



## External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Economics
Level(s)	Advanced Higher

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

There were many strong candidates who performed well in both parts of the examination. However, in some cases there is a discrepancy between marks achieved in both parts of the examination, which might be reduced by greater preparation of candidates for both examined parts of the course.

This is particularly the case with the dissertation, in which some candidates seem unaware of the published 'Dissertation Guidelines' and 'Marking Instructions'. Some candidates seemed to have lacked adequate advice and support through the dissertation process. In particular, referencing, research skills, and the need to back up assertions with evidence, need to be covered. The strongest dissertations also took a balanced and well-rounded approach to the question prior to the conclusion. Some candidates lost marks by not following the presentation and referencing guidelines, which is disappointing.

Many candidates performed extremely well in the examination, demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding of current economic issues. The graphical demands of the Micro Economic questions continues to pose a challenge for some candidates.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Section A

This was generally well done, although too many candidates lost marks because they did not read the case study carefully enough and therefore did not use the information in it to help them answer the questions set. Good knowledge was demonstrated in questions 1(a) and (b) and 5.

Candidates also demonstrated good knowledge of measures to reduce the effects of climate change in (7), but were less able to 'justify' the measures, which was a requirement of the question.

### Section B

The essay part of the examination paper offered candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their economic knowledge and understanding on a wide range of current issues. Many candidates performed strongly in this part of the paper, writing at length in a sophisticated and discursive style.

Essay (2) was well done, with stronger candidates including up-to-date and relevant examples of African countries.

Essay 6 was generally well done with the exception of (a), where many candidates were unable to draw a diagram showing a negative externality in consumption.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Section A**

- ◆ Question 2(b): Many candidates answered part (a) correctly but did not follow through in (b) by including inelastic demand and supply curves in the diagram.
- ◆ In question 7 many candidates did not 'justify' the measures, and therefore could not gain full marks.

### **Section B**

- ◆ Essay 1(a): Weaker candidates did not apply their knowledge of the characteristics to the market for gas and electricity.
- ◆ Essay 4(c): Some candidates included Monetary Policy, which could not be credited because Monetary Policy is not directly under the UK Government's control.
- ◆ Essay 5(c): Some candidates misinterpreted this question, which is concerned with inflation-targeting as a means to control inflation and help achieve the government's other macroeconomic objectives.

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

Centres should ensure that candidates' dissertation titles are clear and appropriate. Centres should avoid too many candidates choosing the same or similar topics. Titles should not be too historic, geographic, political or business-oriented. Centres should ensure that candidates are aware of published guidelines, and should support students appropriately through the dissertation process.

Candidates should be prepared for questions that require diagrams, including those covered in the Higher course. Candidates should be encouraged to be analytical and discursive by considering the advantages and disadvantages of measures/options. They should also be able to incorporate current examples and statistics in their answers.

## **Statistical information: update on Courses**

<b>Number of resulted entries in 2012</b>	81
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<b>Number of resulted entries in 2013</b>	81
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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	40.7%	40.7%	33	70
B	25.9%	66.7%	21	60
C	24.7%	91.4%	20	50
D	6.2%	97.5%	5	45
No award	2.5%	100.0%	2	-

## 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.