



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Administration
Level(s)	Standard Grade

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

No adverse comments on the examination papers were received from centres, and reports from markers indicated that papers were considered to be well-balanced and fair.

Practical Abilities

Performance in the use of functions continued to improve. There were few instances of incomplete projects and candidates appeared to have attempted the level appropriate to their ability. However, many markers commented on poor accuracy of keyboarding.

Knowledge and Understanding

At Foundation level, most candidates performed well in this element. This was particularly evident in the case of true/false and tick box questions.

At General/Credit level candidates did not perform as well, and it appeared that many were not learning Course notes and were unable to answer questions on topics that had been regularly tested in the past.

At Credit level many candidates did not offer enough detail to gain all marks.

Problem Solving

At General/Credit level it is now evident that candidates are using advice previously given in External Assessment Reports and taking an **action** to solve a problem. However, at Credit level many candidates do not achieve maximum marks due to not justifying the course of action to be taken or providing enough detail to gain additional marks.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Practical Abilities

At all levels, candidates largely performed well in the use of software functions. This was particularly clear in the following areas:

- ◆ the construction and manipulation of databases
- ◆ use of absolute cell references or named cells in spreadsheets
- ◆ printing of formulae
- ◆ creation of charts
- ◆ use of the internet

Knowledge and Understanding/Problem Solving

At Foundation level candidates performed well in questions Q1a & b, Q7a, Q9a, b & d, Q10a, Q14a, b, c & e, 16 b.

At General level candidates performed well in questions: Q1, Q2a & b, Q3, Q5a(i) & b, 9a, 11a, 12a, b & c.

At Credit level candidates performed well in questions: Q1a, 10b (i) & (ii).

Areas which candidates found demanding

Practical Abilities

Candidates experienced difficulty in the following areas: composing e-mail/e-diary text; distinguishing between hyphens and dashes; spacing between paragraphs; capitalisation; shoulder headings and paragraph headings; keyboarding accuracy; and in particular proof-reading all work. Many candidates lost marks in the Internet task as they did not show connection information for the journey, and many did not highlight relevant information.

Knowledge and Understanding/Problem Solving

At Foundation level candidates experienced difficulty in questions: Q1c, Q3b, Q9c, Q13, Q15.

At General level candidates experienced difficulty in questions: Q2c, Q6a (ii), Q10a (ii); Q11b.

At Credit level candidates experienced difficulty in questions: Q4b, Q8a.

There were examples of candidates failing to read questions carefully and, therefore, misinterpreting what was asked. For example, in Q4 which stated (in bold) 'other than making/updating appointments' many candidates made reference to recurring appointments — clearly missing the text that was emphasised.

Although candidates mainly demonstrate some knowledge of a topic, often their answers are very brief and lack the detail required to gain all the marks available. For example, in Q4b many candidates identified security features an organisation could employ, but did not say how these features helped maintain security of the organisation.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

In the first instance, teachers are advised to study previous exam papers, solutions and marking schemes provided on the official SQA website. These provide the greatest insight into what is required of candidates in the external examinations. Secondly, candidates should be trained to read each task/question carefully so that they understand what is being asked. This applies to all three elements of the course.

Practical Abilities

Candidates must be encouraged to proof-read all work carefully and to develop an appreciation of good practice, eg consistency of format within a task, limited use of varied fonts/formats etc. Any change in font and/or size should be clearly identifiable.

Candidates should also know when the use of capital letters, dashes/hyphens etc is appropriate. They should also know the layout of a letter and good use of space in a notice. Any form created for manual completion should have a heading and appropriate spacing for the information to be entered.

When constructing a database, candidates must know of the need for a text field for telephone numbers.

All candidates must have e-mail access and be able to print — **for themselves** — messages that they have sent. They must also have access to an electronic diary and indicate clearly the duration of any appointments inserted.

When a search of the Internet is required to find out details of a journey, all details for that journey must be included — this includes connection details. The relevant details must be highlighted so that the chosen journey is clearly indicated.

If using screenshots, candidates must ensure that they are clear enough for markers to check.

Knowledge and Understanding

Teachers may benefit from reviewing the information provided in previous External Assessment Reports. There is no substitute, however, for candidates learning their Course notes, and this should be encouraged by every means possible. Candidates should consider the mark allocation and take this into account when answering the question, ensuring enough detail is provided.

Problem Solving

Candidates should be instructed to state the **action** required to solve a problem. In addition, candidates at Credit level must be able to explain or justify why they have chosen a particular course of action.

Statistical information: update on Courses

STANDARD GRADE

Number of resulted entries in 2012	5319
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	4821
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Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	14.4%
Grade 2	27.6%
Grade 3	17.8%
Grade 4	19.3%
Grade 5	13.4%
Grade 6	5.9%
Grade 7	0.6%
No award	1.0%

Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
KU	32	20	15	30	19	15	28	22	17
PS	33	23	17	30	19	14	27	17	12
PA	200	145	120	150	110	91	100	68	46

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.