



Course report 2025

Higher Administration and IT

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 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 4,593

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 5,252

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	1,754	33.4	33.4	88
B	1,436	27.3	60.7	75
C	961	18.3	79.0	63
D	670	12.8	91.8	50
No award	431	8.2	100%	Not applicable

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 or equal to 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

Candidates found the question paper accessible. Overall, the question paper was slightly less demanding than anticipated and the grade boundaries were adjusted.

Assignment

The assignment performed in line with expectations. A few candidates did not attempt the totals/aggregate query task.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 2

Most candidates were able to gain marks associated with the problems of addressing complaints made by customers on social media. Many answers centred around reputational issues and the potential fall in sales or profits.

Question 4

Candidates were well versed on the consequences of poor time and task management with most candidates scoring highly. Missing deadlines and the resulting employee stress were common answers.

Question 5

Knowledge of team features was good with many candidates gaining 4 or 5 marks. Candidates often wrote about the size of the team and having a leader who could delegate tasks effectively and motivate team members.

Question 6a

Many candidates were able to give reasons why an organisation would benefit from the decision to have an open plan office. Sharing resources and/or equipment and ease of supervision were popular responses.

Question 10

Most candidates gained many marks for this question and demonstrated good knowledge of the consequences of breaches in Health and Safety legislation. There was a good spread of responses around consequences to the employee and the organisation with dismissal of the employee and potential shut down of the organisation common answers.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 3

A few candidates were not able to gain any marks for this question while some candidates only managed to gain half of the marks available. Candidates were unable to do an in-depth comparison of focus groups and online surveys. Often answers were basic and did not compare like for like points or there was sufficient detail for one of the methods but not the other. Some answers merely repeated the content of the question.

Question 8

Candidates' knowledge of this topic area was lacking and many candidates had difficulty scoring more than half marks. Answers were often very general in nature or a misunderstanding of who would be sent documents such as minutes. A few answers related to duties that the chairperson would carry out rather than the administrative assistant.

Question 10(a)

Many candidates struggled to gain more than a third of the marks available for this question. Candidates often strayed into the disadvantages of written communication

and how other methods of communication could address these rather than state the advantages of written communication.

Areas that candidates performed well in

Assignment

Word-processing task — task 1

Most candidates performed very well in this task. Candidates produced a variety of very well-designed forms.

Presentation task — task 2(a)

Most candidates attempted this task and executed it well, particularly with respect to the research aspect and SmartArt.

E-mail task — task 2(b)

Most candidates were able to send an e-mail and attach the correct file.

Database query task — 5

This was the first stand-alone query task for a few years and candidates were able to construct excellent queries with most candidates achieving many of the available marks.

Spreadsheet task — task 7(b)

Many candidates were able to successfully problem solve this task and built the “COUNTIF” function correctly.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Assignment

Spreadsheet task — task 4

Many candidates knew that they had to use the “HLOOKUP” function to find the discount rate but used the wrong cell reference to pick up the basic price of the car. A few candidates also did not use the 20% VAT cell reference on the quote and keyed the figure into the formula in error.

Database aggregate/totals query task — task 6

A few candidates did not attempt this task. For some candidates who attempted the task there was a lack of understanding of query design in terms of the relevant tables that were required.

Spreadsheet task — task 7(a)

Some candidates identified that they had to use a “nested IF” function to determine the interest percentage but did not build their IF statements correctly. Common mistakes included having too many “IFs” and not using operators correctly — either leaving out the “=” or inserting it where it was not required depending on how they had built the function. A few candidates also had the order of the variables in such a way that the IF statement would not return the correct result.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

In Question 1, candidates often gave the same solution to different issues from the case study. Candidates often solved the same issue several times over. Candidates should ensure that they do not repeat themselves by quickly checking their response to ensure that they have solved different issues by different means. Writing the issue on the paper and then writing the solution directly underneath can help candidates focus on the issue they are addressing.

In the meetings question (Question 8), it seemed that candidates were not fully aware of the role of the administrative assistant within the process or how documents are used or indeed the purpose of these. Centres should ensure that candidates are aware of the contents and purpose of meeting documents as well as the specific duties of each office bearer. Arranging for candidates to set up and run a meeting can be a good hands-on task for this purpose or drawing on the experience of candidates who are involved in pupil empowerment teams or similar.

Markers have again noticed that the standard of candidates' handwriting is concerning. In some instances, it was impossible to determine what the candidate had written. Candidates can choose to key-in their answers and indeed, if resources allow, it is possible for all candidates in a centre to word process their responses.

Assignment

Some candidates are still building their total/aggregate queries incorrectly. Candidates who used the "query design" option and subsequently brought in all 3 tables did not have the correct answer despite using "COUNT" and "SUM" correctly. Candidates should be advised to build all queries using the "Query Wizard" option. This feature automatically brings in all the tables that are needed and excludes those

that are not necessary. Consequently, if the candidate chooses the correct fields the design of the query should be correct.

In the 'customer quote' task many candidates failed to include the 'basic price' in their total. Similarly, the discount lookup table clearly displayed the word 'basic price', but many candidates did not appear to have noticed this and consequently failed to realise that the basic price was the determining factor for the discount. When completing all spreadsheet tasks, it is important that candidates read over the entire spreadsheet including all column and row headings so that they have a good understanding of the data they are working with.

A few candidates used a "Nested IF" function in place of a "VLOOKUP" or "HLOOKUP". In theory this may work, but often the formula is so long that it is impossible to read from the printout or the opportunity to make errors is increased significantly. Candidates should firstly rule out the use of "V/HLOOKUP" before proceeding to build a "Nested IF".

When composing "Nested IFs" candidates need to be aware that the order in which the function is constructed will have an impact on whether or not it will operate as intended, for example in this year's paper if candidates had placed the $\geq \text{£}15,000$ as the first option then it would ignore any amounts over $\text{£}25,000$ and hence these customers would have received the wrong discount %.

In many instances, but not all, it is advisable to start with the largest outcome first ($\geq \text{£}25,000$ in this paper). Candidates also need to carefully consider whether they wish to include a figure by using "=" operator.

Candidates would benefit from more practice composing e-mails as the content and layout mark was often lost due to poorly composed e-mails and/or incorrect use of punctuation.

After choosing their design template in the presentation task, candidates should check the entire presentation to ensure that any text or graphics are not obscured by the template or vice versa.

Appendix: 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 is 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 to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of our 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. 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.

- 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.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).