project this year was very positive, with a few candidates producing excellent work. Very few candidates produced projects that were descriptive in nature, and a growing number of projects had clear evidence of analysis and evaluation taking place, with overall conclusions and recommendations also being made.

The breadth and scope of topic choice presented by candidates was very pleasing to see, particularly given the narrow focus of media attention directed towards monetary policy and economic growth throughout the academic year.

Most candidates attempted to answer the question or title that they chose.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well

Question paper

In section 1, question 3 was very well answered by most candidates, who were able to clearly describe the possible impacts of an ageing population. Question 5 was also done to a very high standard, with most candidates able to provide excellent answers on the possible advantages and disadvantages of foreign direct investment on the UK economy. For question 6, most candidates were able to clearly state the key features of Capital Gains Tax.

Section 2 of the question paper was done very well. Many candidates demonstrated a very good understanding of monopolistic competition market structure. For question 8c(ii), there was a very diverse range of answers with a few candidates providing excellent evaluative answers on economic measures that could be taken to reduce climate change that would not normally be anticipated.

In section 3, many candidates that chose question 9 were able to successfully analyse the possible economic consequences of a declining oil and gas industry on the UK economy.

Some candidates that chose question 10 were able to provide excellent contextual understanding to the issue of large regional economic disparities within the UK, by showing an awareness of the long-term impact of deindustrialisation and the economic concern over the 'North-South divide'.

Many candidates that chose question 11 were able to describe the potential economic benefits of a cashless economy in good detail.

For those candidates that chose question 12, some were able to describe the key features of the United States, Mexico, Canada Agreement (USMCA) in detail.

Project

Many candidates produced well-researched projects. Most candidates also made effective use of their introduction to provide context for the topic and clearly state the intended aims.

Referencing, and the correct use of footnotes was very consistent across the range of projects.

Where candidates achieved a very high mark it was due to their ability to present an in-depth analysis and evaluation of their chosen issue. Where candidates had a specific and direct focus on the question and had used their research findings effectively to apply depth to their analysis, they scored very highly.

Many candidates made very effective use of sub-sections, and section conclusions before reaching an overall conclusion at the end. Many candidates also made very effective use of recommendations in their final overall conclusion.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

In section 1, question 2, a few candidates misinterpreted the question and provided answers on the economic implications of increased government spending, which was not what was asked.

In section 2, a few candidates did not access the full range of marks for question 8(b), which asked candidates to describe the measures that the UK uses to prevent firms in imperfectly competitive markets from abusing their dominant market position.

In section 3, it was not uncommon for candidates to not access the full range of marks for question 10(c), because they did not evaluate the possible policies that the current UK government could introduce to reduce regional economic disparities, with the emphasis of the question being on 'regional'.

It was also common for candidates not to gain full marks for question 12(b), where answers would often be limited to the impact of political uncertainty on the US economy in 2024, and question 12(d) where some candidates answered the question from the perspective of a developing economy and not a developed economy.

Project

A few candidates scored low marks because they submitted a very short project of less than 3,000 words which can limit the level of in-depth analysis of their chosen issue.

A few candidates did not reference their findings in either a footnote or endnote. No marks were awarded if the finding was not fully referenced.

Few candidates were able to provide a clear and consistent line of argument that was signposted in the introduction and then inferred to throughout the project.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

A key requirement remains that candidates regularly engage and keep abreast with current economic news. Candidates should be fully aware that the content of the question paper is directly linked to current economic issues, so it is imperative that candidates stay attuned to media commentary and analysis of these issues.

Centres should also continue to take full advantage of the published guidance on topics for the question paper available on the Advanced Higher Economics subject page on SQA's website.

Project

Candidates should choose a topic that is contemporary and where there is economic debate. Choosing an issue where there is clear debate also helps a candidate to engage in the various arguments or discussions surrounding the topic, and this will help drive the candidate's analysis and evaluation of the issue.

In the introduction, candidates should make the purpose and aim of the project very clear. Candidates should also be mindful not to produce introductions that are exceptionally short. There should be no inclusion of graphs, tables, infographics etc, in the introduction.

Candidates who adopt a committed approach to their research may also find that the sub-issues explored will help them with their in-depth analysis.

Candidates who can provide analytical commentary and critical evaluative judgements based on evidence are best placed to produce a strong project. The quality and depth of research presented will also invariably determine the level of analysis and evaluation.

Candidates and centres should note that relevant economic theory can be diverse and there is not a strict requirement to refer to an established economist in a particular field of economics (Keynes, Schumpeter, Stiglitz, Piketty etc), although an interpretation of their particular theory would gain marks.

When presenting an infographic, candidates must ensure that the information contained within it directly relates to the context of the topic. When presenting graphs, tables, charts, or other supporting data, candidates are encouraged to make a numerical interpretation. Any graphs, tables, charts, infographics etc, that are presented in the project should also be of a suitable size and clarity for a reader to easily see the information and figures.

Recommendations should only be reserved for the final conclusion section. Any recommendations must be linked to specific information presented in the main body of the project. Candidates should also note that only two recommendations can be awarded marks.

Candidates must always remember to include a bibliography at the very end of their project.

Candidates are encouraged to present their project in either size 11 or 12 font, and preferably with 1.5 line spacing used throughout. Candidates are also encouraged to use the full 4,000 word count for the project.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

Our main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and to maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, we aim to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, we hold a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of our Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. We can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.

Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).