



Course report 2022

Subject	Business Management
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	790
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	26.3	Cumulative percentage	26.3	Number of candidates	205	Minimum mark required	76
B	Percentage	23.6	Cumulative percentage	49.9	Number of candidates	190	Minimum mark required	62
C	Percentage	25.1	Cumulative percentage	75.0	Number of candidates	195	Minimum mark required	48
D	Percentage	16.5	Cumulative percentage	91.5	Number of candidates	130	Minimum mark required	34
No award	Percentage	8.5	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	65	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

- ◆ ‘most’ means greater than 70%
- ◆ ‘many’ means 50% to 69%
- ◆ ‘some’ means 25% to 49%
- ◆ ‘a few’ means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of [SQA's website](https://www.sqa.org.uk).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

Section 1 effectively assessed candidates' skills in applying their knowledge to the case study. Although the business model of an oil company was not familiar to most candidates, they were able to extract relevant information from the case study to attempt each question.

Section 2 proved to effectively discriminate between candidates' varying abilities to apply their knowledge. This allowed stronger candidates access to the more difficult marks.

The revision support for learners helped to ensure the accessibility of the question paper. However, overall, the question paper proved demanding for the cohort presented this year. The grade boundaries were adjusted to take account of this.

Project

This component allows candidates to apply higher-order cognitive skills, such as analysis and evaluation, on a topic of their choice from the course specification.

The project proved more challenging than in previous years for some of the candidates. The grade boundaries were adjusted to take account of this.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Section 1

Candidates were able to extract relevant information from the case study to answer each question and almost all candidates attempted every question.

Question 2: The diagram of the force field analysis was generally well prepared by most candidates.

Questions 3: Many candidates were able to detail the impact of the organisation's actions, allowing those candidates to receive development marks.

Question 4: Many candidates demonstrated in-depth knowledge of workforce diversity.

Section 2

Question 8(a): Candidates answered this question very well, with most candidates achieving a high score.

Questions 9(a) and 9(b): Candidates attempted both of these well, with many candidates scoring highly.

Project

Introduction

Most candidates scored highly in this section, stating the aim of their project and then describing why the topic, organisation or industry chosen was appropriate to investigate. Almost all candidates were awarded the purpose and core activity marks.

Analysis and evaluation

Candidates who ensured their points were in keeping with the aim of their project scored highly.

Most candidates provided evidence for their findings and referenced their evidence using footnotes.

Some candidates gained many development marks for this section, especially if their project aim allowed them to detail the impacts on stakeholders as well as the company itself.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusive comments that were deduced from two or more points explored in the analysis and evaluation section scored highly.

Research

Most candidates demonstrated that they had carried out a significant amount of research, and the quality of this overall was high. Most candidates used recent research sources and kept their research relevant to their project's aim.

Structure and referencing

Almost all candidates achieved the mark available for using the exact headings as prescribed in the candidate guidance. Most candidates included a well-structured bibliography that showed the date accessed and the date the source was written.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Section 1

Question 1: Many candidates were unable to link their point to payment and instead produced detailed responses on the generic benefits of reducing carbon emissions.

Question 5: Many candidates were unable to apply their points to the human resource department.

Question 6: Some candidates were unable to link the performance to stakeholders and instead detailed impacts on the organisation itself.

Section 2

Question 7 and 10: Despite most candidates securing the general mark allowance, they were unable to apply the theory of these topics to the requirements of the questions and therefore unable to access all the marks available.

Question 8(b): Most candidates were unable to apply the factors they had learned to contingency leadership and instead simply described them.

Project

Introduction

Some candidates prepared projects on National 5 or Higher Business Management topic areas that did not demonstrate their application of the Advanced Higher syllabus.

Some candidates did not understand the difference between ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR). A few candidates did not answer the aim of their project, so did not score as well as they could have.

Dissolved companies should not be used as those make recommendations irrelevant.

Analysis and evaluation

Some candidates who investigated CSR, ethics or technological developments as their project's aim often digressed into analysing the product portfolio or the marketing mix.

A few candidates who did the technological development topic focused on dated technology, and not the development of this technology and how it impacted the organisation recently.

Many candidates did not produce enough points related to their project's aim to gain all of the marks available in this section.

Conclusions and recommendations

Many candidates simply repeated their analysis and evaluation points without making a conclusive comment based on two or more points explored in the previous section.

Many recommendations were vague, contradictory and weakly based on the candidate's analysis and evaluation. They were therefore not appropriate for Advanced Higher level.

Research

Some candidates used findings that were historical and out of date, so were not credited. However, an allowance was made, for this session only, to accept slightly older sources than the timeframe stipulated in the guidance document.

Structure and referencing

A few candidates were not awarded the mark for terminology. For example, referring to unethical actions of the organisation as CSR.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

We encourage centres to use internal assessments robustly to ensure candidates are of the required standard before being presented for Advanced Higher.

Following Brexit, centres should teach the European Union (EU) topic in the ‘Global business’ section of the course specification as a trading bloc. Like the ASEAN trading bloc topic and the China topic, candidates must be aware of the founding purpose and aims of the EU, recent developments, and the impact of trading with the EU.

The technological development topic in the ‘Current issues’ section of the course specification builds on the technology topics at National 5 and Higher levels. Advanced Higher expands to the ‘development’ of technology and how organisations are currently using it. Centres should encourage candidates to keep abreast of recent developments and issues in this field.

Question paper

Section 1

Candidates should continue the good practice, demonstrated this year, of not copying out huge sections of the case study, but instead pulling out relevant parts. Centres should also continue to encourage candidates to source all their answers to the questions from the given case study and not use general marks. General mark allowances are not a given for each question and candidates must not assume they will be awarded in future.

Candidates’ points must be sufficiently developed for Advanced Higher. For example, ‘improves/damages the organisation’s reputation’ needs to be taken further: candidates must demonstrate an understanding of the impact of this before they can receive marks.

We encourage candidates to use a full page for the force field analysis diagram.

Section 2

Most questions at this level commonly ask candidates to apply their knowledge within the context of the question. This often requires candidates to do more than simply regurgitate theory. For example, question 8(b) required candidates to identify a factor and then explain how this factor influenced the leadership style used by the manager/organisation. Many candidates found this particularly demanding this session, and centres are encouraged to embed robust practice of this throughout the duration of the course.

Labels are often required in a candidate’s answer. Question 10 required candidates to label the analytical techniques. It is good practice at this level to encourage candidates to label points clearly. This is particularly important when producing answers on theories, for example, Belbin, Lewin, Mintzberg.

Candidates can gain additional marks for detailing relevant real-life examples of points they are making in the essay questions and should be encouraged to do so. For example, a few candidates produced particularly knowledgeable answers to question 7 by offering examples

of government support and initiatives from their research and by keeping abreast of government current issues, as per the course specification.

Project

Introduction

Candidates must select only one topic to prepare their project on, and the aim of their project must come directly from the course specification. Once a candidate has finalised their project aim, it should be consistent throughout the project; a few candidates wrote a different aim on their flyleaf compared to their introduction section.

Many candidates stray into marketing when analysing CSR and this should be avoided.

It is important, especially at Advanced Higher, that candidates understand the business model of the organisation they choose. For example, candidates making analytical points about Facebook's 'customers' when they mean 'users', failing to grasp how a digital service provider, such as Facebook, generates its income, or stating a company like Facebook would 'halt or slow manufacturing' when it operates in the service and quaternary sectors can devalue the candidate's analysis.

Analysis and evaluation

It is essential that candidates reference every finding with a footnote at the bottom of the page.

Analytical and evaluative comments must link to the project's aim and should be sufficiently detailed for the Advanced Higher.

Most candidates based their analysis on recent past or present business/industry activity, and this should be strongly encouraged. Candidates who analyse an organisation's activities that are yet to happen risk making recommendations in the wrong section, and these would not receive marks.

Conclusions and recommendations

As National 5 and Higher both assess candidates' ability to make justified recommendations, it is important the recommendations at Advanced Higher are logically drawn from the analysis and evaluation section, sufficiently detailed in terms of a clear course of action, and robustly justified. It is not enough for the candidate to simply repeat 'continue to do X' at this level.

To achieve a conclusion mark, candidates must pull two or more points from the previous section together and form a holistic comment.

Research

Candidates should strictly limit their findings to recent activities (within two to three years).

Centres should discourage candidates from using surveys or questionnaires.

Structure and referencing

The bibliography must contain key features, as demonstrated in the marking instruction, in order to attract the mark available. Referenced sources from websites selling pre-written essays will not be considered and centres should firmly discourage the use of them. Centres should refer to the 'Reasonable assistance' advice within the 'Assessment conditions' section of the Course Specification document when advising candidates on appropriate sourcing.

Terminology should be appropriate for Advanced Higher. For example, 'employees are happy' or 'this makes money' does not reflect the required standard.

This session was the first that required the use of an SQA provided template. Cover pages and contents pages are not required. Candidates are encouraged to print double-sided, and use 1.5 or double-line spacing. Candidates who write beyond the prescribed word count are penalised.

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims 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 is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA 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.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2022 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).