Course report 2025

Higher Graphic Communication

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: 3,171

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 3,339

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	732	21.9	21.9	98
B	889	26.6	48.5	84
C	864	25.9	74.4	70
D	527	15.8	90.2	56
No award	327	9.8	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 as expected this year. No adjustments were made to the grade boundaries.

Assignment

The assignment performed as expected this year. No adjustments were made to the grade boundaries.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Computer-aided design techniques questions performed very well this year. There was a marked improvement in candidate's use of terminology, found in the course specification, which allowed many candidates to access marks.

Question 3(g), assembly constraints, showed the biggest improvement in use of terminology.

Assignment

Task 1, production graphics, was very well answered by most candidates.

Task 3, preliminary graphics, was well answered by many candidates this session, showing improvements in the quality of manual sketches.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Desktop publishing features, design elements and principles is an area that candidates continue to find challenging. Correctly identifying where certain design elements and principles were used proved difficult for a few candidates.

Question 1(c), grid structure, was particularly demanding for many candidates.

Question 4(b), where candidates were to describe how to model the component using the helix and extrude along a path command, had elements that were not

attempted well. Many candidates did not include all relevant dimensions for the path in the extrude along a path section, and the terminology for the helix of pitch and number of revolutions was not used correctly by many candidates.

Questions 1(d), 1(e) and 4(g) started with the ‘explain’ command word. Most candidates continue to struggle with this command word and only give the effect, without the cause.

Drawing standards, conventions and protocols is an area that some candidates found challenging.

Questions 2(c) and 5(d), in which candidates were asked to identify and apply standard symbols, were very poorly attempted.

Some candidates found Digital Technology in Graphic Communication questions to be very demanding. Questions 2(e), 3(e), 4(a), 4(g) and 4(i) asked questions related to this topic.

Assignment

Task 2(c) showed some improvement in terms of skill and visual impact, but most candidates were unable to demonstrate a higher level.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates must use the correct terminology, set out in the Higher Graphic Communication course specification. Teachers and lecturers should refer to past papers, their marking instructions and the appendix at the end of the course specification to support candidates in their understanding of the purposes of various aspects of drawing standards, conventions and protocols.

Centres and candidates should use the Understanding Standards materials to familiarise themselves with the expectations of an 'explain' response.

Teachers and lecturers should also remind candidates to use blue or black ink for their responses, as instructed on the front page of the question paper. Since question papers are scanned as part of the marking process, responses written in pencil or highlighter pen may not be visible to markers.

Assignment

In task 2(c), candidates must consider the overall skill they are trying to demonstrate and the visual impact that they are trying to create. At Higher, candidates should be able to identify a range of design elements, principles, DTP terms and techniques in task 2(b). This supports a coherent, high-quality layout. Understanding Standards materials has examples of what constitutes a higher level of skill and visual impact, and what constitutes 3 marks for the final bullet point in task 2(c).

If a centre chooses to use digital sketching methods, they must only use a straight edge tool in sketching software — using circle tools is like using a set of compasses for manual sketching and does not allow preliminary skills to be assessed.

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.