Course report 2026

Advanced Higher Economics, 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: 192

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 141

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

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	96	68.1	68.1	84
B	25	17.7	85.8	72
C	17	12.1	97.9	60
D	2	1.4	99.3	48
No award	1	0.7	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

The question paper performed as intended.

Section 1: This section allowed those candidates who had kept abreast of current national and global economic news to access all questions.

Section 2: Overall performance was strong, reflecting a high level of preparation. The responses demonstrated excellent theoretical understanding of market structures and interventions, and supporting diagrams were appropriate and accurate.

Section 3: Candidates chose from all four options.

Project

The project performed as intended. Many projects showed evidence of analysis and evaluation taking place, with clear introductions, overall conclusions and recommendations.

The breadth and scope of topic choice was significant, with over 40 different topics presented. This is positive, particularly given the narrow focus of media attention directed towards global tariffs and the sluggish UK economic growth throughout this academic year.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper

Section1:

Question 1b: Most candidates answered this question very well and clearly described current spending.

Question 3: Most candidates provided excellent answers on the consequences of further increases to the National Living Wage on the economy.

Section 2:

This section was very well answered.

Question 9(b): Many candidates demonstrated a very good understanding of the consequences of price wars for firms and consumers.

Question 9(c)(i): Many candidates provided excellent answers on why vaccinations may lead to positive externalities in consumption.

Section 3:

Question 10(b): Many candidates successfully discussed the possible advantages and disadvantages of the ‘gig’ economy.

Question 11(d): Most candidates described the impact that new technologies may have on the UK economy.

Question 12(c): Many candidates provided excellent answers on the economic arguments for and against Scottish independence.

Question 13(b) and (c): Many candidates described the economic arguments for and against the use of tariffs, and also the reasons for the downturn in Germany’s economy in recent years.

Project

Candidates performed very well, with a few producing excellent work. Very few projects were descriptive in nature.

Many candidates produced well-researched projects. Most candidates effectively used their introduction to clearly define the topic's context, justification and aims. Referencing, and the correct use of footnotes, was consistent across the range of projects.

Many candidates effectively used sub-sections and section conclusions, before reaching an overall conclusion at the end.

Candidates using their referenced research findings effectively by directly integrating quotes to support their analytical and evaluative commentary, were more likely to gain the marks for analysis and evaluation.

There's evidence that candidates are getting better at using applied economic theory in the context of the issue.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper

Section 1:

Question 1(a): Some candidates did not correctly describe economic growth and did not mention real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) / real output.

Question 2: A few candidates incorrectly stated that the UK government could lower interest rates when explaining the measures the UK government could undertake to encourage economic growth.

Question 6: A few candidates mistakenly associated Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) with reducing income inequality.

Section 2:

Question 9(a): A few candidates did not fully label their diagram.

Section 3:

Question 10(a): Some candidates missed marks because they provided information on ‘firms’, when the question specifically referred to the economic costs of unemployment to the ‘individual’ and to the ‘UK government’.

Question 10(c): Many candidates mixed up productivity with overall production, so did not gain full marks.

Question 12(a): Many candidates missed marks as they did not fully describe the role of the Office for Budget Responsibility.

Some candidates did not provide any supporting statistics, so did not access the 2 marks available.

Project

When making an analytical and/or evaluative point from a finding, a few candidates missed marks as they did not fully reference their finding in either a footnote or an endnote.

A few candidates did not fully integrate and interpret relevant supporting data, tables, infographics, diagrams, charts and/or graphs within the body of their project.

A very few candidates did not add page numbers to their project.

Preparing candidates for assessment

You can use the materials on the Understanding Standards website to help you prepare candidates.

Question paper

It’s essential that candidates regularly engage with and keep abreast of current national and global economic news. Candidates must understand that the content of the question paper is directly linked to current economic issues, both national and global, so it’s imperative that they stay up to date with media commentary and analysis of these issues.

You should take full advantage of the ‘Guidance on topics for the question paper’ document available on the Advanced Higher Economics subject page.

In section 3, you should make candidates aware that 2 marks are available for accurate statistics.

Project

You should encourage candidates to follow their own individual areas of interest. Candidates should choose a topic that’s contemporary and ideally where there’s economic debate. Choosing an issue where there’s clear debate helps them engage in the various arguments or discussions surrounding the topic, and this allows them to showcase their analysis and evaluation of the issue.

Advise candidates not to produce introductions that are exceptionally short (one or two sentences) or exceptionally long.

Although statistics can help provide context and justification for the choice of topic, candidates should not include any supporting data — such as graphs, tables, or infographics — in their introduction.

Encourage candidates to explore sub-issues, as this will help them with their in-depth, substantive analysis and evaluation.

Candidates who provide analytical commentary and critical evaluative judgements based on directly quoted and referenced research findings, are more likely to produce a strong project.

When presenting an infographic, candidates must make sure that the information directly relates to the context of their topic. When presenting graphs, tables, charts, diagrams, or other supporting data, candidates must clearly identify a trend, draw a comparison or provide a calculation. Inserting a graph, table, chart or diagram with nothing else, does not gain a mark. All graphs, tables, charts, diagrams or infographics must be of a suitable size, and the information must be clear and legible.

Candidates must keep their recommendations for the final conclusion section. They must link these to specific information they've presented in the main body of the project.

Encourage candidates to present their project in font size 11 or 12, and preferably with 1.5 line spacing throughout. Make sure candidates are aware there are 3 marks for 'presentation and referencing' and that they should follow the instructions given for this section. Encourage candidates to use the full 4,000 word count for the project.