



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Administration
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It 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 question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The cohort of candidates was of a higher standard than usual this year. Almost all candidates completed the paper in the required time — very few handed in half-completed printouts. Very few candidates did not attempt task 4.

Accuracy in some tasks was excellent, but in others was poor.

Many candidates did not hand in the correct printouts:

- ◆ value instead of formula (and vice versa) in the spreadsheet, and
- ◆ often random printouts in the database.

Many candidates did not hand in a printout for Task 1a, though they had completed the task as Task 1b was included. Some information in printouts was also truncated, showing that the hard copy had not been looked at by the candidate.

As always, candidates attained higher marks in Tasks 1–3 than they did in Task 4. However, candidates did better in Task 4 than they have in previous years. There was a better understanding of command words, but answers to 'outline' and 'describe' questions still tended to be too brief.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Task 1a: Most candidates attained highly in this task. Keying-in accuracy was excellent, especially numbers. Almost all candidates were able to format cells correctly. Candidates were able to identify the main heading and format it correctly. Formulae in this task were generally well done — most candidates used the sum function correctly.

Task 1b: Most candidates inserted labels in the correct place, and accurately inserted the additional figures. Most candidates were awarded at least one mark for inserting an appropriate label. This label tended to be accurately keyed in. The majority of the formula marks were awarded. Some candidates inserted additional rows to indicate the cost of the family support worker — these candidates were often successful when calculating the formula, so were awarded the marks.

Task 1c: Most candidates handed in the correct type of chart, on one page.

Task 2a: Nearly all candidates gained exceptionally high marks. The accuracy in the amendments and new record were excellent.

Task 2b: Again, the accuracy of inputting new fields and populating them was excellent. Formatting both new fields was also well done.

Task 2c: Most candidates were able to complete a search, and were able to exclude a field when printing.

Task 3: Most candidates used the letterhead and printed on one page as instructed. The majority of candidates understood what the manuscript correction signs required them to do. Inputting the chart in the correct place tended to be completed accurately.

Task 4

Question 1: The majority of candidates identified additional information for inclusion into the organisation chart — in many cases this information was directly related to the scenario that was set.

Question 2: Most candidates were awarded full marks.

Question 3: A good number of candidates outlined that an e-mail can be sent to many people at the same time.

Question 4: Many candidates were able to accurately identify the legislation required. The question about disadvantages of manual filing was also answered well.

Question 5: Many candidates were able to describe one advantage to the employee of flexible working.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Task 1a: Many candidates were not awarded the keying in mark for the main heading, due to spacing with a dash. Many candidates did not right-align the column headings. The mark for boldening a row was often not awarded — candidates had boldened some cells within the row, but not the whole row.

Task 1b: A number of candidates did not hand in the correct value and formula printout for this task, thus losing many marks. Accuracy when keying in additional labels was poor, even though the labels were stated in the paper. Again italicising a row was a problem, though there was evidence of individual cells being italicised. Many candidates were not awarded the formatting mark due to the number of support worker days not being a whole number. A number of candidates did not total all the columns in the spreadsheet. Many candidates did not gain the Total Money Raised formula mark — candidates added from E3:E15, even though they had already totalled E3:E11. Many candidates were not awarded the formula mark in E17.

Task 1c: This task gained very poor marks. Accuracy of inserting the heading — which was clearly stated in the instructions — was very poor. Sorting data, and including the correct

data in the sort and in the chart, was very often incorrect. Sensible labelling of axes and legends, or deleting them, appeared to have been ignored.

Task 2b: Sorting the database on Activity was very poor. Many candidates did not sort the database at all, many sorted it descending, and many did not sort the whole database — only the one field. The new field 'Target Achieved' was often truncated.

Task 2c: A substantial number of candidates searched for ≥ 75 , instead of >75 .

Task 3: The layout of the letter was often very poor. Many candidates missed out the reference and date altogether, and some put in a reference incorrectly. Many candidates had random extra line spaces. Keying in accuracy was very poor, especially when it was copy typing. Many candidates decided to change the format of the date that was in the text. A number of candidates did not insert the correct figures from their own printout, and from the additional information in the question paper.

Task 4

Question 1: Naming the organisation chart caused problems for the majority of pupils — all parts of a tree from branch to leaf were mentioned.

Question 3: A reasonable number of candidates attempted this question, but many were not able to describe a feature of e-mail.

Question 4: Outlining methods of keeping personal information secure tended to be vague. The question specifically asked about personal information, but many answers were about security of people or equipment.

Question 5: Many candidates did not state duties for section a. Instead, they provided skills and qualities of a receptionist. Part b was very poorly answered, or candidates missed out this question. Some candidates did not expand the flexible working practice, they merely identified therefore did not gain marks.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

As always, read instructions carefully. Read carefully what to printout, then check what has been printed out. Candidates must look at what they have printed out and check with the paper to make sure that:

- ◆ it is correct, ie value or formula
- ◆ information is not truncated
- ◆ it makes sense

Candidates must read instructions carefully, ie embolden a row, not just a cell.

Be aware that sometimes there are two instructions in one sentence. Candidates must make sure they complete both instructions, eg 'wrap and right align'. Many candidates just wrapped sub-headings. They attained no marks for this as the instruction was to carry out both formats.

Candidates need to think about what they are doing, so that the information they are working out makes sense — for example, the number of support worker days must be a whole number.

Candidates need to pay attention to showing meaningful data in a chart, eg labelling axes and legends. In some situations it is acceptable to delete the labels and legend if the chart will make sense. If they are included, they must enhance the meaning of the chart.

Candidates must be aware of the command words used in the paper, so that they know how much to write for an answer. The command words, and exemplar answers with marking guidelines, are detailed on the Understanding Standards website.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2011	2720
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	2760
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	42.3%	42.3%	1168	72
B	28.0%	70.3%	773	61
C	16.0%	86.3%	442	51
D	4.7%	91.0%	129	46
No award	9.0%	100.0%	248	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.