



# **Course report 2025**

## **National 5 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: 446

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 511

## 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            | 350                  | 68.5       | 68.5                  | 86                    |
| B            | 78                   | 15.3       | 83.8                  | 74                    |
| C            | 51                   | 10.0       | 93.7                  | 62                    |
| D            | 19                   | 3.7        | 97.5                  | 50                    |
| No award     | 13                   | 2.5        | 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 did not perform as expected. Some questions were less demanding than anticipated. The grade boundary was raised for lower and upper 'A' candidates to reflect this.

All candidates completed the paper within the time allocated.

## **Assignment**

The assignment performed as expected. There was an extremely broad range of topics this year, some with only one entry for the entire cohort and some that were extremely popular, including the cost-of-living topics, the ageing population, tourist tax, national minimum wage and VAT on private school fees.

## **Section 2: comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas that candidates performed well in**

#### **Question paper**

- Q1(a) — giving examples of costs
- Q1(b) — describing measures to reduce costs of production
- Q1(e)(ii) — describing disadvantages of unemployment
- Q1(e)(iii) — describing methods of measuring unemployment
- Q2(c) — describing the steps to measure inflation
- Q2(d) — identifying the returns to factors of production
- Q2(e) — explaining advantages and disadvantages to global trade
- Q3(a) — defining the market for chocolate
- Q3(b) — drawing a market diagram
- Q3(c) — outlining reasons why individuals borrow from banks
- Q5(a) — distinguishing with examples between an indirect and direct tax
- Q7(b) — describing types of aid given to developing economies

#### **Assignment**

Candidates who followed the guidelines in the coursework assessment task generally performed well. The most accessible sections remain Introduction; Research; and the findings element of Findings, Analysis and Interpretation.

All but a very few candidates picked up the one mark for the Structure and Presentation section.

## Areas that candidates found demanding

### Question paper

- Q1(d) — reasons why farmers may be affected by poor weather conditions: most candidates struggled to give two reasons here and ended up repeating or developing the same reason.
- Q1(e) — distinguish between level and rate of unemployment: some candidates answered correctly on the rate of unemployment but then went on to state the percentage of the population, or the percentage of the labour force rather than the working population.
- Q1(f)(i) — define economic growth: many candidates did not state, 'using the same or fewer resources' when stating that economic growth is an increase in total output over a period of time.
- Q29(b)(i) — calculating change in real income: some candidates found it hard to do the calculation and then state what had happened to real income.
- Q4(a) — difference between a need and a want: some candidates were flipping a 'need is something required for survival' whereas a 'want is something not required for survival', rather than something that makes life more pleasant.
- Q4(c) — demand diagram showing a rise in price of water bottles: many candidates drew diagrams with a shift in demand rather than a contraction of demand.
- Q4(d) — define supply: many candidates gave 'woolly' definitions and did not give the proper definition.
- Q4(e) — explain reasons for the supply curve sloping upwards from left to right: some candidates found it difficult to articulate this concept and were not able to explain two full reasons.
- Q5(c) — describe public and merit goods: many candidates were not able to describe these terms accurately and relied too much on examples.
- Q5(d) — outline the money flows: some candidates wrote about real flows rather than money flows.

## **Assignment**

### **Background**

In the Background section, some candidates were unable to gain marks as they were 'telling a story' rather than giving facts and statistics about their topic. Some candidates gave a different purpose in their title and their report.

A few candidates gave a series of facts in their Introduction section which they then repeated as findings in the Findings, Analysis and Interpretation section. In these cases, marks were awarded only once, in whatever section was most advantageous to the candidate.

### **Research Sources**

In the Research section marks are available for stating reasons for choosing sources. Some candidates gave long descriptions of what they found, which is not necessary — a simple statement is all that is needed (for example, 'I looked up the Office of National Statistics to find statistics on UK employment'). Some candidates did not gain marks because they failed to explain the value of their research sources.

### **Findings, Analysis and Interpretation**

In this section, several candidates stated findings but did not follow through with any analysis of the point. Some candidates did not match their findings and analysis with their title; this also impacted their conclusions and recommendations which should address the title of the report.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Many candidates still found the Conclusions and Recommendations section challenging. The main challenges were not justifying their conclusions and/or recommendations; bringing new material into the section for which no foundation has been laid in the Findings, Analysis and Interpretation section; and merely repeating an analysis point with no development.

## **Economic Theory**

Some candidates still found the Theory section challenging and did not incorporate theory points into the body of the Findings, Analysis and Interpretation section. No marks are awarded for any theory points outwith this section. Candidates must integrate their theory and not put it in as stand-alone definitions.

A few candidates used a discrete heading for their theory, despite the coursework assessment task explicitly saying that this should not be done.



## **Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment**

### **Question paper**

#### **Updated terms**

From session 2025–26 candidates will no longer be awarded marks for using old terms. Candidates should, going forward use the following up-to-date terms:

- Unemployment Element of Universal Credit rather than Job Seekers' Allowance.
- Living Costs and Food Survey rather than the Family Expenditure Survey

Many candidates used some terms interchangeably and used abbreviations in diagrams, for example:

- price and cost – 'cost to the consumer' when they mean price and 'the price of production' instead of cost of production.
- disposable (income after tax is paid) and discretionary income (income available for non-essential spending) — candidates should be clear about the difference between both of these.
- diagrams:
  - Axis — Price not P, Quantity not Q
  - Axis — Cost not C, Output not O

#### **Diagrams**

Centres should ensure that candidates recognise what is being asked of them in questions involving diagrams. If a question asks for a 'demand' diagram, then a demand curve should be the start point. Similarly, if a question asks for a 'supply' diagram, then a supply curve should be the start point. If a question asks for a 'market' diagram, then both a demand and a supply curve should be given in the original diagram.

Centres should ensure that candidates are completely familiar with what type of response is required for each of the command words. For example, if candidates are asked to 'draw' a diagram, then no explanation text is required, however if candidates are asked to 'explain, using a diagram' then an explanation response is required in addition to the diagram.

Candidates should be encouraged to produce diagrams that are large enough to make the labels easy to read in an exam setting.

## **General**

When asked an 'explain' question, candidates should be careful that they are not simply repeating the stem of the question as the identification (ID) of their answer.

When looking at costs, candidates should be encouraged to give examples that are definitely fixed or variable, rather than costs which could be seen as semi-fixed or semi-variable (for example electricity, heating).

When teaching trading blocs, a minimum of two examples should be covered.

BRICS is not accepted as a trading bloc.

Candidates should be made aware of consequential marks. This could help and motivate candidates to not miss questions out. For example, in questions that require calculations, candidates should show their working. In this way consequential marks might be awarded in subsequent questions.

## **Admin**

Candidates should be encouraged to space their work out. Candidates with handwriting that is difficult to read, should consider submitting word processed scripts or making use of a scribe or transcriber. These should be printed in double line spacing for ease of marking.

# **Assignment**

## **Introduction**

A few candidates included 'the reason I chose this topic ...' in their introduction. This is not necessary as no mark is awarded for this and candidates are using up their word count.

Candidates should be clear in their title if they are referring to the UK or the Scottish economy. Either is acceptable, but the findings and analysis should match the title. Candidates should also ensure that their title and the body of their report matches.

## **Research**

Candidates should remember that when explaining the value of a source, they need to give a two-part answer containing what the value is, and why it is a value. For example, the article is up to date (what) because it was published in March 2025 (why). Also, when giving a time period, candidates should use dates rather than using phrases such as 'last month'.

Centres should remind candidates to check that the number or name of each source in the body of the report matches with the number or name of the source in the appendices. Candidates should use full URLs to detail their sources rather than embedded links which cannot be accessed by markers.

## **Findings, Analysis and Interpretation**

Centres should ensure that in the Findings, Analysis and Interpretation section candidates follow the marking guidelines. There must be a source for every finding, and there must be a finding for any point of analysis. For example, a candidate should give a source, a finding and then an analytical point (with a maximum of three analytical points coming from any one finding). Candidates should be careful not to just reword a finding and use that as analysis. Candidates should use inverted commas to indicate each of their findings.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Centres must ensure that candidates know how to justify a conclusion and/or recommendation.

Recommendations must be linked to the title and not based on new evidence introduced that had not previously been discussed in the Finding, Analysis and Interpretation section.

## **Economic theory**

Candidates should remember that theory marks can only be awarded if the points appear in the Finding, Analysis and Interpretation section. Theory points in the introduction or conclusions and recommendations sections will not be credited.

Theory marks can be awarded for correct definitions of economic terms, provided they are in the context of the surrounding text. Candidates should ensure that enough definitions are included to gain all of the available theory marks.

It would be helpful if candidates used bold and/or italics for their theory points.

## **General**

If using graphs, candidates should incorporate them into the body of the report and should describe in words what a graph is showing.

At the end of the process candidates should check that the title and the content of their report match, and if necessary 'tweak' the title.

Centres are reminded that whilst there is no restriction on candidates selecting the same topic as others, all candidates must gather their own research and produce their report on their own.

Centres should ensure that candidates submit their assignments on white, rather than coloured paper.

Candidates should print their reports double sided, although this is not mandatory.

# **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](#).

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