



External Assessment Report 2013

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 better prepared than in previous years. There were very few candidates who were not Intermediate 2 standard.

Almost all candidates were able to complete both Paper 1 and Paper 2 in the required time. In Paper 1, Section 1, candidates attained more marks than in previous years. In Section 2, there appeared to be a more even spread of attempted questions than last year — and most candidates attempted all parts of their chosen questions.

Many candidates still have difficulty in answering higher-order command words. Some still demonstrate poor knowledge and exam technique — often failing to read keywords within the question. Spelling and grammar still represents a challenge to some candidates

In Paper 2 there are still printouts without printed 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 in Paper 2 — although less so than previous years. Candidates are getting better at putting the correct printouts in their submission, though a minority of candidates still lose unnecessary marks through submitting incorrect printouts. There were less extraneous printouts this year compared to previous years.

Paper 2

A discrepancy was identified between one of the mileage records listed on the question paper and the mileage shown in the provided spreadsheet e-file. Whilst this was unfortunate, an extensive review of candidate scripts showed that for the vast majority of candidates there was no impact in their ability to complete the task as they had not noticed the difference and it did not affect their answer. A small numbers opted to change the spreadsheet e-file to match the record listed in the question paper. Where this was identified, the candidates were credited in full to ensure that no candidate was disadvantaged.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Paper 1, Section 1

- ◆ Question 1 (a): Most candidates answered this question well
- ◆ Question 3 (a): This question was answered much better than the same type of question in previous years with most candidates being able to outline the use of the business documents.
- ◆ Question 4 (a): Most candidates are comfortable with the advantages of e-commerce and always answer this well.

Paper 1, Section 2

Although the marks for this section were lower than those for section 1, the overall attainment for this Section was an improvement on last year. Most candidates try to compare and outline quite well.

Paper 2

Overall Paper 2 was well done by many candidates. Many appeared to have been well prepared for it.

- ◆ Task 1: Accuracy of editing input to the database was very good. Almost all candidates demonstrated their ability to insert a record and a field (including formatting) — most gaining all the marks available.
- ◆ Task 2: Again, the accuracy of input was usually excellent. Most candidates followed the instructions for formatting heading, labels and bordering. In Task 2b (chart), many candidates were awarded the marks for using the correct data and printing on a separate sheet. The value printout for Task 2b tended to attain full marks, and the Named cell reference and IF statement formulae were well done by most candidates.
- ◆ Task 3: Almost all candidates used the letterhead template provided. Most candidates understood the manuscript correction signs and were able to complete the whole document.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Paper 1, Section 1

Generally candidates still struggle with the 'Describe' command word, in that the outline and additional comment must match. Similarly with 'Compare' — many candidates are only able to compare two things for one mark (instead of four things for two marks).

- ◆ Question 1 (b): Many candidates had little or no knowledge of the Computer Misuse Act.
- ◆ Question 3 (b): Candidates were unsure of the use of mailing lists – perhaps because they did not know what a mailing list was.
- ◆ Question 4 (b): Many candidates' responses contained references to eye tests/regular breaks — which showed they were not reading the question, which referred to workstations.
- ◆ Question 5 (b): Most candidates could not justify the use of expense claim form by the organisation — many of whom repeated the use by the employee.

Paper 1, Section 2

- ◆ Question 1 (b): Surprisingly poorly answered — many candidates failed to gain all four marks for their descriptions of factors to be considered when arranging travel.
- ◆ Question 2 (c): many responses outlined features of hot-desking and failed to justify its introduction by an organisation.
- ◆ Question 3 (b): most of the responses referred to hardware, eg projector, computer etc, instead of the features of presentation software.
- ◆ Question 3 (c): Candidates struggled with comparing permanent and fixed term. In some cases there was no comparison at all, just statements about each type of contract.

Paper 2

Task 1: Very few candidates were able to problem solve the Return Mileage for Ardnair. Many candidates also had difficulty with sorting the database on 2 fields – a major issue at Intermediate 2 level as it is always examined in the database task. A number of candidates were unable to print the database on one page as instructed – and sometimes the fields were truncated when printing directly from the database table.

Many candidates submitted a report printout which showed truncated fields. Many candidates are inserting their name into the report footer. This means that the footer is incorrect, so marks are not awarded – again a major issue at this level as mentioned above.

Task 2: Many candidates, did not recognise that the formulae was obviously wrong and some of the cells returned values in excess of £100,000 for a school trip, eg Catering costs were extremely unrealistic.

The Border cell instruction – although applied – was frequently on the wrong cell.

Many candidates did not use the absolute cell in the Catering formula and some used cell values instead of cell references – although the task clearly requested the use of an absolute cell. In chart printout, few candidates attained marks for the appropriate heading - usually due to spelling errors - and several candidates failed to include clear or appropriate legend for a pie chart.

Many formula view printouts still show truncated columns – resulting in unnecessary loss of marks.

Task 3: The content of many letters was very poor — particularly the reference, complimentary close (lack of problem solving of the Headteacher name) and tear off slip spacing. In fact, many candidates had little idea of how to set out a tear-off slip.

Knowledge of spacing and line spacing (eg after the letterhead, between ref, date, etc) was also poor.

Some candidates assumed the letter was mail-merge – although this did not significantly affect the marks awarded.

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 – there are still many instances where packs contain no 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' — many candidates are still not giving two matching/related points.

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-processed document, as it is easier to sort data in a table, fit the document to one page without truncating, and key-in name and school in the footer.

Similarly, spreadsheet printouts can be easily set up to fit to one page and can be easily formatted to ensure all columns are visible — especially in formula printout.

Any chart should have a meaningful heading, legend and axis. This is a basic skill and should be easily achieved at this level.

Candidates must be familiar with the layout of word-processing documents. Letters have been tested in the last few years, yet still many candidates are unsure of proper layout/content.

Accuracy of keying-in is still a major issue for many candidates. They do not seem to be able to proof-read their own work. Perhaps more emphasis should be given to this in normal class work — instead of teachers/lecturers correcting all inaccuracies, students could be allowed to find and correct them on their own.

Candidates must continue to ensure that they include the correct printouts in their submissions, in the correct order. They should check this before handing to the Invigilator.

However, it should be noted that, overall, there seems to be an improvement on the skills of the majority of the 2013 cohort at Intermediate 2 level.

**Statistical information: update on Courses
Intermediate 2**

Number of resulted entries in 2012	3576
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	3506
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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	29.0%	29.0%	1044	70
B	28.4%	57.4%	1020	60
C	23.0%	80.4%	825	50
D	6.6%	87.0%	238	45
No award	13.0%	100.0%	467	-

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.