

Course report 2026

National 5 Graphic Communication, SCQF level 5

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: 5,266

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 4,967

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

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	1,845	37.1	37.1	89
B	1,165	23.5	60.6	76
C	873	17.6	78.2	64
D	619	12.5	90.6	51
No award	465	9.4	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 expected. A few questions were less demanding than anticipated; for example, questions 1(a)(i), 5(c) and (e). We adjusted the grade boundaries accordingly.

Assignment

The assignment performed as expected.

Overall, candidates completed tasks 1, 2(a) and 3 to a good standard.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper

- 1(a)(i) Most candidates stated pie chart/graph as being the correct type of graph.
- 1(a)(ii) Many candidates correctly explained why a pie chart/graph was appropriate to communicate the information. Many candidates explained the use of percentages in the pie chart/graph, and some explained that all parts add up to 100%.
- 1(b) Many candidates described ways that the most popular types of music were graphically communicated on the screen. Many candidates described increased size of segments, increased size of numbers and drop shadows pushing the most popular genre segments forward.
- 1(c)(i) Most candidates identified the line graph.
- 1(c)(ii) Most candidates correctly explained why a line graph was appropriate to communicate the information. Many candidates explained a change over a period of time, and some candidates explained a trend.
- 1(d)(i) Many candidates described at least one way depth was used in the layout. Many candidates described the use of drop shadow on the '1002' text and the overlapping elements such as the bubble shapes and black line.
- 1(d)(ii) Many candidates described at least one way unity was used in the layout. Many candidates described the repeated use of colour and font.

1(d)(iii)	Many candidates described at least one way contrast was used in the layout. Many candidates described the reverse text, the black line against the background and the contrasting colours of the bubble shapes.
2(a)(i)	Most candidates explained the purpose of a promotion graphic in terms of advertising a product or service.
2(a)(ii)	Most candidates stated two input devices that could be used to create a digital file of a manual graphic — the most common answers were scanner, tablet and camera.
2(d) and (e)	Most candidates correctly stated the directions related to the site plan.
3(a)	Many candidates described how to model the component using 3D CAD software. Many candidates correctly described the initial sketch with extrusion to create the main body of the component. Most candidates correctly described the cylindrical extrusion on the top and the subtracted feature on the bottom of the component. Some candidates correctly shelled the feature last, removing the top face with the correct wall thickness.
3(b) (i), (ii) and (iii)	Most candidates correctly stated the correct 3D CAD commands.
4(c)	Most candidates explained the benefits of publishing a portfolio online rather than printed. Most candidates explained ease of sharing, ease of editing and reaching a wider audience.
4(d)	Many candidates identified the correct true shape.
4(e)	Most candidates correctly identified the socket.

- 5(a) Most candidates correctly identified the two layouts from the six options available.
- 5(b)(i) Most candidates correctly stated that a drop shadow had been applied to the text.
- 5(c) Many candidates described at least one effect the yellow-orange colour had on the layout.
- 5(d) Most candidates correctly stated the primary, secondary and tertiary colours.
- 5(e) Most candidates correctly identified two features that made the instructions easy to understand. Most candidates referred to the colour coding and shape coding features of the instructions.
- 6(b) Many candidates correctly explained one effect illustration techniques have on 3D models.
- 6(d) Many candidates correctly identified a range of errors in the drawing. Many candidates identified incorrect labelling and a unit applied to a dimension.
- 6(e)(ii) Most candidates stated three pieces of information found in a title block.

Assignment

Task 1

- 1(a) Most candidates successfully modelled the components using 3D CAD and orientated them correctly.
- 1(b) Most candidates orientated the views correctly and created sectional views with the cutting planes in the correct position.
- 1(c) Most candidates produced this view to the correct orientation and with the correct spacing and alignment.

- 1(d) Most candidates produced their drawings using third angle projection and included a suitable title block. Many candidates correctly applied centre lines to their component orthographic views, as instructed.
- 2(a) Most candidates produced a CAD-rendered pictorial illustration of the handheld gaming device using the correct materials.
- 2(b) Most candidates produced clear thumbnails that contained the required information.
- 2(c) Most candidates produced the DTP layout to the correct dimensions.
- 2(c) Most candidates included an image from the data sheets, extended text, the company name and the logo.
- 2(c) Many candidates correctly identified their use of flow text along a path.
- 2(c) Most candidates correctly identified their use of the design elements and principles. A few candidates gave a full explanation of the effect they had on the layout — this was not required.

Task 3

- 3(a) Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of interpreting a pictorial view as orthographic views.
- 3(a) Some candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of applying hidden detail.
- 3(a) Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of applying third angle projection.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Question 1(e) | Many candidates did not refer to the type of alignment between two or more elements of the layout. |
| Question 3(d) | Many candidates did not state the correct type of constraint descriptions. Many candidates did not describe the correct method of constraining surfaces and centre axis. |
| Question 4(b) | Most candidates correctly explained one benefit of digital sketches; however, few explained a second benefit. |
| Question 6(c) | Many candidates extruded or revolved the main cylindrical body and lip; however, many candidates did not remove the internal material (most incorrectly using shell rather than subtraction). Some candidates created a correct 2D sketch of the front feature with subsequent subtraction. |

Assignment

Task 1

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1(b) | A few candidates did not assemble the components correctly. |
| 1(d) | <p>Many candidates did not apply dimensions following British Standards. Broken extension lines and overlapping dimensions were common.</p> <p>Some candidates did not label their drawing views or give the component drawings titles.</p> <p>Some candidates did not apply centre lines to the evidence in task 1(a).</p> |

A few candidates did not apply the correct scale to the drawings.

Task 2

2(c) Many candidates did not produce a high or excellent quality DTP layout.

Task 3

3(a) Many candidates did not produce sketches to good proportions.

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper

You should encourage candidates to:

- Use sketches to support their answers for 3D CAD questions. This helps them to communicate dimensions for 2D sketches and gain marks.
- Annotate questions relating to design elements and principles (DTP) (questions 1(d) and 1(e)). This is a useful strategy for candidates who find it difficult to articulate their answers in written comments alone.
- Provide more detail in their responses on the design principle of alignment. They must describe the type of alignment between two or more separate elements to achieve a mark; for example, left-hand alignment or central alignment.
- Annotate the orthographic drawings in British Standards 'errors' questions. Nearly all candidates who performed well in question 6(d) annotated the drawing to support their answer.
- Articulate the process of constraining components; for example, by describing which faces should be mated together. You can enhance this area of understanding by referencing past paper questions and consolidating knowledge through relevant learning and teaching activities.

Assignment

Task 1

You should ensure that:

- Your templates for producing the production graphics are suitable and set up correctly. The template should have an appropriately sized title block that allows drawings to fit on the sheet.
- When applying dimensions to the component parts, candidates include enough dimensions to allow for manufacture. They should use the data sheets to help them identify whether they have included enough dimensions. If there is a dimension shown on the data sheet, candidates should include it on their production drawings.

- Candidates do not manually override incorrect dimensions in their work to make models appear accurate. If they notice they have not modelled a part correctly when they add dimensions, they should edit the part, not override the dimensions on the production drawings.
- Candidates understand what 'correct orientation of views' means.
- Candidates can use the three National 5 assembly techniques — centre axis, mate and align.
- Candidates develop their knowledge of how to apply British Standards to drawings, as most candidates appear to find it challenging.
- Candidates develop the skill of applying dimensions to their drawings to British Standards. You should help candidates develop the skill of adding symbols and annotations to dimensions; specifically:
 - diameter
 - radius
 - square
 - chamfer
- Candidates develop the skill of applying centre lines to their drawings to British Standards.

Task 2

You must not provide a template for this part of the assessment. Candidates are assessed on producing a promotional graphic to stated dimensions, which they cannot demonstrate if they are given a template. For example, providing candidates with shapes or files preset to the correct size for task 2(c) is not permitted.

You should:

- Advise candidates that they can present a clean copy of the DTP layout and then another copy labelled with the DTP elements, principles and features for task 2(c). This can make it easier for markers to see the quality of DTP without identification lines running across it.
- Support candidates to improve their quality of DTP work. You should encourage them to use the design elements and principles creatively.

Task 3

You must not provide templates for this task.

You should:

- Remind candidates not to use drawing boards and equipment, as doing this means they will receive 0 marks for the task.
- Ensure candidates do not use shape tools if they use digital sketching methods, as this simulates using vector graphics. Similarly, candidates must not use software that creates 3D models and converts them to 2D sketches. This is because the task assesses the skill of sketching.
- Ensure candidates do not use 3D CAD software to CAD model the parts, create orthographic views from the 3D CAD software, then trace these on paper, as this is malpractice.
- Ensure that candidates are prepared to show the elevation of the component parts in the direction indicated on the data sheets.
- Continue to support candidates' understanding of how to apply hidden detail in orthographic sketches.
- Remind candidates that they must sketch all parts of the manual pictorial sketches correctly and to fair proportions. This has improved this year but requires further development.
- Remind candidates that manual renders need to show representations of light, shade, shadow, tone, materials and texture. This has improved this year but requires further development.