

Course report 2026

Higher Applications of Mathematics, 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.

Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 4,682

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 7,024

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

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	1,155	16.4	16.4	76
B	1,425	20.3	36.7	63
C	1,815	25.8	62.6	50
D	1,558	22.2	84.8	37
No award	1,071	15.2	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

The course assessment was accessible to most candidates. Feedback suggests that it gave them a good opportunity to demonstrate the breadth and depth of their knowledge of Higher Applications of Mathematics.

Question paper

The question paper performed mostly as intended. A few questions were more demanding than intended. We took this into account when setting the grade boundaries.

Project

The project performed as intended. The marking team reported positive feedback from centres, indicating that the project was fair and accessible for candidates.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper

Question 1: calculate the accumulated value

Many candidates performed well. A few candidates did not accurately identify the correct number of months required for the power or the correct decimal multipliers.

Question 2(a): complete the PERT chart

Most candidates performed well and completed the PERT chart correctly.

A few candidates added additional boxes to the PERT chart and did not clearly indicate the earliest possible start time and the latest completion time, either on the diagram or in a key.

Question 2(b): construct a Gantt chart

Many candidates performed well and completed the Gantt chart correctly. A few Gantt charts were difficult to read because candidates did not shade the boxes using black or blue pen and/or included float times unnecessarily.

Question 2(c): state float time

Many candidates stated the float time with units.

Question 3(a): construct a scatter plot

Many candidates created the appropriate scatter plot by plotting Y on X.

A few candidates either made no attempt at this question or plotted X on Y.

Question 3(b): find the correlation coefficient

Most candidates generated the correlation coefficient and then stated it.

A few candidates did not attempt this question or did not state the correlation coefficient after generating the output.

Question 4(a): complete the Venn diagram

Most candidates performed well and gained full marks.

Question 4(b): calculate the probability

Many candidates performed well. A few candidates did not identify the total number of candidates from the question.

Question 5(a)(i): complete the worksheet

Most candidates performed well. However, many candidates did not enter the correct formula into the worksheet.

Question 5(a)(ii): construct the graph

Many candidates performed well. However, many candidates made an error in question 5(a)(i) and obtained a linear graph as a result.

Question 7(a)(i): state an appropriate hypothesis test

Many candidates stated the correct test.

Question 8(a): calculate net monthly income

Many candidates set out their working in a logical way and labelled the taxable income that they calculated.

Question 9(a)(i): calculate probabilities and complete the tree diagram

Many candidates performed well. A few candidates rounded probabilities during their calculations and did not check that the probabilities added up to 1.

Question 11(a): state one reason

Many candidates stated an appropriate reason why the headline might misrepresent the number of honeybee hives in the UK.

Project

Introduction

Most candidates gained marks 2 to 4. Some candidates did not explain the background and context of their project clearly enough to gain mark 1.

Subjective impression

Many candidates achieved marks 7, 8, 11, 13 and 14 by generating appropriate graphical displays, including titles, labels and scales and commenting on how helpful the graphs were in context. Some candidates did not explain why the graphs they chose would help to form a subjective impression. Some candidates did not identify descriptive statistics that were appropriate to their data.

Presentation

Most candidates gained marks in this section and managed to stay below the word limit. Some candidates did not include appropriate introductory text before graphical displays, descriptive statistics or additional statistics.

Most candidates used appropriate headers.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper

Question 3(b)(ii): interpret the correlation coefficient

Many candidates attempted this question. However, most candidates' answers did not explain the negative correlation coefficient in context.

Question 3(d): estimate the stopping distance

Some candidates did not use the predict function given in the data booklet when estimating the stopping distance. A few candidates used the x and y variables incorrectly when calculating their estimate.

Question 5(b)(i): state the type of model

Most candidates did not identify the type of model they had generated from their graph.

Question 5(b)(ii): explain what the graph shows

Most candidates did not explain what the graph showed in context. Most candidates who obtained a linear model in question 5(b)(i) did not state that there was a constant rate of change that meant that the profit continued to increase.

Question 8(c): determine whether the amount is affordable

Most candidates did not use the information given in the data booklet effectively when answering this question.

Question 9(a)(ii): determine the probability

Many candidates added the probability of the manufacturing delay to the probability of the delivery delay instead of multiplying them. Some candidates rounded the probabilities, which led to totals that did not add up to 1.

Some candidates did not gain this mark because they used incorrect probabilities from question 9(a)(i), which added to more than 1.

Question 9(b): calculate the expected cost

Most candidates used incorrect probabilities when calculating the expected cost. Many candidates did not adjust the expected cost correctly to account for the control measure.

Question 9(c): explain why they use both control measures

Most candidates stated that both control measures gave the 'cheapest cost' instead of using the expected terminology of 'lowest expected cost'.

Question 10(b): determine whether savings have increased at least in line with inflation

Most candidates did not correctly compare the increase in savings with the increase in the consumer price index. Many candidates therefore reached an incorrect conclusion.

Question 10(c): give one reason why a claim might not be made on an insurance policy

Many candidates incorrectly stated that policyholders pay money into a fund and receive it back if they make a claim.

Project

Introduction

For marks 5 and 6, most candidates did not explain sufficiently why their data was valid or unbiased. Most candidates either made a statement saying that their data was valid and unbiased or stated that the source was reliable without providing an explanation. For example, 'Since this is an official website, it's valid and unbiased.'

Analysis and interpretation

Some candidates produced the relevant statistics, but they did not analyse them in context.

Conclusion

Most candidates did not make appropriate connections or provide a summary between their graphical displays, descriptive statistics, or additional statistics in their conclusion. Many conclusions did not reflect the statements candidates made earlier in their analysis about the graphical displays, descriptive statistics and additional statistics.

Many candidates introduced new analysis of graphical displays, descriptive statistics and additional statistics in their conclusion, which meant they missed out on marks. (Analysis must appear before the conclusion to gain the conclusion marks.) A few candidates did not gain any conclusion marks because they did not state an appropriate research question.

Presentation

Some candidates did not analyse their graphs or descriptive statistics until the conclusion. These candidates gained the marks for analysis but did not gain the mark for flow.

Preparing candidates for assessment

The comments in the previous sections and those below can help you prepare candidates for the Higher Applications of Mathematics course assessment.

Question paper

- Remind candidates that they should print spreadsheets in both value view and formula view.
- Remind candidates that their scripts, including printouts, are scanned in black and white.
- Encourage candidates to use the checklist on the inside of the front page of the question paper to ensure that they have printed all relevant documents.
- Encourage candidates to refer to the data booklet to help them when answering questions.
- Consider what types of questions may be asked in the question paper after the data booklet is released.
- Consider the best way to allow candidates to practise skills for questions that require them to use software packages.
- Encourage candidates to set out clear, concise and appropriate working for all questions.
- Remind candidates to use appropriate statistical language when using statistics to interpret a statistical hypothesis or test.

Project

- Ensure that candidates use appropriate data sets.
- Ensure that candidates have a suitable research question based on their data. Candidates should state research questions explicitly and follow one of the following formats:
 - I am going to investigate if there is a difference in means between...
 - I am going to investigate if there is a relationship between...
 - I am going to investigate if there is a difference between two proportions.
- Remind candidates that they must provide an explanation of why they think their data or source is valid and unbiased.

- Remind candidates that they cannot use the example projects on the Understanding Standards website (or elsewhere) for their project.
- Remind candidates that they must generate all statistical diagrams they use in their project themselves, and they must not copy statistical diagrams from textbooks or journals.
- Remind candidates to use language appropriate for the course.
- Ensure that candidates make statements in the subjective impression section, such as, 'The boxplot allows me to visually compare the median of the two data sets and gives an indication of the spread of data.'

You can find detailed marking instructions for the 2026 course assessment on our [website](#). Our website also contains the marking instructions from previous years.

The [Understanding Standards website](#) contains examples of candidate evidence with commentary.