



Course report 2025

Higher 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 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 9,514

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 10,190

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	3,523	34.6	34.6	84
B	2,275	22.3	56.9	71
C	1,968	19.3	76.2	58
D	1,346	13.2	89.4	45
No award	1,078	10.6	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

Overall, the question paper performed as expected, however, a few questions were more demanding than intended. This was taken into account when setting the grade boundaries.

Assignment

The assignment performed as expected. More candidates than in previous years gained all marks available. The mean mark for this component increased from the previous year.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper

- 1(b) Most candidates were able to justify having a diverse product portfolio. A few candidates described disadvantages.
- 1(c) Many candidates struggled to relate their answers to identify a role of a manager based on the list in the course specification. Some candidates described the roles but did not link their answers to the opening of new stores.
- 1(d)(i) Many candidates were able to explain the challenges of operating a responsible sourcing policy. Some candidates only explained one challenge.
- 1(d)(ii) Many candidates were able to justify the importance of the quality management procedures used by Pets at Home.
- 1(e) Many candidates were able to describe actions the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) could take if Pets at Home fails to comply with competition policy. Some candidates described actions that would not be available to CMA.
- 1(g) Most candidates were able to discuss the benefits to Pets at Home of its website.

- 1(h) A few candidates were able to explain reasons for the change in Pets at Home's financial data. Some candidates read the exhibit the wrong way round, describing a decrease as opposed to an increase. Some candidates mixed up current assets and non-current assets. Some candidates did not make it clear that current liabilities were short-term.
- 2(a) Many candidates were able to discuss the use of franchising to the franchisee. A few candidates confused the franchisee with the franchiser.
- 2(c) Some candidates did not sufficiently explain reasons to prepare a cash budget. Some candidates missed out on marks as they referred to profit/loss in a cash budget.
- 2(d) Many candidates were able to provide thorough descriptions of objectives of a multinational. A few candidates outlined objectives rather than describing them, which did not gain marks.
- 3(b) Many candidates did not answer the question that asked them to describe the purpose of a SWOT. Descriptions of SWOT with no mention of the purpose did not gain marks.
- 3(c) Many candidates were able to discuss advantages and disadvantages of methods used to research customer satisfaction. A few candidates missed out on marks as they discussed types of market research instead of methods.
- 4(b) Most candidates were able to demonstrate sound knowledge of capital-intensive production.
- 4(c) Many candidates were able to discuss the use of just-in-time inventory control.

- 5(a) Many candidates were able to describe sources of finance available to a public limited company. Some candidates missed out on marks as they did not write enough points for the marks available. A few candidates described sources not suitable for a public limited company, which did not gain marks.
- 5(c) Most candidates were able to show sound knowledge of reasons for using internal recruitment.

Assignment

Most candidates used the headings and layout specified in the coursework assessment task and the [Understanding Standards](#) materials to provide a clear structure.

Most candidates chose appropriate topics that allowed them to research sufficient evidence to analyse and access the marks available. A few candidates chose multi-stranded topics, for example, internal and external factors, which meant they could not gain full marks.

Background information was often shorter statements indicating the topic from the course that was being researched and a description of the main activities of the business, which was sufficient to gain marks.

Most candidates explained their research methods well. A few candidates wrote about the purpose of research methods with no link to an explained value, which was not awarded marks.

Many candidates handled the analysis section well, making clear analytical points based on their findings. Some candidates reworded findings instead of analysing them, which did not gain marks. Some candidates made points that did not link to the purpose of the assignment and therefore did not gain marks. A few candidates gave recommendations in the analysis section, which were not awarded marks.

Most candidates included very few conclusions, and this remains one of the most challenging areas. Conclusions should not just repeat findings, but should be an overall judgement/summative point that is based on at least two different findings.

Most candidates gained marks by making recommendations that were justified in the conclusion and recommendation section. Candidates received additional marks for developing a recommendation. Negative development was often more likely to be credited with marks, as positive development was often repetition of analysis.

Some candidates made recommendations that were not justified and appeared as new information, which gained no mark.

Many candidates made multiple recommendations to continue, carry on and do more of the same activity. This is not good practice and should be discouraged.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres should ensure they give candidates sufficient opportunities to practise answering questions using case studies. They can do this by providing past papers and marking instructions from previous years.

Candidates should read case studies and questions carefully. They should pay close attention to the command word and the number of marks available. This helps them to include enough points and detail to earn all the marks they can. Candidates can practise planning and writing clear answers by using published past papers and marking instructions.

Centres should ensure they cover all content areas detailed in the course specification and spend sufficient time on each of them. They should encourage candidates to revise all areas of the course, even those not asked in recent past papers, and the areas recently updated in the course specification. For example, candidates should know the purpose of an inventory management control system and be able to draw a fully labelled diagram. This diagram should include all elements, such as axes and labels for maximum inventory level, minimum inventory level, reorder level, lead time, buffer inventory and reorder quantity.

Candidates whose handwriting is difficult to read should consider submitting word-processed scripts. These scripts should be printed in 1.5 or double line spacing to make marking easier. As scripts are scanned, it is helpful to print them double-sided.

Assignment

Candidates should stick to the word count for the assignment, as they will receive a penalty if they exceed it by more than 10%.

Topics must be from the Higher course content. Candidates should choose a topic and an organisation that allows them to have sufficient content to analyse.

Candidates should choose only one organisation and one topic.

Candidates must base their analysis of findings on researched evidence. They should reference each point and consider whether to use footnotes or refer directly to the appendices. Candidates must not include recommendations in the analysis section.

Candidates should clearly link conclusions and recommendations to evidence from the analysis and interpretation section. They should be aware that negative impacts of recommendations can often gain marks when fully developed.

A good quality report makes recommendations on what improvements a business can make rather than suggesting that the business continues to do what it is doing presently. Multiple suggestions to continue activities will not be awarded marks in future. Understanding Standards materials will be updated to reflect this.

From 2025 onwards, in line with the National Standard and current marking instructions, only conclusions and recommendations that have been justified in the same section based on information from the analysis and interpretation section will be accepted.

Teachers and lecturers should be aware that it is permissible to give reasonable assistance to candidates. This includes advice on choosing a topic, sources of information and the likely availability or accessibility of resources. They can also give advice on the structure of the report.

Centres must use the SQA template available on the Higher Business Management [subject page](#) as reports are scanned and marked from image.

For ease of marking, it would be helpful for assignments to be printed double-sided, and using 1.5 or double line spacing.

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](#).