



Course report 2024

National 5 Business Management

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. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2024 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 9928

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 9908

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	4031	Percentage	40.7	Cumulative percentage	40.7	Minimum mark required	87
B	Number of candidates	2352	Percentage	23.7	Cumulative percentage	64.4	Minimum mark required	73
C	Number of candidates	1788	Percentage	18	Cumulative percentage	82.5	Minimum mark required	60
D	Number of candidates	1158	Percentage	11.7	Cumulative percentage	94.2	Minimum mark required	46
No award	Number of candidates	579	Percentage	5.8	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

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 statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper covered a good breadth of content and was accessible to candidates. It mainly performed as expected, however the A grade boundaries were adjusted to take account of the slightly lower level of demand in a few questions.

Assignment

The assignment performed as expected.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

- Question 1(a)(i) Most candidates successfully identified the stakeholders of Ooni.
- Question 1(a)(ii) Most candidates showed sound knowledge of the interest of stakeholders.
- Question 1(f)(i) Many candidates were able to identify the trend in gross profit.
- Question 1(f)(ii) Most candidates showed sound knowledge of actions to prevent a loss.
- Question 2(c)(i) Most candidates correctly identified the working practice.
- Question 4(a) Many candidates showed sound knowledge of partnerships.
- Question 4(b) Candidates performed well in this question, showing sound knowledge of customer service.
- Question 6(a) Most candidates identified the elements of the marketing mix.
- Question 6(c)(i) Most candidates identified methods of distribution; a few candidates identified examples of the methods so did not gain marks.
- Question 7(a)(i) Most candidates could identify the minimum inventory level.
- Question 7(a)(ii) Most candidates could identify the maximum inventory level, although, many candidates could not identify the reorder quantity.

Assignment

The most popular topics were Marketing Mix and Customer Service. Many candidates produced detailed and well-structured assignments that indicated familiarity with marking guidance.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

- Question 1(c) Some candidates found it difficult to describe pricing strategies fully. For example, 'high price is high price' rather than 'high price is higher than competitors'.
- Question 1(d)(i) Many candidates were unable to give a second distinction between quality assurance and quality control. A few candidates did not qualify one side of their distinction.

Question 1(d)(ii)	Many candidates did not outline a quality input, for example 'staff' rather than 'highly trained staff'.
Question 1(e)	Some candidates confused product development with product life cycle.
Question 2(a)(ii)	Some candidates did not outline sectors of economy and only identified.
Question 2(c)(ii)	Some candidates found it difficult to justify working practices. A few candidates only justified for the employees and not for the organisation.
Question 2(d)(i)	Some candidates gave uses of technology in selection process and not recruitment. Some candidates did not to name a type of technology. For example, 'use technology to create a job description' rather than 'use word processing to create a job description'.
Question 3(a)	Many candidates displayed good knowledge of sources of finance. Some candidates, however, did not give enough detail to describe the source.
Question 3(b)	Many candidates showed poor knowledge of breakeven terms.
Question 5(a)	Many candidates found it demanding to explain the costs of training.
Question 7(a)(ii)	Many candidates were able to identify the maximum inventory level. However, only a few were able to identify the reorder quantity.
Question 7(c)	Many candidates found it difficult to justify lead time and credit terms.

Assignment

Background information

Some candidates gave overly long background information which used up unnecessary words from the candidate's overall count. A few candidates did not state their assignment topic.

Research methods and sources

Some candidates only listed the value of information meaning they missed out on marks.

Findings, analysis and interpretation

Most candidates tried to analyse their findings. A few candidates gave findings which were not specific to their topic.

Conclusions and recommendations

Some candidates gave new information in this section that they had not previously mentioned in findings, analysis and interpretation. This could not be credited. Some candidates gave conclusions and recommendations which were not justified or evidenced from report.

Collating and reporting

A few candidates used the wrong headings. A few candidates did not include two graphics.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres should continue to use past papers to ensure that candidates can apply command words accurately. For example, practise is needed with the command word 'outline', as many candidates only 'identified' in this year's question paper.

Candidates should take account of the mark allocation of each question. This helps them give the relevant number of points and/or developments to reach the mark allocation.

Candidates should avoid using the generic terms — for example 'money', 'people', 'affect'. Responses should be more specific, for example sales/profits, customers/shareholders, increase/decrease.

Candidates whose handwriting is difficult to read, should consider submitting word processed scripts. These should be printed in 1.5 or double line spacing for ease of marking. As scripts are scanned it would be useful to print double sided.

Assignment

Centres should continue to use SQA's template provided on the [subject page](#) on SQA's website and ensure that candidates use 1.5 line spacing throughout. Candidates should make the purpose of their report clear in the first section.

Centres should note that the headings must be in full (for example research methods and sources not just research methods) and that there is a slight difference between National 5 and Higher. Candidates should also be reminded to include two graphics in their reports. Graphics can include charts, images, screenshots etc.

Some candidates may find it easier to write their topic as a question — as then they may find it easier to write an overall conclusion by answering the question. Conclusions and recommendations must be clearly linked to a research finding or source from the findings, analysis and interpretation section. No new information should be introduced in the conclusion.

Candidates should be discouraged from including sub-headings in their findings, analysis and interpretation section.

Candidates should not exceed the 1,300 word limit and they must declare the word count accurately on the flyleaf. Appendices do not contribute towards the word count.

Understanding Standards materials have been updated are available on [SQA's website](#) to help prepare candidates for future assessment.

Appendix: 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.

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.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in [March 2024](#) and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).