# Course report 2026

## Higher Administration and IT, SCQF level 6

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.

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# Statistical and grade boundary information

## Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 5,252

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 5,543

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

| Course award | Number of candidates | Percentage | Cumulative percentage | Minimum mark required |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 1,765 | 31.8 | 31.8 | 82 |
| B | 1,467 | 26.5 | 58.3 | 70 |
| C | 1,107 | 20.0 | 78.3 | 58 |
| D | 635 | 11.5 | 89.7 | 46 |
| No award | 569 | 10.3 | 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 expected, however candidates found some questions more demanding than intended, particularly question 6 and question 8.

## Assignment

The assignment performed as expected. However, the internet research within the assignment was slightly less demanding than intended.

Overall, we made a small downward adjustment in the grade boundaries to take account of the above.

# How candidates performed

## Areas where candidates performed well

### Question paper

#### Question 5(a)

Many candidates were able to give a reason as to why an agenda is needed. Candidates often mentioned the fact that it enabled attendees to prepare for the meeting or allowed attendees to decide whether to attend.

#### Question 11

Knowledge of the consequences of failing to keep electronic data secure was evident with many candidates gaining 3 or 4 marks. Potential fines for breaching General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the impact on the organisation's reputation were popular responses.

### Assignment

#### Task 1(a) — Presentation

This task was attempted by almost all candidates. Most candidates performed the internet search correctly and were able to choose appropriate slide designs.

#### Task 1(b) — e-mail

Most candidates were able to send an e-mail with the correct attachment.

#### Task 3 — COUNTIF and SUMIF

Most candidates who attempted this question gained full marks, demonstrating an ability to select the correct functions and build these correctly — including the use of locked ranges.

#### Task 5 — Pivot Table

Most candidates gained 4 or 5 marks out of the 5 marks available for this task.

# Areas where candidates did not perform well

## Question paper

### Question 1

Some candidates simply identified the issue without giving a clear indication of how it could be addressed.

### Question 4(a)

Many candidates did not score marks for this question. A few candidates did not attempt the question whilst some candidates were unable to accurately outline the stages of team formation.

### Question 8

A few candidates were able to describe aspects of an ergonomic office but many candidates did not gain marks as they simply identified the feature.

### Question 9

Some candidates were able to score half of the marks available for this question however candidates' responses often focused on the benefits of good customer care rather than the complaints process itself.

### Question 12

Most candidates did not manage to gain any marks for this question. A few candidates did not submit a response whilst many candidates wrote about GDPR rather than Freedom of Information features.

## Assignment

### Task 7 — Aggregate/Totals

A few candidates did not attempt this question.

# Preparing candidates for assessment

## Question paper

In the case study, it is good practice for candidates to write down the issue and then, directly underneath, say how this issue may be solved or avoided in the future. Candidates should check that their response has an action that will solve the issue.

You should encourage candidates to breakdown each question to clearly identify the command word, topic and number of marks allocated. This should allow them to structure their answer correctly with the relevant information.

Candidates should use model answers where they can look at a response and determine where marks would be awarded or not and the reasons for this. A good starting point for this would be the Administration and IT section of our Understanding Standards website. Candidates could also peer mark assessments and/or homework and practise giving feedback.

Candidates could use a course checklist to ensure that their revision has covered all aspects of the theory. They could use the Higher Administration and IT Course Specification on our website to construct their checklist.

Past papers questions are an excellent resource for revision in terms of practising content and timings, but you should also encourage candidates to use a wide variety of revision techniques to broaden their knowledge and understanding.

## Assignment

Candidates should always check their formula printout to ensure that, where necessary, cell ranges are locked. Alternatively, they could use named ranges, which automatically lock the correct data references when formulae are copied. They demonstrated a good understanding of the COUNTIF and SUMIF functions. However, some candidates either did not use absolute cell references within the ranges or only partially used them.

The Aggregate Query task involved combining records that have the same value using the ‘Group By’ function in a query. Candidates should look for clues as to how

records must be combined or ‘grouped’. Phrases such as ‘for each’ often indicate how the information is to be grouped. For example, if the task read ‘For each department in the business find the total wages paid’, the field that would need grouping in this scenario is the ‘Department’ field. To complete the task, the ‘Wages’ field would also be used along with the ‘Sum’ function to add all the wages together. These queries are marked positively so that candidates will receive marks for all parts of the query that are correct. Candidates should try to carry out the task even if there are aspects that they can’t complete or are unsure of.

The database report task was done well but many candidates did not gain marks due to the truncation and/or misalignment of field headings and/or data. They should check their printout to ensure that they have not cut off any data or field headings. They should also check the accuracy of their headings for spelling errors and consistent capitalisation. This also applies to any other task that requires candidates to enter headings including pivot tables, database forms, charts and e-mails.

You should encourage candidates to practise writing e-mails and emphasise the need for proper punctuation and composition.