

Course report 2026

National 5 Physical Education, 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

For information about the portfolio, 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: 21,327

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 22,057

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

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	11,040	50.1	50.1	87
B	7,056	32.0	82.0	74
C	3,131	14.2	96.2	61
D	717	3.3	99.5	48
No award	113	0.5	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

Portfolio

The portfolio performed as intended. Candidates were able to access the full range of marks.

The assessment was felt to be fair to all candidates with individual assessment items performing as expected. This includes items accessible to C candidates, as well as questions to challenge A candidates. Most candidates understood what was required and were able to attempt the whole portfolio.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Portfolio

Question 2(a) — Candidates explained the challenges faced when gathering data and linking back to the reliability of the data.

Questions 2(b), 2(f) — Most candidates identified methods of data collection and relevant targets.

Question 2(c) — Descriptions were short and concise, allowing most candidates to achieve full marks for the process and the data collection method.

Question 2(e) — Most candidates described a strength and development need for both factors. Candidates used short and concise descriptions of performance.

Question 2(h) — Most candidates correctly described approaches to performance development.

Question 3(c) — Most candidates described the process of monitoring their programme of work.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Portfolio

Question 1 — Candidates were not able to provide responses that included sufficient detail in the context and impact to clearly explain factors impacting performance. For example, candidates did not provide full and clear contexts and impacts in their explanations for factors such as 'motivation' 'concentration', 'etiquette' and 'team dynamics'.

Candidates incorrectly included 'confidence' in mental factor responses.

Question 2(d) — Candidates identified relevant reasons for using an identified method but lacked reasoning in their responses to explain the benefit of these reasons on the performance development process.

Question 2(g) — Candidates identified relevant reasons for setting targets but did not demonstrate clear understanding of the benefits of target setting linked to the identified reason.

Question 3(d) — Many candidates could not evaluate relevant aspects of the Personal Development Programme (PDP). Many candidate responses did not provide enough relevant detail in their judgement of the identified aspect of the PDP. Candidate responses which did correctly make judgements on relevant aspects of the PDP still lacked evaluation through personal value linked to the performance development process rather than an overall performance impact.

Question 3(e) — Many candidates did not make a judgement and determine the value of its impact on performance — they provided an explanation of a factor without evaluation. Some candidates were not able to demonstrate depth or breadth of knowledge of both factors to access the full mark allocation.

Question 3(f) — Many candidates identified current aspects of performance that require development, however their justification of the actions to be used to develop future performance lacked detailed reasoning.

Preparing candidates for assessment

Portfolio

Section 1 — You should encourage candidates to ensure that they include a clear 'Factor', 'Context' and 'Impact' on performance for each response. Candidates must ensure that the impact demonstrates a linked understanding to the context included in the response. Responses with a clear and specific context are more able to provide relevant impacts in performance.

An example of an acceptable response is included below:

'Team dynamics can have a negative impact on your performance. For example, in football if you are playing as a centre back and your midfield has just lost the ball in your half and the opposition is looking to run a quick counterattack and launch the ball in behind for their wingers to run onto, having poor team dynamics with your defensive line can cause confusion with you and the rest of your defensive line. If you are not good at working well together some defenders may step up while others drop off, and no one takes responsibility for marking the opposition winger making a run in behind. The impact of this is that your team becomes disorganised during the counterattacking moment, making it easier for the opposition to exploit the space in behind.'

'Confidence' is an emotional factor and candidates will not gain marks if they use 'confidence' as a mental factor.

Question 2(d) — Candidates should ensure that they provide a reason why the method was used and an explanation of its benefits. Candidates that give examples from the method will demonstrate their knowledge and reasoning well. Candidates should also be aware that reasoning around reliability and validity must have a 'so what?' to ensure knowledge is not repeated from Question 2(a).

Candidates should be aware that 'identifying strengths and development needs' also requires further impact linked to the performance development process.

Example of an acceptable response:

'Another reason I selected the bleep test as a method of gathering data was because it highlighted my strengths and weaknesses. If my weaknesses were clearly highlighted in the results of the test, it meant I knew what I needed to work on. This was good because it meant I could plan and focus my training sessions on these weaknesses, meaning I was using my training time valuably.'

Question 2(e) — Candidates must describe their strengths and development needs in their own current performance. Quoting statistics or information from data collection to identify a strength or development need will not achieve marks. Similarly, describing improvement that could be made to a development need will not achieve marks.

You should make sure that confidence is no longer described in performance as a mental factor, for example if you use a mental toughness questionnaire.

Question 2(f) — You should advise candidates it is good practice to link targets to identified development needs in question 2(e).

Question 2(g) — Candidates should ensure that they clearly explain the positive impacts of setting targets when creating a PDP.

Example of an acceptable response:

'It is important to set targets as it is a baseline to measure progress. This is because I can then go back and monitor my performance and compare to the target to see if my training is effective. If not, I can change my personal development plan to something that works.'

Question 2(i) — A candidate's justification must give a decision, explanation and personal reasoning. Decisions may come from any area of the PDP other than the justification of approaches. Personal reasoning is demonstrated by acknowledgement of how the decision made will benefit their own performance development during the PDP.

Example of an acceptable response:

‘Another decision I made when planning my training was the amount of different approaches I used. I chose to use multiple different approaches. This helped me enjoy the session more and become more motivated as I was not getting bored and fed up of repeatedly doing the same approach to develop. This was good because it meant I didn’t lose focus the whole session and was putting my time to good use.’

Question 3(d) — Candidates must identify an aspect from their Personal Development Programme (PDP), provide a positive or negative judgement, evidence to support that judgement, and then a personal value linked back to the PDP. The value must link back to the impact on the PDP or training process and not performance in a game or performance situation.

Example of an acceptable response:

‘One reason my training was ineffective was because I chose not to do a warm up. Not doing the correct muscle activation I needed to then led me to pull a muscle when I started training as I was not warmed up correctly. This was not good because it then meant I could not complete my training programme and it set me back 6 weeks.’

Question 3(e) — Candidates must evaluate their performance after the PDP has taken place. Candidates should place a positive or negative value in relation to the factors and make a judgement on the impact on performance. Candidates must show that they understand that this is the end impact of the performance development process. If candidates evaluate using specific performance examples they will gain more marks. The majority of candidates that gained high marks in this question evaluated two different aspects of performance for each factor.

Example of an acceptable response:

‘My physical weakness is now my speed. I can tell this because in a game, when there is a loose ball in the middle of the court, me and my opponent raced to get it and she beat me there. This is not good because as a result my opponent gained possession for their team which allowed them to have a quick counter attack.’

Candidates can access 2 marks for evaluating the impact of one aspect of performance in each factor. This is demonstrated in the example answers in the coursework marking instructions. The portfolio assessment task is available on the [Physical Education subject page](#).

Question 3(f) — Candidates must state a current performance development focus; the action they will take to improve in this area; and give personal reasoning as to why they will take this action. Candidates may write about any factor but responses must be related to their chosen portfolio activity.

Candidates must ensure that their reasoning gives a detailed, positive justification of the action taken, for example why this action will ensure improvement in performance or exemplify a clearly linked performance development impact, not simply that performance in the identified area will improve.

Example of an acceptable response:

'Looking at my current performance in volleyball I am happy with how much my dig has improved. I am going to continue doing the feeder drill to maintain my accuracy and form when performing my dig. This means that in a game when I need to use my dig I can successfully dig it up to the setter so they can set me up to spike the ball gaining us a point.'