

Course report 2026

Advanced Higher Business Management, SCQF level 7

We've written this report for teachers and lecturers. We recommend you read this with the published course assessment documents and marking instructions.

The report:

- provides a summary of how each course component performed
- highlights areas of the question paper and coursework where candidates performed well and areas where they did not perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

We collect and prepare the statistics in course reports before we complete the appeals process.

Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 1,009

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 1,009

Distribution of course awards (including minimum mark to achieve each grade)

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	239	23.7	23.7	81
B	186	18.4	42.1	69
C	205	20.3	62.4	57
D	169	16.7	79.2	45
No award	210	20.8	100	Not applicable

We've not applied rounding to these statistics.

In this report:

- 'Most' means greater than or equal to 70%.
- 'Many' means 50% to 69%.
- 'Some' means 25% to 49%.
- 'Few' or 'a few' means less than 25%.

You can find [statistical reports](#) on our website.

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's 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 make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Senior Qualifications Scotland staff normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors use 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.

- We can adjust the grade boundaries downwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- We can adjust the grade boundaries upwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- If levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries.

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](#).

How the course assessment performed

Question paper

Overall, the question paper performed as expected. One topic was more demanding than intended and we adjusted the grade boundary marks to reflect this.

Project

This component performed similarly to last year, but with a marginal decrease in the mean mark.

Most candidates produced detailed projects, demonstrating extensive research into their chosen organisation or industry.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper

Most candidates effectively selected and applied relevant information from the case study to support their responses.

Question 1

Most candidates produced well-developed force field analyses, making effective use of evidence from the case study.

Question 6

Many candidates detailed how artificial intelligence (AI) enhanced Netflix's competitiveness.

Question 8

Many candidates produced detailed responses on the ways managers can support employees at the different stages of Tuckman's framework.

Question 9(a)

Many candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of McGregor's Theory Y.

Project

The introduction, research and structure sections were the most accessible this year, with many candidates gaining all marks available for them.

Most candidates carried out a significant amount of recent research and evidenced their findings with footnotes. Most candidates included a well-structured bibliography that showed the dates sources were accessed and published.

Candidates tended to construct their conclusion points well, correctly drawing from two or more findings in the analysis and evaluation section to form a holistic statement.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper

Question 2

Only some candidates made clear links between the activities within Netflix's environmental policy and its functional areas, with many responses lacking sufficient application to the case study.

Question 7(a)

Only some candidates described the aims of the European Union (EU), with many responses instead referring to generic aims of trading blocs.

Question 7(b)

Only a few candidates supported their responses with specific evidence and factual detail relating to the EU.

Question 9 (b)

Only some candidates demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the contingency school of management.

Project

Most candidates demonstrated evidence of extensive research into their project aims. However, some candidates did not provide sufficiently detailed findings that identified recent actions, activities or developments by an organisation in relation to the project aim within the required two-to-three-year timeframe.

Some candidates' recommendations were vague, lacked feasibility and were only weakly supported by analysis and evaluation.

Preparing candidates for assessment

You should:

- Use internal assessments robustly to ensure candidates can meet the required standard before taking their final exam.
- Ensure internal assessments reflect the same level of demand as the external assessment.
- Make sure you sufficiently adapt the case study, and not just section 2, when using questions and sections from past papers.
- Be aware that questions that assess candidates on topics that are not listed in the latest version of the course specification, and are therefore no longer part of the course content, do not qualify as valid evidence for exceptional circumstances.

Question paper

You should encourage candidates to:

- Source evidence from the case study as the basis of their responses in section 1. General mark allowances are not a given for every question and may not be awarded in future.
- Keep up to date with current issues that relate to topics in the course specification. The question paper is, in part, shaped by current issues, so candidates should be familiar with analysis of these issues. You should embed wider reading into the delivery of the course, covering not only the UK, but the broader global economic climate as well, particularly the EU and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regions, and China.
- For the economy of China, ASEAN and EU topics, provide specific evidence and facts about each region in their responses to access all the marks available. We recommend they carry out wider reading of FDI in these regions.
- Compile a collection of relevant and recent examples related to the course topics, as they can gain additional marks for describing examples that relate to the question.

Project

You should remind candidates that:

- If they choose technological developments as their project aim, the topic is about the use of the technological developments for managing the organisation's functional areas, and not about selling technologically advanced products.
- If they select the topic of an organisation's impacts on its home and host countries as their project aim, they must be clear in their findings; specifically, in terms of which country, home or host the evidence is relating to.

Introduction

Candidates should explain their reasons for selecting the organisation or industry and/or project aim, and provide supporting evidence using footnotes.

Analysis and evaluation

You should encourage candidates to:

- Fully detail their findings. This requires describing a recent action, activity or development by the organisation in relation to their project's aim. It must be clear from the finding what exactly the organisation or industry has done and/or reported, and when they achieved it.
- Find the most recent evidence available to them and include the date that the action, activity or development took place. Candidates' findings must have been carried out by the organisation or industry within the past two-to-three years. For example, an organisation may state on its website that it established a charity five years ago, but candidates must detail what the charity has done in the past two-to-three years, such as how much it donated last year. Findings detailing an organisation's aims, commitments and pledges etc must be qualified with progress made within the two-to-three-year time period.

Conclusion and recommendations

While National 5 and Higher require candidates to make justified recommendations, at Advanced Higher level, it is important that they logically draw their

recommendations from the analysis and evaluation section, making sure they give sufficient detail in terms of a clear and viable course of action, and robust justification. It is not enough for candidates to repeat 'continue to do X'.

Recommendations should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

Research

Companies' websites often contain out of date information, and the date of the website's publication or update is usually not clear or impossible to find. You should advise candidates to source their findings from an organisation's annual report rather than its website. This makes it clearer that the activity, development or action in the finding is within the two-to-three-year period, while also making it more straightforward for candidates to provide a robust reference to the source.

All sources produced by an organisation, such as its website, sustainability report and annual report, count as one source. News articles count as separate sources.

Third-party websites, such as Wikipedia and ethicalconsumer.org, that provide an overview of a company's ethical actions often list activities outwith the two-to-three-year time limit. Candidates must source findings from credible sources that prove the company has done something in the time period required.

Structure and referencing

Candidates must provide a valid date of publication for each source in their bibliography. Analysis and evaluation from any source without a clear date of publication will not gain marks. Online sources must have a date of publication and a date of access. If it is not possible to find a date of publication for a source, such as a company's website, you should discourage candidates from using the source.

You should encourage candidates to include the date and author along with the URL in the footnote or, alternatively, to insert the full reference as the footnote. For example:

¹ https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/ah-course-spec-business-management.pdf

(Qualifications Scotland, 2026)

or

¹ Qualifications Scotland. (2026). Advanced Higher Business Management Course Specification. [Online]. Qualifications Scotland. Last Updated: 2026. Available at: https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/ah-course-spec-business-management.pdf [Accessed June 2026].

Candidates should place footnote anchor points after the finding but before analysis and/or evaluation. Footnotes must include the full URL.