



Higher  
Coursework  
Assessment Task



# Higher Economics

## Assignment

### Assessment task

This document provides information for teachers and lecturers about the coursework component of this course in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed. It **must** be read in conjunction with the course specification.

**Valid from session 2025–2026 and until further notice.**

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# Introduction

This document contains marking instructions and instructions for candidates for the Higher Economics assignment. You must read it in conjunction with the course specification.

This assignment is worth 30 marks. This is 25% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

This is one of two course assessment components. The other component is a question paper.

# Marking instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following marking instructions for the Higher Economics assignment are addressed to the marker. They will also be helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

Candidates' evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking.

## General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- a Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- b If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- c There is a penalty for exceeding the word count of 2,000 words by more than 10%. Do not include appendices in this count.
- d The assignment has a total mark allocation of 30 marks, broken down into sections as follows:

### **Introduction (2 marks)**

Award marks for describing the purpose of the report and for providing relevant background information on the chosen topic or issue.

### **Research (3 marks)**

Award marks for explaining the suitability of research sources used.

### **Application and understanding (9 marks)**

Award marks for applying relevant theory to viewpoints and developing them.

### **Analysis and evaluation (10 marks)**

Award marks for making analytical and/or evaluative comments based on sourced findings.

### **Conclusions/recommendations (5 marks)**

Award marks for drawing justified conclusions and/or making justified recommendations, based on the 'application and understanding' and/or the 'analysis and evaluation' section(s).

### **Structure (1 mark)**

Award a mark for using appropriate headings, fonts and sizes.

## Marking overview

|  |   |   |  |  |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Section 1: introduction                  |   | <b>2 marks</b>  | <b>1 mark</b>  | <b>0 marks</b>   |
|  |   | Purpose of the report clearly described<br><br>Relevant background information provided | Purpose of the report clearly described<br><b>or</b><br>Relevant background information provided | Purpose of the report unclear or not described<br><br>No background information provided |
| Section 2: research                      | <b>3 marks</b>  | <b>2 marks</b>  | <b>1 mark</b>  | <b>0 marks</b>   |
|  | Three explanations of suitability provided from at least two research sources | Two explanations of suitability provided from research source(s)                        | One explanation of suitability provided from a research source                                   | No explanations of suitability provided  |
| Section 3: application and understanding |   | <b>6-9 marks</b>  | <b>1-5 marks</b>   | <b>0 marks</b>   |
|  |   | Relevant theory applied to at least two viewpoints                                      | Relevant theory applied to only one viewpoint  | No relevant theory applied   |
| Section 4: analysis and evaluation       |   | <b>7-10 marks</b>   | <b>1-6 marks</b>   | <b>0 marks</b>   |
|  |   | Analytical and/or evaluative comments made relating to at least two findings            | Analytical and/or evaluative comments made relating to at least one finding                      | No analytical or evaluative comments made  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Section 5: conclusions/<br/>recommendations</b> |  | <b>4-5 marks</b>   | <b>1-3 marks</b>   | <b>0 marks</b>   |
|  |  | At least two justified conclusions drawn and/or justified recommendations made<br><br>Based on the ‘application and understanding’ and/or ‘analysis and evaluation’ section(s) of the report | At least one justified conclusion drawn and/or justified recommendation made<br><br>Based on the ‘application and understanding’ and/or ‘analysis and evaluation’ section(s) of the report | No justified conclusions drawn or justified recommendations made<br><br>Justified conclusions drawn and/or justified recommendations made, but unrelated to points made in ‘application and understanding’ and/or the ‘analysis and evaluation’ section(s) of the report |
| <b>Section 6:<br/>structure</b>                    |  |  | <b>1 mark</b>  | <b>0 marks</b>   |
|  |  |  | Appropriate headings, fonts and sizes used   | No, or inappropriate, headings, fonts and sizes used   |

## Detailed marking instructions

| Section                 | Marking instructions   | Max mark | Additional guidance   |
|-------------------------|--|----------|---|
| Section 1: introduction | <p>Award 1 mark for clearly describing the purpose of the report.</p> <p>Award 1 mark for providing relevant background information. This must include a piece of relevant data.</p> | 2        | <p>Candidates clearly describe the <b>purpose</b> of the report, this needs to be more than a repeat of the title, for example:</p> <p><b>The impact on the UK economy of continuing low interest rates.</b></p> <p><i>This report will examine the impact on the UK economy of continuing low interest rates. It will outline the effects on the government, firms and individuals.</i><br/>(1 mark)</p> <p>They provide <b>background information</b> on the topic or issue, for example:</p> <p><i>In 20xx interest rates in the UK were lowered to x%.</i><br/>(1 mark)</p> |

| Section                    | Marking instructions   | Max mark | Additional guidance  |
|----------------------------|--|----------|--|
| <b>Section 2: research</b> | <p>Award <b>1 mark</b> for each explanation of the suitability of a research source.</p> <p>Candidates must explain the suitability of at least <b>two</b> research sources to gain full marks.</p> <p>If they explain the suitability of only <b>one</b> source, award a maximum of 2 marks.</p> <p>Do not award marks for flipped or repeated explanations of different sources.</p> | <b>3</b> | <p>When explaining the suitability of a research source, candidates could focus on whether the source is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ up to date</li> <li>◆ accurate</li> <li>◆ complete</li> <li>◆ cost-effective</li> <li>◆ concise</li> <li>◆ objective/unbiased</li> </ul> <p>Do not award marks for the use of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ relevant</li> <li>◆ valid</li> </ul> <p>They give an <b>explanation of the suitability</b>, for example:</p> <p><i>I used the Guardian newspaper website. The research source was cost-effective because I accessed it online, so I did not have to pay to obtain it.</i><br/> <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p><i>I used the BBC website because it is subject to a Royal Charter meaning it must be objective.</i><br/> <b>(1 mark)</b></p> |

| Section  | Marking instructions  | Max mark        | Additional guidance   |
|--|---|-----------------|---|
| <p><b>Section 3: application and understanding</b></p> | <p>Award <b>1 mark</b> for applying relevant theory to a viewpoint.</p> <p>Award <b>1 mark</b> for developing theory applied to a viewpoint.</p> <p>Do not award development marks for definitions.</p> <p>There must be viewpoints from at least two different perspectives to gain full marks.</p> <p>If they apply theory to only one viewpoint, award a maximum of 5 marks.</p> | <p><b>9</b></p> | <p>Candidates must look at the topic or issue from at least two viewpoints, for example from the perspective of the government, individuals and/or firms (subheadings are not required).</p> <p>They must clearly apply relevant economic theory to the topic or issue.</p> <p>At this stage of the report, there is no need for candidates to refer to research and/or findings.</p> <p>They <b>apply theory</b> to viewpoints and/or <b>develop theory</b> applied to viewpoints, for example:</p> <p><i>Individuals who save will receive a lower return on their savings when interest rates are falling.</i><br/> <b>(1 mark for applying theory to a viewpoint)</b></p> <p><i>This may mean individuals have to wait longer to make big ticket purchases, such as a car.</i><br/> <b>(1 mark for developing theory applied to viewpoint)</b></p> <p>Candidates should ensure any development points made in this section are not repeated in analysis and evaluation.</p> |

| Section  | Marking instructions  | Max mark         | Additional guidance  |
|--|---|------------------|--|
| <p><b>Section 4: analysis and evaluation</b></p> | <p>Award <b>1 mark</b> for each point of relevant analysis, evaluation and/or development, based on findings.</p> <p>Do not award marks for analysis and/or evaluation of a finding, if not sourced. The source of each finding must be in the report or as an appendix.</p> <p>Candidates should analyse and/or evaluate at least two relevant findings to gain full marks.</p> <p>If only one finding is analysed and/or evaluated, award a maximum of 6 marks.</p> | <p><b>10</b></p> | <p>Candidates must make their analytical and evaluative points from research, which should include quotes, statistics, displays, graphs and charts. Analysis and evaluative points must relate to the theory made in the ‘application and understanding’ section. Evaluative points based on findings must support or challenge the theory stated in application and understanding.</p> <p>Candidates should ensure their analytical points in this section do not repeat their development points in application and understanding.</p> <p>They make points of <b>analysis</b> and/or <b>evaluation</b>, for example:<br/> <i>A BBC article (appendix 1) stated that ‘more than 70% of advisers say their clients are now investing in stocks and shares due to low bank interest rates’. This supports the theory that saving is less attractive as the interest payments on money stored in the bank is falling.</i><br/> <b>(1 evaluation mark)</b></p> <p><i>This increase in investment for public limited companies means firms may be able to expand and invest in R&amp;D.</i><br/> <b>(1 analysis mark)</b></p> <p><i>This investment could increase productivity in the economy resulting in higher GDP. (1 analysis mark)</i></p> <p>Evaluation based on findings which are theoretical will not attract marks; for example, ‘I found in Source 1, Economics Help, that low interest rates give a lower return to savers. This supports the theory that savers get a lower return on their savings when interest rates are low.’</p> |

| Section   | Marking instructions   | Max mark        | Additional guidance   |
|---|--|-----------------|---|
| <p><b>Section 5: conclusions/ recommendations</b></p> | <p>Award <b>1 mark</b> for each justified conclusion, based on the ‘application and understanding’ and/or the ‘analysis and evaluation’ section(s) in the report.</p> <p>Award <b>1 mark</b> for each justified recommendation, based on the ‘application and understanding’ and/or the ‘analysis and evaluation’ section(s) in the report.</p> <p>Award <b>1 mark</b> for each development of a conclusion or recommendation.</p> <p>Award a maximum of <b>2 development marks</b> for any one conclusion or recommendation.</p> <p>Candidates must not include new information in this section.</p> <p>Do not award marks for conclusions, if the information is an unsummarised repeat of what is in the ‘application and understanding’ and/or the ‘analysis and evaluation’ section(s) of the report.</p> | <p><b>5</b></p> | <p>Candidates draw <b>justified conclusions</b>. This should include more than one impact for the factor, for example:</p> <p><i>I conclude that inflation has an overall negative impact on individuals because I found that inflation reduces their spending power, particularly for those on fixed incomes, and my evidence showed that average wage increases have not matched the level of price rises in the economy.</i><br/><b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>They make <b>justified recommendations</b>, for example:</p> <p><i>I recommend that the UK government should not increase its level of corporation tax. My evidence showed that such an increase could deter multinationals from locating in the UK.</i><br/><b>(1 mark)</b></p> |
| <p><b>Section 6: structure</b></p>                    | <p>Award <b>1 mark</b> for using appropriate headings, fonts and sizes in the report.</p>  | <p><b>1</b></p> |   |

# Instructions for candidates

This assessment applies to the assignment for Higher Economics.

This assignment is worth 30 marks. This is 25% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

It assesses the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ selecting an appropriate and current economic topic/issue
- ◆ collecting information/evidence relating to the context of the assignment, from a range of sources
- ◆ applying relevant economic concepts and theories to the context of the assignment
- ◆ analysing and evaluating economic data/information
- ◆ drawing/making valid justified conclusions and/or recommendations based on economic data, concepts and evidence
- ◆ communicating economic reasoning and conclusions and/or recommendations
- ◆ producing an economics report relating to the context of the assignment

Marks for the assignment are as follows:

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| ◆ introduction                               | 2 marks  |
| ◆ research                                   | 3 marks  |
| ◆ application of knowledge and understanding | 9 marks  |
| ◆ analysis and evaluation                    | 10 marks |
| ◆ conclusions/recommendations                | 5 marks  |
| ◆ structure                                  | 1 mark   |

Your teacher or lecturer will let you know if there are any specific conditions for doing this assessment.

In this assessment, you have to carry out research, analyse information and write a report on a current economic topic or issue of your choice, including economic theory.

Your economics report should be no longer than **2,000 words** (excluding appendices) and should follow the section headings above. If your word count exceeds the maximum by more than 10%, a penalty is applied.

You can include a maximum of four A4-sized pages of appendices; these **do not** count towards the 2,000 words.

You must give brief details of each research source. You can do this in the body of your report or as an appendix at the end.

Although you have a notional 8 hours in class to research and write up your report, you may carry out field research outwith the classroom in addition to this.

# Preparing your report

Use the following instructions to prepare your report. The tick boxes can help ensure you complete each section.

You may wish to use the ‘Higher Economics – assignment notes’ to help you prepare your report, but this is optional. There is an example at the end of this document and on SQA’s website under the ‘Coursework’ tab.

## Section 1: introduction (2 marks)

- ◆ Describe the purpose of your report.
- ◆ Provide relevant background information on your topic or issue.

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
|                                 | ✓ |
| Purpose                         |   |
| Relevant background information |   |

## Section 2: research (3 marks)

- ◆ Explain the suitability of research sources used.

You can use as many sources of information in your report as you like, but you only need to provide three explanations about the suitability of the source.

|          |                       |   |
|----------|-----------------------|---|
|          |                       | ✓ |
| Source 1 | Explained suitability |   |
| Source 2 | Explained suitability |   |
| Source 3 | Explained suitability |   |

Sources may include, for example websites, newspapers, magazines, books, statistics, graphs, charts, interviews, surveys, questionnaires, documentaries, podcasts, visiting speakers, and field trips.

For any source used, you must give brief details of each source in the body of your report or as an appendix, for example URL, book title.

If you use fewer than three sources, you must still provide three explanations. For example, if you use only two sources, you must provide two explanations about the suitability of one of them.

|          |                       |   |                       |   |
|----------|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
|          |                       | ✓ |                       | ✓ |
| Source 1 | Explained suitability |   | Explained suitability |   |
| Source 2 | Explained suitability |   |                       |   |

**Section 3: application and understanding (9 marks)**

- ◆ Apply relevant theory to at least two viewpoints.
- ◆ Clearly develop any theory applied to a viewpoint.

Your viewpoints and/or points of theory must link to the purpose of your report. Your two viewpoints can, for example be from the perspective of the government, individuals and/or firms.

|   | How many in your report? |
|---|--------------------------|
| Theory applied to viewpoints                |                          |
| Development of theory applied to viewpoints |                          |

**Section 4: analysis and evaluation (10 marks)**

- ◆ Make 10 points of analysis and/or evaluation.
  - State your source, the relevant finding(s) and make point(s) of analysis and/or evaluation for each finding.
  - Your points of analysis and/or evaluation must link to the theory in the ‘application and understanding’ section.
  - You must give brief details of the source of each finding in the body of your report, for example the name of a newspaper or in an appendix, for example the URL.
  - If it is possible to link the information together, you can combine information from different sources to make a stronger analytical point.

|                                   | How many in your report? |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Analysis and/or evaluation points |                          |

## Section 5: conclusions/recommendations (5 marks)

- ◆ Draw conclusions, justifying why you are drawing them.
- ◆ Make recommendations, justifying why you are able to make them.

You must base your conclusions and/or recommendations on points you have already made in the ‘application and understanding’ and/or the ‘analysis and evaluation’ section(s).

You must make five justified conclusions and/or justified recommendations and/or developments of these.

|   | How many in your report? |
|---|--------------------------|
| Justified conclusions                     |                          |
| Developments of justified conclusions     |                          |
| Justified recommendations                 |                          |
| Developments of justified recommendations |                          |

## Section 6: structure (1 mark)

- ◆ Use the headings from sections 1-5 to structure your report.
  - You must use consistent fonts and sizes throughout your report.

|                           | ✓ |
|---------------------------|---|
| Headings, fonts and sizes |   |

You should:

- ◆ insert your report title
- ◆ use 1.5 line spacing
- ◆ use a readable, clear font
- ◆ use a font size of 12
- ◆ number your pages
- ◆ insert your SCN on every page
- ◆ print double sided
- ◆ staple your pages together

## Higher Economics – assignment notes

You can use this to record your research and analysis, and to help you prepare your final report. If you need additional space, you can add more rows to any of the tables.

You can download a copy from SQA’s website under the ‘Coursework’ tab.

### Introduction (2 marks)

|                                 | Notes |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Purpose                         |       |
| Relevant background information |       |

### Research (3 marks)

| Source | Explanation of suitability |
|--------|----------------------------|
|        |                            |
|        |                            |
|        |                            |

### Application and understanding (9 marks)

| Theory applied to viewpoint (minimum two) | Development of theory applied to viewpoint |
|---|--|
|   |  |
|   |  |
|   |  |
|   |  |
|   |  |
|   |  |
|   |  |

**Analysis and evaluation (10 marks)**

| Source | Finding | Analysis and/or evaluation point(s):<br>(for example this shows that ... this means that ... this suggests that ... this leads to ... therefore ... the impact is ...) |
|--------|---------|--|
|        |         |  |
|        |         |  |
|        |         |  |
|        |         |  |
|        |         |  |
|        |         |  |
|        |         |  |
|        |         |  |
|        |         |  |
|        |         |  |

**Conclusions/recommendations (5 marks)**

| Conclusion, recommendation or development | Justification |
|---|---------------|
|   |               |
|   |               |
|   |               |
|   |               |
|   |               |

**Structure (1 mark)**

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
|                           | ✓ |
| Headings, fonts and sizes |   |

**Recommended style**

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
|                      | ✓ |
| Report title         |   |
| 1.5 line spacing     |   |
| Readable, clear font |   |
| Font size 12         |   |
| Pages numbered       |   |
| SCN on each page     |   |
| Print double sided   |   |
| Stapled              |   |

# Administrative information

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## History of changes

| Version | Description of change  | Date           |
|---------|--|----------------|
| 1.1     | Minor amendments made to the 'Instructions for candidates' section.  | September 2019 |
| 1.2     | Minor amendments made to:<br>Section 4 – 'Additional guidance' to highlight 'Analysis and evaluative points <b>must</b> relate to the theory made in the 'Application and understanding' section.<br><br>Section 5 – we have updated the justified conclusion example in 'Additional guidance'.  | August 2023    |
| 1.3     | Minor amendments made to the detailed marking instructions:<br><br>Section 1– Introduction, 'Marking instructions' text added to highlight that data should be included as part of the background information.<br><br>Section 2 – Research, 'Additional guidance' updated to clarify what marks would not be awarded for.<br><br>Section 4 – Analysis and evaluation, 'Additional guidance' amended to remove an example and to clarify the marking approach where a theoretical source has been used.<br><br>Section 5 – Conclusions and recommendations, 'Additional guidance' update relating to justified conclusions.   | August 2024    |
| 1.4     | Amendments made to the detailed marking instructions – additional guidance information column:<br><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Section 1 – Introduction: example title has been added and the introduction text updated.</li><li>◆ Section 2 – Research: last example response updated.</li><li>◆ Section 3 – Application and understanding: new text added and example responses updated.</li><li>◆ Section 4 – Analysis and evaluation: new text added and example responses amended.</li><li>◆ Section 5 – Conclusion and recommendations: example recommendation response amended.</li></ul><br><b>What you need to do differently</b><br>You need to update your teaching notes. | September 2025 |

| Version | Description of change  | Date         |
|---------|--|--------------|
| 1.5     | <p>Minor amendment made to the detailed marking instructions – additional guidance column on page 5.<br/>Section 1 – Introduction: background information example.</p> <p><b>What you need to do differently</b><br/>You need to update your teaching notes.</p> | October 2025 |

Note: you are advised to check SQA’s website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.

## Security and confidentiality

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