# Course report 2026

## Advanced Higher Graphic Communication, 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: 286

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 358

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

| Course award | Number of candidates | Percentage | Cumulative percentage | Minimum mark required |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 41 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 122 |
| B | 78 | 21.8 | 33.2 | 103 |
| C | 106 | 29.6 | 62.8 | 84 |
| D | 83 | 23.2 | 86.0 | 65 |
| No award | 50 | 14.0 | 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

Some questions were more demanding than anticipated; for example, questions 2(c) and 5(a). We adjusted the grade boundaries to account for this.

## Project

The project performed as expected. Candidates selected a good range of contexts, and many took a combined approach with technical graphics (TG) and commercial video media graphics (CVMG) work, using TG models to support the development of CVMG graphics.

# How candidates performed

## Areas where candidates performed well

### Question paper

Most candidates performed well in questions about preliminary graphics, conversion between digital and print media, intellectual property rights, 3D computer modelling, most illustration techniques and digital testing methods, and the role of some professionals in the built environment sector.

In questions on digital testing methods, application of modelling processes and surveys, many candidates demonstrated good understanding of some content areas. Many candidates demonstrated a basic level of understanding of topics such as offset lithography, elements and principles, but an insufficient depth of knowledge in 'explain' questions or to relate knowledge fully to a particular context.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1(a) | Digital thumbnails — Many candidates clearly explained the purpose of thumbnail sketches, with some candidates articulating the advantages of using digital technology in generating preliminary graphics. |
| 1(c)(i) | Colour space — Many candidates showed understanding of the requirement for colour space, identifying RGB and CMYK, and use of Pantone, but could have made clearer reference to their use in digital and printed media. |
| 1(c)(ii) | Text to vector — Most candidates correctly referenced scalability, while a smaller number identified transferability. |
| 1(c)(iii) | Resolution — Like in question 1(c)(i), many candidates understood the need for specific resolutions. |
| 1(d) | Digital rights management — Most candidates successfully referenced reputation management and payment processing. |

2(d)(ii) Dynamic effects — Many candidates demonstrated a strong understanding of dynamic effects, with most gaining full marks by correctly identifying elements such as wheels or background motion.

3(a) Freeform modelling — Many candidates gave good responses. Many candidates effectively supplemented their answers with sketches.

3(e) Finite element analysis (FEA) — Many candidates referenced applied force and selecting materials.

4(b)(i) and (ii) Surveys — Many candidates identified underground and drainage surveys correctly. Many candidates applied the survey to the specific context.

4(c) Interior designers — Many responses were strong.

4(d) Virtual reality modelling language (VRML) — Many candidates attained near full marks.

## Project

### Analysing the graphic brief and research

Some candidates demonstrated a good approach to their research and identified appropriate target audiences for TG and CVMG, as well as some key research areas. Their research was valid, evidence-based and effectively allowed them to progress to preliminary graphics. Some candidates also took good holistic analysis and research approaches, completing work throughout their project instead of only at the end. For example, some candidates researched FEA simulations at this stage rather than at the start, strengthening their evidence and approach.

### TG preliminary planning

Many candidates produced a range of 2D and 3D sketches that provided a good visual understanding of their project. They selected and correctly used appropriate modelling techniques and supplied good information to enable them to progress to production graphics. Many candidates demonstrated skills in reverse-engineering and/or designing products or items to support the development of TG work.

### CVMG preliminary planning

Many candidates produced creative and well-annotated preliminary graphics, showing detailed technical requirements for print-based and digital work, and justified their use of elements and principles. Many candidates demonstrated good creativity in producing a range of layouts for print-based or digital graphics that met the project requirements. Many candidates also demonstrated good planning and development work to show their progress towards a solution.

### TG graphic solution

This was the section of the project where candidates performed best. Most candidates demonstrated good performance when they produced:

- Models with a clear visual link to their preliminary work that were complex enough for Advanced Higher.
- A suitable number of component drawings for all components or key components, and included suitable dimensions that would enable manufacture.
- Assembly work with appropriate sections, enlarged views and exploded views to clearly demonstrate the correct assembly of their components.
- A range of technical details from the list provided in the project assessment task.
- Appropriate simulations that allowed them to test their models. Many candidates attempted FEA tests, which were of a good standard, and they presented their results well. A few candidates produced mechanical animations and CFD tests.
- Good-quality technical renders that demonstrated use of the techniques listed in the project assessment task.

### CVMG graphic solution

Many candidates:

- Produced a range of appropriate graphics for print-based work and digital work that demonstrated good skill and visual impact, and met the requirements of the project assessment task.
- Produced graphics in recognised formats for final graphic solutions and included most of the required detail.

- Featured a clear link between their preliminary graphics and final graphic solution.
- Identified and explained the use of elements, principles and technical requirements across the range of graphic items.
- Demonstrated good skill in creating brand continuity between print-based and digital graphics.
- Produced work that looked professional, with professional organisation such as accurate alignment, layout, scale and hierarchy of elements within the graphic.
- Used good font choices and colour schemes relevant to the audience/target market.
- Focused on a few choice elements/principles to a high standard.
- Used good supporting graphics.

**Evaluation**

Many candidates produced detailed evaluations that included information about the strengths and weaknesses of their project overall and the performance of individual aspects, and that related to their brief and specification. Candidates also took good holistic evaluative approaches, evaluating work throughout their project instead of only at the end.

# Areas where candidates did not perform well

## Question paper

Some candidates did not demonstrate depth of understanding in the following topics:

- CAD/CAM.
- Commercial printing methods, and the use of graphics in real-life contexts often lacked the detail required at this level.
- The use of design elements and principles, 3D modelling techniques, and the function and effectiveness of different commercial graphics. At Advanced Higher, candidates should demonstrate their understanding of the Advanced Higher course content by using examples they have studied at this level, and only draw on Higher and National 5 content if it is relevant.

- Creators and users in the built environment, and manufacturing and engineering sectors, and the graphics used in the engineering, design and built environment sectors.

Some candidates did not provide specific, detailed responses, frequently relying on generic answers in technical processes such as offset lithography, motion tweening and feature surveys, as well as conceptual understandings of topics such as pace, colour space applications, and the specific use of the golden ratio in design layouts.

Many candidates did not perform well in the following topics:

- converting raster to vector
- offset lithography printing
- the use of specific lighting techniques
- motion tweening animation and video post-editing techniques
- Advanced Higher-specific design elements and principles
- some surveys used in the built environment sector

1(b) Raster to vector — Most candidates did not provide enough information about the process of ‘tracing’ an image.

1(c)(iii) Many candidates did not explain the effect of having resolution too high or too low.

1(e) Printing techniques — Most candidates did not articulate the main processes of offset lithography, often focusing on print-ready copy preparation instead.

1(f) CAD/CAM — Most candidates identified scalable vector graphics but did not provide responses specifically relating to the functionality of vinyl cutters.

2(a) Digital testing methods: computational fluid dynamics (CFD) — Most responses were poor. Many candidates gave repetitive answers rather than demonstrating a practical understanding of how car ventilation systems function.

Although most candidates scored highly in question 3(e) on FEA, they performed less well in question 2(a). Most candidates understood what CFD testing was but did not use generated data to suggest effective modifications to the ventilation system.

2(c) Polygons — Performance was limited; many candidates struggled to explain the application and editing of polygons effectively.

Polygonal modelling relates to two areas of the course specification: the use of polygons in the production of 3D graphics and techniques, customs and practices across 3D modelling, including editing commands. Most candidates gained 1 mark by demonstrating they understood that using polygons increases shape control, but did not gain the second mark related to manipulation of edges, nodes, faces or density of the mesh.

2(d)(i) Lighting and illustration — Some candidates found this challenging. Responses often lacked the necessary detail and specificity. Candidates frequently provided generic statements rather than demonstrating an understanding of techniques such as image-based lighting (IBL) or specific lighting methodologies.

3(b) Surface modelling — Some candidates struggled to recognise the ‘loft’ as a surface, leading them to describe ‘shelling’ instead of ‘thickening’.

3(c) Irregular fillet and chamfer — Responses varied in quality. Most candidates gained marks for the extrude along a path and irregular fillet. Candidates who revolved the initial solid performed better than those who used extrude, chamfer and shell.

4(a)(i) to (iii) Professional roles — Many candidates did not give concise, accurate descriptions of professional roles. Responses were often too generic, except for the quantity surveyor role, which was more widely understood.

4(b)(i) to (iii) Surveys — Performance was mixed. While candidates generally seemed to understand underground and drainage surveys, many candidates struggled with the concept of a ‘feature survey’, frequently confusing it with a topographical survey.

5(a) Motion tweening — Most candidates confused motion tweening with other animation styles, such as stop motion, and did not show a detailed understanding of the advantages of using motion tweening in general and in the context of the question.

Post-editing techniques were better described, with candidates mentioning how transitions and overlays could be used, but many candidates’ responses in general were vague and did not demonstrate familiarity with the reasons for choosing animation techniques for certain applications.

5(b) Pace — Many candidates did not explain applying pace within the application, often providing generic responses or confusing the concept.

5(c) Golden ratio — Most candidates identified where the golden ratio was used but did not explain its contribution to layout hierarchy or proportion.

5(d) File types — Many candidates rephrased the question rather than providing a technical description of how each file type is used.

## Project

### Analysing the graphic brief and research

Many candidates did not attain higher marks because they missed key pieces of information that were crucial to progress their project. For example, if they did not research:

- sizes, the number of components required and how components could be assembled
- CVMG formats or analyse their use of styling, elements and principles

- or analyse the requirements of intended audiences

**Producing graphic specifications**

Some candidates did not gain marks in this area because their specifications did not relate to analysis and research, or their responses were limited and did not confirm the range of graphics required.

**TG preliminary planning**

Candidates did not attain higher marks in this area when they:

- provided insufficient technical detail to support an understanding of the model
- did not include relevant technical detail such as enlarged views and sectional views
- did not include complex 3D visualisation and only submitted preliminary graphics that were 2D
- scanned and scaled their sketches poorly, submitting low-quality images with limited clarity

**TG graphic solution**

Some candidates did not produce the technical detail required. Some candidates did not produce sections in both their component and assembly drawings, so they could not access marks in the highest band.

**CVMG graphic solution**

Some candidates did not present their print-based solutions in the correct pre-press formats, or produced solutions that contained placeholder text.

Some candidates did not complete the requirements for a suite of graphics as they only produced two items instead of three.

Some candidates did not attain high marks because of the quality of their graphics and visual impact.

# Preparing candidates for assessment

## Question paper

You should:

- Encourage candidates to study past paper questions that specifically relate to Advanced Higher course content; for example, the specific design elements and principles.
- Set candidates surface modelling as well as solid modelling exercises to ensure they are challenged.

## Project

### Analysing the graphic brief and research

Candidates should focus on analysis and research that covers the following:

**TG**

- A brief that confirms intended audiences — for example, manufacturers or assembly technicians — and what is required to meet their needs.
- The number of components required.
- Potential choices for modelling techniques that can be used for modelling components.
- Key sizes for components: assembly information or key assembly methods for the chosen product.
- Illustration techniques: consideration of similar products, renders, materials and lighting.
- FEA or CFD: consideration of suitable tests and what forces or pressures would be applied, materials required.
- Mechanical animations: analysing similar animations to inform decision making and suitability of approach.

**CVMG**

- A brief that confirms intended audiences; for example, consumers or retailers.
- Consideration of similar documents or graphic items to support planning and analysing their use of elements, principles and styling.
- Consideration of formats, dimensions, layouts, sizing and structure.
- Device compatibility.
- Animation techniques or processes.
- Print-based graphics: consideration of printing techniques, paper weights or types, colour scheme (for example, CMYK) and print resolution.
- Digital graphics: consideration of navigation, transitions, animation type, accessibility, colour schemes (for example, RGB), resolutions, frame rates, structure and device compatibility.
- CVMG file types for print and digital graphics.

Candidates can carry out analysis and research at any point in the project as it is marked holistically. For example, they can conduct research for their FEA test when attempting this section of the project. This allows them to concisely detail their approach and draw valid conclusions.

**Producing graphic specifications**

Candidates should produce separate specifications for TG and CVMG, detailing:

- The range and format of graphics required for their project, linked to the requirements outlined in the project assessment task.
- Conclusions drawn from their analysis and research that specify decisions for taking graphics forward.

**TG preliminary planning**

Candidates should:

- Annotate or label their work to show how they intend to use the required modelling techniques. They will gain more marks if they provide relevant technical detail to enhance the clarity and understanding of their work.

- Ensure they include any dimensions that are critical. It can be useful for candidates to complete skill-building tasks, where they apply dimensions to drawings to understand the expected standard at this level.
- Present their work on two pages and avoid scanning and scaling work, as this results in diminished quality and limits clarity.

**CVMG preliminary planning**

Candidates should:

- Ensure they plan for the range of graphics chosen for printed and digital graphic items as set out in their project brief.
- Include suitable annotations, detailing the use of elements and principles, and explaining the CVMG technical requirements of their graphics.

**Project plans**

To gain full marks, candidates must include key stages and intermediate stages in their project planning, along with suitable timings for each stage. This should link to specifications and the requirements for graphics as outlined in the project assessment task.

**TG graphic solution**

Candidates do not need to produce component drawings for every component and should focus only on key components that demonstrate their chosen modelling techniques. This reduces the need to use too many pages when presenting work and improves clarity.

Candidates should:

- Annotate or label their components to demonstrate the modelling techniques they have used in their model. They should ensure they include sections in their component drawings, especially where this adds clarity to internal detail.
- Ensure they include any dimensions that are critical.
- Clearly demonstrate the assembly of their model through cutting planes for sectional work. Where required, candidates can include more than one section.
- Include enlarged views to demonstrate the correct assembly of components.

- Ensure they correctly align exploded views, with no overlapping components.
- Ensure the scales and line weights they use result in clear printed drawings. You can advise candidates on suitable scales and line weights and provide them with a centre-devised template.

Candidates often benefit from skill-building lessons focusing on British Standards and conventions for clarity.

**CVMG graphic solution**

Candidates must present print-based solutions in a pre-press format, and digital graphics in a format ready for digital publication.

Candidates should:

- Ensure that they present solutions without placeholder text. Placeholder text indicates that graphics are still in the development phase and are not final.
- Present pre-press formats correctly for their chosen graphic items with registration, crop marks and colour bars applied correctly, where required. For example, for a business card in a suite of graphics, they should consider duplexing, or how many business cards they could print on one page.
- Produce graphics for the specified criteria as listed under 'CVMG preliminary planning' above and not take on too much.
- Give themselves enough time to complete their CVMG work to the same standard as their TG work.
- Focus on the requirement for each type of printed and digital graphic, as outlined in the project assessment task.

You should:

- Give candidates opportunities to complete skill-builder tasks to help them improve their skills at this level, and their approach to preparing and presenting CVMG graphic items not covered in other levels. The tasks should ensure graphics include effective visual impact and are of the standard required for Advanced Higher.
- Refer to the Understanding Standards materials for support.

### Evaluating the solutions and the process

Candidates must ensure their evaluations are concise and focus on discussing the performance of their graphics in relation to achieving their specifications, and the strengths and weaknesses of their solutions.

Like analysis and research, evaluations are marked holistically, so candidates can complete them at any point of the project. For example, candidates could evaluate their FEA simulations or technical illustrations when producing work for this section.