



Common questions about National 3 and National 4 Business and National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Business Management

Contents

Unit assessment — National 3, National 4 and freestanding units	2
Coursework	4
Conditions of assessment for coursework	9
Question papers	11
General.....	12

Unit assessment — National 3, National 4 and freestanding units

If a candidate does not pass one part of a unit assessment, does the whole unit need to be re-assessed?

No. You only need to re-assess the specific assessment standard or outcome.

At [National 4](#), [National 5](#) and [Higher](#) there are thresholds defining the number of assessment standards required to pass each unit. You can find details of the thresholds in each unit specification on SQA's website.

Is oral questioning acceptable for re-assessment?

Yes, if appropriate, but you must document this for verification purposes.

There are no marks allocated in the unit assessment support packs. Can centres apply marks for their own use?

Yes. You can apply marks for assessment purposes; however, you must make sure that candidates meet the minimum number of assessment standards for each unit. During verification, we do not consider marks.

Can candidates work through the tasks in the assessment support packs over a period of time, rather than completing them during a single assessment?

Yes.

Can I assess the units under open-book conditions?

Yes. You can assess the units under open-book or closed-book conditions — this is a decision for individual centres.

If a candidate achieves the National 4 units but does not complete the added value unit, can they achieve the National 3 course?

Yes, as there is a hierarchy in place, however, you must ensure you enter your candidate for the National 3 course.

Can candidates use the National 5 assignment unchanged as evidence for the National 4 added value unit?

No. Candidates can use the National 5 assignment to meet some of the evidence requirements of the National 4 added value unit but, as they have different assessment standards, you can't directly substitute one for the other. You could include relevant parts of the assignment towards the added value unit, but you must ensure that all assessment standards are met.

Coursework

If a candidate changes level, can they submit their Higher assignment for National 5, without changing it?

No. The Higher assignment is based on the Higher course content and has its own marking criteria.

Candidates could use their initial research for the Higher assignment as the basis for the National 5 assignment, however the differences between the two levels must be considered. Some of the differences include the word count, the assignment layout and the topic chosen in relation to the course content.

If a candidate is resitting the National 5 or Higher course, can they resubmit an assignment marked by SQA in a previous session?

No. They must achieve all components of the course assessment (question paper and assignment) in the same session. For the assignment, it may be possible for a candidate to use their previous research material; however, in all cases they must submit a new assignment.

What criteria should candidates follow when choosing an organisation for the assignment?

Candidates can base their National 5 or Higher assignment on any size and type of organisation, but should make sure they choose a business and a topic that they are able to research in the appropriate depth.

For National 5, we recommend candidates research a small to medium sized business, and for Higher we recommend a large business.

Do candidates need to carry out both primary and secondary research for the assignment or project?

For the National 5 and Higher assignment, research can be primary or secondary (or both), however, finding the right amount of relevant information can sometimes be a challenge. For example, small businesses (particularly those without a website) may not provide sufficient information, while large organisations often provide overwhelming amounts of information.

For the Higher assignment, information gathered from secondary sources should be enough to complete a report successfully, therefore primary research would not be required.

For the Advanced Higher project, we discourage primary research as it can be difficult to gather the required volume of research findings (a minimum of 100 responses to a questionnaire or survey).

Can candidates select the same topic and/or business as others in their class?

Yes. There is no restriction, but they must complete their own research and produce their own report.

In the first section in the assignment, how much detail is required?

For National 5 (Background information), candidates must provide:

- the name of the organisation
- the purpose of the assignment
- sufficient background information to ensure that the reader understands what the business does

For Higher (Introduction), candidates must clearly state:

- the name of the organisation
- the purpose of the assignment
- the main activity of the organisation

In the assignment ‘research’ section, can candidates gain marks for using the same value for different sources?

Yes. They can gain marks for using the same value (for example **bias**) for different sources **only if** they give different explanations for each source. For example:

- ‘The newspaper may be **biased** because the journalist may have their own political opinions which influence the information unfairly.’ (1 mark)
- ‘The company website may be **biased** because it omits any negative information and markets the company in a positive light.’ (1 mark)

In the assignment ‘research’ section, can sources be internal or external, as well as primary or secondary?

Yes. Sources can be any combination of internal, external, primary or secondary.

Can candidates present the research section in their assignment in a table format?

Yes. They can present their information in any format (including tables), as long as the content is sufficient.

Can coursework be submitted to SQA with graphs and charts in colour?

SQA scans coursework in black and white, ready for marking. To ensure the detail is clear and legible after scanning, candidates should print in black and white (grayscale).

What is the difference between an analysis point and a conclusion in the National 5 assignment?

An analysis point is a statement about the meaning of a finding.

A conclusion is a statement that gives a synopsis of a point (or several linked points).

What is needed to make a conclusion in Higher and Advanced Higher coursework?

To gain a conclusion mark, candidates must pull two or more points together from the 'Analysis and evaluation' section and form a holistic comment.

Do candidates have to include both conclusions and recommendations?

No. Candidates can include any combination of conclusions and/or recommendations. However, they might find it difficult to gain full marks if they give only conclusions, or only recommendations.

Are candidates able to provide their own opinions in the conclusions and recommendations section of the assignment?

Yes. If a candidate states their opinion and goes on to develop it, this can form part of their recommendations or conclusions.

Can candidates use an analytical tool in the Higher assignment?

Yes. Candidates can use an analytical tool to aid their research. Reference to the analytical tool should be included in the appendix only. No marks are awarded for the use of an analytical tool.

Conditions of assessment for coursework

What is the maximum length of the assignment or project?

Excluding references and appendices, the final report should be **no longer than**:

- National 5 — 1,300 words
- Higher — 2,000 words
- Advanced Higher — 2,500 to 3,500 words

The actual word count must be added to the candidate details flyleaf that is submitted along with their assignment or project. If the word count exceeds the maximum by more than 10%, a penalty is applied.

The number of pages of appendices should be **no more than**:

- National 5 — two pages
- Higher — four pages
- Advanced Higher — four pages, excluding the bibliography

How long do candidates have to complete the assignment?

Candidates should be able to complete the assignment in a notional 5 hours for National 5, and a notional 8 hours for Higher. This includes time for secondary research and producing the report. Candidates who choose to carry out field research may need additional time to complete their research.

We recommend that candidates produce their report over time, as there are no longer discrete research and write-up phases. This means that they can complete the initial stages of the report outwith the classroom.

Do candidates need to use the SQA assignment template or project template?

Yes. We scan National 5 and Higher assignments and Advanced Higher projects so we can electronically mark them. To ensure complete accuracy in the scanning process, candidates **must** use the template when submitting their assignment or project.

You can find the templates, and more detailed guidance for submitting assignments or projects on the relevant subject level page, under the 'Coursework' tab on the [Business Management pages](#) on SQA's website.

Do candidates need to use the SQA assignment notes document when completing their assignment?

No. It is not mandatory, however, the assignment notes document gives candidates a structure to help them plan and complete their assignment, so that they are less likely to miss anything out.

Under what assessment conditions do candidates complete the assignment report?

We recommend that candidates complete their final report within the learning and teaching setting, as this helps ensure that the work presented is their own.

You must put in place ways to authenticate candidate evidence and/or research that is not completed within the learning and teaching setting.

You can find further information regarding coursework conditions in the [Guidance on conditions of assessment for coursework](#) on SQA's website.

Question papers

In ‘compare’ or ‘distinguish’ questions, are candidates penalised for not using link words such as ‘whereas’ or ‘both’?

No, but using these terms may help to clarify their answers.

Is it essential that candidates mention the stimulus material in all their answers at National 5 and Higher?

No, only in questions where we specifically ask candidates to refer to the text.

In the Higher question paper, do candidates need to calculate ratios?

No.

Would candidates sitting a National 5 examination be asked to draw an inventory control diagram?

No, we cover this in Higher Business Management.

Is the Higher Specimen Question Paper (SQP) going to be updated following the changes made to the course specification in May 2024?

No, all questions apart from question 1(g) are still relevant to the course specification, so there are no plans to update the SQP at this stage.

General

Where can I find information about course content for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher?

You can find this is in the course specifications (including appendix: course support notes) — these are available on the [Business Management pages](#) on SQA’s website.

Course specifications were updated and published on the subject and level webpages in May 2024. In October 2024 we published audio presentations that highlight what content has been updated. You can find these on the subject and level webpages under the ‘Understanding standards’ tab.

In the National 5 Business Management Course Specification, some areas of content within topics are listed as ‘ie’ (that is) and some are listed as ‘eg’ (for example) — is there a difference?

Yes. When we use ‘ie’ in a list, the list is definitive. We will only ask questions on items in the list. For example, ‘types of training’ questions would only ever cover ‘induction, on the job, and off the job’.

When we use ‘eg’ in a list, the list is not definitive. You may wish to discuss other examples in the classroom, however, questions would only be asked about items in the list. Candidates are awarded marks for responses that are relevant to the question asked. For example, for a question on ‘Sources of finance’, acceptable responses could include sources that are not in the list noted in the course specification.

The National 5 Business Management Course Specification refers to a simple business plan. What information could this contain?

A simple business plan could include the company name, the product or service, the target market, the competitors, the marketing and pricing strategy, and sources of finance.

The National 5 Business Management Course Specification refers to a simple contract of employment. What information could this contain?

A simple contract of employment could include the name of the employer, employee and the job title, the place of work, the hours of work, the days of work, the rate of pay, when wage or salary is paid, any additional financial benefits (for example overtime rates, bonuses), holiday entitlement, probationary period, termination process, and disciplinary and grievance procedures.

What are examples of economic policies at Higher?

Current examples of economic policies could be holding inflation at 2%, setting interest rates, setting the level of personal and business taxation, creating growth by building infrastructure (such as HS2, dualling the A9 or A96).

What are examples of competition policies at Higher?

Current examples of competition policies could be privatising or re-nationalising industries, preventing monopolies forming, increasing or reducing trade barriers, supporting the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to investigate anti-competitive behaviour by firms.

What are examples of current technological development at Advanced Higher?

Technological development is about **using** emerging and developing technologies, for example trialling or using driverless cars, delivery by drones, or using AI to help manage functional areas of organisations.

Technological development is not about what technology the organisation sells or its product portfolio, such as Amazon's Echo Dot or Tesla's electric vehicle range.

What other resources are available?

As part of our Understanding Standards programme, we provide a range of online resources to help you understand what is required in the course assessments for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. You can find [Business Management resources](#) on our Understanding Standards website.

For National 3 and National 4 Business, these are available on [SQA's secure website](#).

You will find general questions and answers about National Qualifications on our website at www.sqa.org.uk/faq.