



## External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Administration
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

This year's cohort seemed to be less well prepared than in previous years. Many candidates did not seem to be well enough prepared to Intermediate 2 standard, meaning that some should have been presented at Intermediate 1.

Almost all candidates were able to complete both Paper 1 and Paper 2 in the required time.

In Paper 1, candidates usually attained more marks in Section 1 than Section 2. In Section 2, almost all candidates attempted Question 1, many attempted Question 3 and fewer Question 2. Those who attempted Question 2 tended to attain highly. Many candidates had difficulty in answering higher-order command words. A number of candidates demonstrated poor knowledge and exam technique. Candidates often failed to read keywords within the question, so did not answer the question.

Customer care, working practices and e-commerce were topics candidates could write about confidently. When writing about travel, many candidates still referred to holiday travel, instead of business trips.

In Paper 2 there are still scripts with no candidate names on them, despite instructions to candidates that their name must be included on each sheet.

There was evidence of some basic IT difficulties, eg sorting a spreadsheet and layout of letters in Paper 2. Candidates are getting better at putting the correct printouts in their submission, though a significant minority of candidates do lose a number of marks through submitting incorrect printouts. Work should be submitted in the order specified in the exam paper.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Paper 1 – Section 1

Question 1: Many candidates attained full marks for both parts of this question.

Question 2 (a): Most candidates were able to attain both marks.

Question 4 (a): Most candidates attained at least half marks for this question.

### Paper 1 – Section 2

Question 1 (a): Most candidates attained maximum marks, though a minority wrote about duties of the Administrative Assistant.

Question 2 (b): Candidates were able to define e-commerce, and most could confidently outline benefits.

Question 3 (a): Many candidates attained highly in both identifying and justifying the methods of payment used when abroad.

## **Paper 2**

Task 1: Most candidates attained highly in Task 1a. The accuracy of input was usually excellent. Most candidates completed in formulae in column F and G correctly, and in the correct place, even if they had made errors when sorting the spreadsheet.

The value printout for Task 1b tended to attain most marks. Many candidates used the named cells marked in the formula printout for Task 1b. Most candidates gained some marks for the formula printout in Task 1b, even though some of their answers were obviously incorrect, they carried on. In Task 1b, chart, many candidates were awarded the marks for using the correct data and printing on a separate sheet.

Task 2: Accuracy of input to the database was very good. Almost all candidates demonstrated their ability to search the database both times it was required. Most candidates gained highly in the report.

Task 3: Almost all candidates used the letterhead template provided. Many candidates attempted a mail merge. Most candidates understood the manuscript correction signs and used the correct complimentary close.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Paper 1 – Section 1**

Question 3 (a): Many candidates wrote about software instead of mobile equipment. When mobile equipment was referred to, candidates often gave generic references and did not mention specific equipment.

Question 3 (b): Candidates tended to give methods of data protection instead of equipment protection.

Question 4 (a): Candidates struggled to attain the second part of the description marks because they did not name the mobile technology. Instead, they described features, eg e-mail, text.

Question 4 (b): Many candidates did not have the knowledge to gain marks for this question.

Question 5 (b): Most candidates described induction training instead of justifying its use.

### **Paper 1 – Section 2**

Question 1 (b and c): Very poorly answered. Many candidates showed no knowledge about the work of the Purchasing department, therefore could not answer the questions.

Candidates often identified the wrong document, and very few candidates described the use of the document.

Question 1 (d): Most candidates tried to compare two unrelated benefits, and so were not awarded marks. Many also compared features of communication instead of benefits.

Question 2 (a): A significant minority of candidates wrote vague answers that showed no knowledge of HASAWA.

Question 2 (c): Though many candidates could identify a type of computer network many could not justify any uses for the organisation.

Question 3 (b): Again candidates showed little knowledge of a department within the organisation and the activities it carries out. A few candidates attained the first mark of the description, but very few were able to write more about the department and attain the second mark.

Question 3 (c): Another 'compare' question that candidates struggled with. Either unrelated terms were compared, or there was no comparison at all, just statements about each type of contract.

## **Paper 2**

Task 1: The majority of candidates had difficulty sorting a section of the spreadsheet on two columns. Many candidates had difficulty inputting the IF statement in column E using absolute cell references, and some referred to column D in the IF statement instead of column C.

In the value printout for Task 1b, the majority of candidates did not right-align the column headings. Candidates had been instructed to format consistently, but they did not appear to realise that the other column headings had been right-aligned.

In the formula printout for Task 1b most candidates had difficulty with the percentage change and 2013 (Projected) formulae. Many candidates inputted  $E6 \geq 7500$ , instead of  $E6 > 7500$ .

In Task 1b, chart printout, few candidates attained marks for the appropriate heading, usually due to spelling errors, and the meaningful legend and axes.

Task 2: Very few candidates were able to sort the database on full name — perhaps this is because candidates still have difficulty sorting a database on two fields. The majority of candidates submitted a report printout which showed truncated fields.

Many candidates are inserting their name into the report header. This means that the heading is incorrect, so marks are not awarded. A number of candidates were unable to print the database on one page as instructed.

Task 3: Many candidates had no idea about the size the logo should be on headed paper — it was far too large and often truncated. The layout of many letters was very poor — no reference and/or date, and no knowledge about how the name and address should look, or where it should be.

Knowledge of spacing and line spacing (eg after the letterhead, between ref, date, name and address and salutation) was also poor. Candidates rarely included the name and designation after the complimentary close.

Although the mail-merge was attempted by many candidates, in a significant number of scripts it was poorly executed. Many candidates had no spaces between fieldnames, eg Title Name Surname. A large number of candidates also did not know the layout of the salutation. Most candidates had little idea of how to set out a tear-off slip.

Many candidates attained few marks for keying-in due to inaccuracies when copy typing.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

Centres should download and check the files provided by SQA in plenty of time before the examination. The files should then be kept secure until the day of the exam. Teachers should not be using the files or going into the files to make amendments, other than to print them for each group for submission with candidate printouts. Any queries or concerns about the files should be directed to SQA before the date of the examination.

Candidates must have the knowledge stated in the Arrangements Document.

Extended writing for higher-order command words requires greater focus. When answering 'compare' questions, the comparisons must be linked. The command words and exemplar answers are on the SQA Understanding Standards website. Candidates must especially be aware of the amount of writing required when answering higher-order command words, ie 'Describe' — candidates are not giving two points.

Any chart should have a meaningful legend and axis, or have them removed.

Candidates should look at the hard copy that comes out of the printer. It should be checked for truncation, accuracy and formatting. It is good practice to export databases to a word-processor, as it is easier to fit the document to one page, without truncating fields.

Candidates must be familiar with the layout of word-processing documents and the use of mail-merge. Mail-merge has been tested in the last few years, yet still many candidates are unable to use this feature.

Candidates must continue to ensure that they include the correct printouts in their submission, in the correct order. This should be checked by the candidate before the folder is handed to the invigilator.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2011	3981
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	3585
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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	12.7%	12.7%	457	69
B	24.9%	37.7%	894	59
C	30.0%	67.7%	1076	49
D	11.2%	78.9%	401	44
No award	21.1%	100.0%	757	-

## 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.