Course report 2025

Higher Economics

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:   925

Number of resulted entries in 2025:   911

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	415	45.6	45.6	85
B	179	19.6	65.2	73
C	134	14.7	79.9	61
D	85	9.3	89.2	49
No award	98	10.8	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

The question paper performed generally as expected, although a minor adjustment was made to grade boundaries to take account of the paper being marginally less challenging than anticipated. The paper assessed the full range of the course content identified in the course specification.

Feedback from centres and markers suggested that this paper was of an appropriate level of demand and enabled candidates to use the skills and subject knowledge they developed throughout the course.

Assignment

The assignment performed as expected. Most candidates achieved a high mark in this part of the course and the average mark improved from 2024.

Most candidates used the correct structure and followed the published guidelines which enabled them to achieve high marks in the introduction, research, application and understanding, and structure sections.

Candidates continue to find the analysis and evaluation, and conclusion sections more challenging, but the percentage of candidates attaining the highest marks in these sections improved this year.

Those candidates who chose suitable economic issues, and provided appropriate findings which meaningfully linked to their economic theory scored high marks.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 1(c): Many candidates were able to accurately draw a fully labelled market diagram.

Question 1(d): Many candidates were able to accurately draw and explain a Production Possibility Curve (PPC) diagram to illustrate opportunity cost.

Question 1(e): Most candidates were able to describe the role of the World Trade Organization.

Question 2(d): Many candidates were able to demonstrate a strong understanding of the stages of the business cycle.

Question 2(g): Many candidates were able to describe suitable economic measures to improve Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Question 3(a)(i): Many candidates showed good knowledge of this key topic and could distinguish between the core concepts of scarcity and shortage.

Question 3(e): Most candidates had strong subject knowledge of this topic and were able to accurately describe one type of market failure.

Question 4(b): Most candidates were able to describe possible impacts of increasing income tax on an economy.

Question 4(c)(i): Many candidates were able to accurately describe three types of unemployment.

Question 5(a): Many candidates were able to describe some key economic characteristics of developed economies.

Question 5(b)(i) and 5(b)(ii): Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the reasons for, and disadvantages of, multinationals locating in UK.

Assignment

Introduction: most candidates scored highly as they provided a suitable purpose for their assignment which included more detail than their title. They also provided concise background information, which included a piece of relevant data.

Research: most candidates scored highly as they explained the suitability of at least two of their research sources.

Application and understanding: most candidates were able to access full or close to full marks in this section by applying suitable economic theory to at least two viewpoints.

Structure: most candidates received the mark available for correctly using appropriate headings, font size, and line spacing.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 1(a): many candidates were unable to accurately define a negative externality as they did not refer to the negative impact on third parties or society in their answers.

Question 2(a): many candidates were too vague in their definitions of a recession and did not gain the mark.

Question 2(f): some candidates did not accurately describe national debt and instead related it to consumer debt.

Question 3(a)(ii): some candidates did not distinguish between planned and market economies. Some candidates were not able to give corresponding distinguishing factors between the different economic systems.

Question 4(e): some candidates did not describe the problems of using national income statistics to compare countries. They described problems of calculating national income statistics rather than using them to make comparisons between countries.

Question 5(d): some candidates did not describe any of the components of the Balance of Payments. Instead, their answers were too general and focused on the overall balance of payments or the different accounts of the balance of payments.

Assignment

Analysis and evaluation: Some candidates used theoretical sources for their findings in this section. This leads to candidates not being able to add any analysis to the theory they have already provided in the previous application section. As candidates are directly repeating theoretical points already made, they cannot access further marks.

Some candidates did not clearly quote from their findings and therefore they did not make it clear where a finding ends and their own personal analysis starts.

Conclusions/recommendations: Some candidates directly repeated individual points they have made earlier in their assignment. Candidates must bring together several points they have made earlier to make a justified conclusion.

A few candidates brought new information into this section when they are drawing conclusions. Conclusions must be based on points made earlier in the assignment. Recommendations, by their nature, are likely to go beyond the points made earlier in the assignment, but they must follow logically from the points and arguments made already.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres should encourage candidates to ensure that they have a sound understanding of every topic in the course. Core economic theory such as components of the Balance of Payments and economic systems remain a valuable part of the course's assessable content.

Candidates must ensure they learn precise definitions and the correct terminology of key economic terms such as recession, negative externalities and types of unemployment such as technological unemployment. Precise definitions and correctly used terminology are vital in many areas of economics, and centres should stress this to candidates.

Candidates should be encouraged to always read questions carefully to ensure they apply their knowledge in the correct way. This is an important skill for candidates to develop, such as in question 4(e) where marks were not awarded due to candidates not answering exactly what was being asked.

Assignment

Introduction: Centres should encourage candidates to avoid long titles as it can make it difficult to access the purpose mark. The purpose mark can only be awarded if the candidate goes beyond repeating the title.

To gain the background information mark, candidates should ensure they include a piece of data such as a relevant date or statistic relating to their chosen topic.

Research: Candidates should ensure that they write about the value of at least two of their sources rather than the content of the research in this section. They should also ensure that they do not repeat any of the values given, for example the value of a source being up to date can only be used once.

Application: Candidates should take care when developing the theoretical points made here as it can lead to repetition in the analysis section. Candidates should carefully read their application and their following analysis section when complete to avoid direct word-for-word repetition between these two sections.

Analysis: Candidates must make it clear where findings are from by fully sourcing all findings. They must also make it very clear where the finding ends and the candidates own analysis starts, in order for markers to identify where marks can be given. This can be achieved by using direct quotes from their sources or using clear phrasing such as 'the source stated that' or 'I found from the source'.

Candidates must avoid theoretical findings which simply repeat the theoretical points made in the application section. Findings should be from sources such as news articles or government websites not from revision websites. Using a theoretical finding leads to repetition of the theoretical points made earlier in the application section.

Conclusions: Candidates must ensure that their conclusions are justified by bringing together several points made earlier in the assignment rather than directly repeating an earlier point.

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](#).