

Course report 2026

Higher Physical Education, 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 didn't perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

For information about the Physical Education — Performance, you should read the verification summary 2025-26 on the [Physical Education](#) page of our website.

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: 12,660

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 13,018

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

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	2,801	21.5	21.5	68
B	4,275	32.8	54.4	58
C	4,148	31.9	86.2	48
D	1,467	11.3	97.5	38
No award	327	2.5	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 largely as expected and reflected the published course specification and assessment standards. It provided appropriate differentiation across the attainment range, with accessible questions allowing candidates to demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding while more demanding questions successfully differentiated higher-attaining candidates.

Feedback from markers and team leaders confirmed that the paper was fair and accessible. Candidates who attempted all questions generally had opportunities to access marks throughout the assessment. As in previous years, some candidates left questions incomplete or unanswered throughout the paper.

Evidence gathered through item analysis confirmed that many candidates did not differentiate between performance and performance development contexts which led to the paper being more demanding than intended. We therefore adjusted the grade boundaries.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper

Most candidates demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding when responding to questions requiring description and identification. Candidates generally recognised key concepts and were able to apply their knowledge to familiar performance contexts.

Most candidates successfully identified strengths and development needs from performance scenarios and selected appropriate approaches to support performance development. Where responses required straightforward application of course content, candidates generally accessed marks consistently.

Many candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of approaches used to develop performance and identified appropriate methods for improving performance across physical, mental, emotional and social factors. Candidates generally responded well where questions required knowledge and understanding rather than extended analysis or evaluation.

Candidates who addressed the context of the question and supported their responses with relevant examples generally performed well throughout the assessment.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper

Questions requiring analysis and evaluation continued to present the greatest level of challenge. Many candidates provided descriptive responses where analysis or evaluation was required. As a result, responses often lacked the depth needed to access the higher tariff marks.

Many candidates found it difficult to distinguish between **performance** and **performance development**. This was particularly evident in question 2(a), where

candidates often described the use of an approach during performance rather than explaining how the approach supported performance development.

Questions 2(b), 2(c) and 6(d) required candidates to evaluate approaches or overall performance using evidence from performance contexts. Many candidates identified relevant points but didn't develop these into supported evaluative judgements.

Candidates often stated whether an approach was effective without explaining why or supporting the judgement with relevant evidence.

Some candidates demonstrated knowledge of individual concepts but didn't apply this knowledge to the specific context presented in the question. If candidates adapted their prepared responses rather than addressing the wording of the question, they often missed opportunities to gain marks.

A few candidates left incomplete responses or did not answer questions towards the end of the paper. This was more evident in the final section of the assessment than in earlier questions.

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper

Candidates benefit from experiencing the mandatory course content through practical performance as well as classroom learning. This helps them apply their knowledge more effectively when responding to assessment questions.

You should encourage candidates to distinguish clearly between **performance** and **performance development**. They should understand whether a question requires them to describe performance itself or explain how an approach is used to improve future performance.

You should provide regular opportunities for candidates to practise analytical and evaluative responses. Encourage them to support evaluative judgements with relevant evidence from performance contexts rather than relying on description alone. If a candidate anchors their response within a specific activity they tend to perform better. Without this, their responses are vague and lack relevant clarity.

You should remind candidates to identify and respond to the command word used in each question. For example, analytical and evaluative questions require more than description and should include clear links between evidence, judgement and impact.

You should encourage candidates to apply their knowledge directly to the context provided in each question. Responses that are adapted from prepared material are less likely to address the specific requirements of the assessment.

Finally, you should also encourage candidates to attempt every question. Even where candidates are unsure of an answer, if they apply their relevant course knowledge they may be able to gain marks.