



External Assessment Report 2013

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 similar standard to last year. Almost all candidates completed the paper in the required time — most candidates submitted a printout for each of the IT tasks. As with last year, most candidates attempted Task 4.

Accuracy in most tasks was excellent, although a few candidates still seem to be unable to proof read either on screen or on hard copy.

Many candidates did not hand in the correct printouts in the spreadsheet (ie formula view) where a lot of marks are awarded. It was obvious that the task had been completed as the chart task showed. Omission of the required printout meant that those candidates gained fewer marks than they should have.

Some information in printouts (mainly database Task 1a) was truncated, which occurs when candidates print directly from the database and do not check the hard copy.

As in previous years, candidates attained higher marks in Tasks 1–3 than in Task 4. However, some candidates did better in Task 4 than they have in previous years. There was a disappointing understanding of command words, with answers to ‘outline’ and ‘describe’ questions is still too brief to be awarded any marks.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Task 1 (Database create): Nearly all candidates gained high marks, with most only making minor keying-in errors. The accuracy in the amendments and new field data were excellent.

Task 2 (Spreadsheet update): Most candidates formatted labels as instructed, and accurately inserted the new column and data. Other rows and labels were also accurately inserted and formatted — again the additional figures were keyed-in accurately. The majority of the formula marks were awarded. Most candidates handed in the correct type of chart, on one page.

Task 3 (Word Processing create using template): Almost all candidates used the memo template 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, resulting in many candidates achieving more than half the marks available, which was an improvement on last year.

Task 4:

- ◆ Question 1: The majority of candidates identified additional information for inclusion into the organisation chart to make it more useful to staff and visitors.
- ◆ Question 2: Most candidates were able to outline a benefit of job-sharing and two health and safety areas covered in Induction training. There were many good tasks of an Admin Assistant stated.

- ◆ Question 3: A good number of candidates identified the legislation required and correctly outlined a security method of protection customer information.
- ◆ Question 5: Most candidates completed the Petty Cash Voucher accurately.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Task 1

- ◆ Candidates who print directly from the database table have problems with Field Names and detail being truncated, resulting in very few marks being awarded for accuracy.
- ◆ Sorting the database still seems problematic for some candidates. Many candidates did not sort the database, and some did not sort the whole database but managed to sort on only the one field. The new field 'Star Rating' was often truncated.
- ◆ Some candidates included the search criteria field in the printout — although required fields, and order of fields required, were clearly stated.

Task 2

- ◆ A number of candidates did not hand in the correct value and formula printouts for this task, thus losing unnecessary marks.
- ◆ Accuracy when keying-in additional labels was poor, even though the labels were stated clearly in the paper.
- ◆ The chart — although the type was correct — was poorly done. Sensible labelling of sectors and/or legend appeared to have been ignored.

Task 3

- ◆ Many candidates did not understand who the memo was from — and so very few achieved the first accuracy flag.
- ◆ Most accuracy errors seemed to be due to carelessness rather than misreading the text in the question.
- ◆ Many candidates inserted the Tour Name rather than the Tour Guide Name, which if proof-read would have been noticed as incorrect.

Task 4

- ◆ Question 1: Most did not know what a line relationship was, including who to report to when someone is absent. Many confused the word 'relationship' with friendship.
- ◆ Question 2: A reasonable number of candidates attempted this question, but many were not able to describe information in a skill scan.
- ◆ Question 4: Outlining features of website design tended to be too vague to be awarded any marks. Similarly, very few candidates were able to describe a communication technology.
- ◆ Question 5: Part (a) was very poorly answered, or candidates missed out this question completely. The candidates who did attempt to answer failed to describe. Instead they merely identified equipment.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

As in previous years, candidates must read instructions carefully — especially what to print out, how many printouts are required, and then checking what has actually been printed out.

Centres should encourage candidates to print database tables or searches using a word processing document in the form of a table. This will ensure that no fields are ever truncated; sorting can be easily completed if needed; printing is easily set to one page, landscape or portrait using the table functions; and name and school can easily be printed in the footer.

Candidates need to look at what they have printed out and check with the paper to make sure that:

- ◆ it is as instructed, ie value or formula, gridlines, etc if it is a spreadsheet task
- ◆ information is not truncated — especially the database table
- ◆ it makes sense

Following other instructions is also very important. For example:

- ◆ Candidates need to be aware that sometimes there are two instructions in one sentence. They must make sure they complete both instructions to achieve one mark.
- ◆ Candidates need to pay attention to showing meaningful data in a chart, eg labelling and legends. In some situations it is acceptable to delete the 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 2012	2748
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	2257
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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	45.0%	45.0%	1017	72
B	28.4%	73.4%	642	61
C	14.8%	88.3%	335	51
D	3.8%	92.0%	85	46
No award	8.0%	100.0%	180	-

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.