

Course report 2026

Higher Economics, 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.

Note: we've made changes to the course assessment from session 2026–27.

Check your [subject page](#) for more information.

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: 911

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 1,087

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

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	498	45.8	45.8	84
B	189	17.4	63.2	72
C	161	14.8	78.0	60
D	104	9.6	87.6	48
No award	135	12.4	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 and offered an appropriate and anticipated level of demand, allowing candidates to display their subject knowledge and the skills developed throughout the course.

There was no adjustment to the grade boundary.

Assignment

The assignment performed as intended. Most assignments submitted addressed all sections of the task, had appropriate sources and were presented in a clear and well-organised structure.

The average mark for the assignment increased this year and many candidates gained high marks. The 'analysis and evaluation', and 'conclusion/recommendation' sections proved challenging for candidates, but those who chose suitable topics and followed all the guidelines gained high marks across all sections of the assignment.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper

1(c): Many candidates fully explained how economic growth would lead to improvements in living standards.

1(d): Many candidates accurately distinguished between and gave examples of progressive and regressive taxes.

2(b): Most candidates correctly described the effects of inflation on firms.

2(c): Many candidates accurately described characteristics of a developing economy.

3(a): Many candidates clearly distinguished between economic goods and free goods, and gave relevant examples.

3(b): Many candidates accurately drew a fully-labelled market diagram.

3(e): Many candidates correctly described some characteristics of a monopoly.

4(b)(ii): Many candidates explained disadvantages for the UK government of an increase in unemployment.

4(e): Many candidates accurately described some of the economic powers devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

5(a)(i) and (ii): Most candidates demonstrated strong knowledge when describing the benefits of global trade to consumers and firms.

5(e): Many candidates accurately described at least one role of the World Bank.

Assignment

Introduction

Most candidates provided a suitable purpose including more detail than their title. Most candidates also provided some appropriate background information, including a piece of relevant data.

Research

Most candidates included three clear explanations why their research sources were suitable.

Application and understanding

Most candidates applied appropriate theoretical points to their chosen topic. Most candidates also applied their theory to at least two points of view, therefore allowing them to access a high mark for this section.

Structure

Most candidates used the correct headings, font size and line spacing.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper

1(a): Most candidates missed this mark as they did not define productivity. Many candidates were not precise enough with their definition, or they focused on improving productivity rather than defining the concept itself.

1(e): Some candidates missed marks because they gave methods of improving geographical mobility rather than occupational mobility.

2(e): Some candidates did not gain marks as they described factors related to the level of price elasticity of demand, instead of explaining these factors and relating them to the level of responsiveness of demand to a change in price.

3(c): Many candidates did not gain marks as they did not accurately describe the way the price mechanism allocates scarce resources.

4(b)(i): Some candidates missed marks as their description of the Claimant Count lacked precision, or they mixed up the Claimant Count with the Labour Force Survey.

4(d): Some candidates did not gain marks as their answers related to a positive multiplier effect, rather than a negative multiplier effect.

5(c): Many candidates missed marks as their descriptions of components of the current account lacked the precision required or they described other aspects of the UK Balance of Payments.

Assignment

Analysis and evaluation

Some candidates missed marks because they provided research findings that were theoretical in nature. They used their research findings to either back up or contradict the applied theoretical points made in the previous section, and it's not possible to prove or disprove applied theory with further theoretical findings.

Some candidates did not gain marks as their evaluation repeated word-for-word points they had made in the 'application and understanding' section.

A few candidates missed marks as they did not clearly present their research findings. This made it difficult for markers to evaluate if their analysis was correct.

Conclusions/recommendations

Some candidates missed marks as they provided new information in their conclusions.

Some candidates did not gain marks as they directly repeated points made earlier in their assignments, rather than gathering several points and bringing them together to form a conclusion.

Preparing candidates for assessment

You can use the materials on the [Understanding Standards](#) website to help you prepare candidates.

Question paper

You should use the updated specimen question paper (70 marks, reduced from 90 marks) to show candidates the format of the revised exam.

Encourage candidates to develop their knowledge of precise definitions and understanding of core topics and concepts, such as:

- productivity
- the Claimant Count
- components of the UK Balance of Payments

Make sure you continue to cover the full course content with candidates, and they understand that the exam can include any topic listed in the course specification, even if the topic has not appeared in a question paper for several years.

You should advise candidates to answer all questions by addressing the command word used, for example:

- ‘Draw’ only requires the fully labelled diagram.
- ‘Distinguish’ requires a difference related to each of the two factors given in the question to gain each mark.

Development marks are available for many questions, so you should encourage candidates to give additional relevant details in their answers to gain these marks.

Assignment

Title and introduction

You should encourage candidates to select a suitable current issue which will allow them to gather enough research findings to gain the analysis and evaluation marks. Candidates should make the title of their assignment a question that they go on to

answer throughout the report. Choosing a suitable title is extremely important, as overly narrow or overly detailed titles can cause candidates problems.

Candidates should avoid restrictive titles, such as the impacts of a global issue on one economy, as they could stray from investigating this one narrow subject and miss marks. Candidates can complete excellent assignments using these titles, but they must stay on topic throughout.

Encourage candidates to select a title that allows them to expand and gain the 'purpose' mark in the introduction. Using a long and detailed title question, for example one that includes 'the impacts on individuals, firms and the government', can make it difficult to gain the 'purpose' mark, as their purpose is a word for word repeat of their title.

Remind candidates to keep their introduction section brief and save their word allocation for later sections.

Research

Make sure candidates focus on explaining the value of each research source, rather than only providing the information found in the source. They should use the chosen value once, for example 'up to date', as they do not gain marks for repeating.

Application and understanding

When writing their assignments, candidates might find sub-headings useful (for example 'Impacts on individuals'). However, you should encourage candidates to remove them before submitting their final assignment, as this prevents candidates putting their theoretical points under the wrong sub-heading and missing marks.

Analysis and evaluation

The 'application and understanding' and 'analysis and evaluation' sections directly relate to each other, and candidates should consider this when deciding what to include in each section. They should make sure each finding connects to an applied theoretical point made in the 'application and understanding' section. This allows candidates to either back up or disprove their applied theoretical points.

Conclusions/recommendations

Candidates should make sure each conclusion brings together several points they made earlier in their assignment.

Recommendations can include some new information as, by their nature, candidates should take their application, understanding, analysis and/or evaluation further. They must also make sure that recommendations follow on logically from previous points.