



## External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Economics
Level(s)	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

On the whole candidates were well prepared for the paper, with many strong centres, including some that were new to the examination this year. Most candidates seem to have fully covered the syllabus, but there were a few questions which highlighted that some areas had not been covered in a few centres. The most disappointing aspect of the paper this year was that Essay 6 in Section B was overlooked by many candidates, who did not turn over the page despite the instructions to do so.

Although the grade distribution is lower than in some previous years this may be because a higher number of candidates are attempting the course as a 'Crash' Higher in S6.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

In Section A, Item A most candidates did well on (a) (i) and (ii) and (e). In Item B (a) (b) and (c) were well done.

In Section B, Essay 1 (a) and (b) were well done. Candidates were well-prepared for Essay 3, which was a popular choice. Essay 5 (a) and (b) on free trade allowed many candidates to demonstrate excellent knowledge of this area of the syllabus.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Item A

- ◆ Question (f): Some candidates had not covered fixed exchange rate systems either at all or in sufficient depth to answer this question.

### Item B

- ◆ Question (f): Some candidates confused the Price Elasticity of demand with the Income Elasticity of Demand.
- ◆ Question (g): Too many candidates did not appreciate that a shift in the demand and supply curve was required.

### Section B

- ◆ Essay 1(c) was done particularly poorly, with many candidates unable to explain how the price mechanism works.
- ◆ Essay 2(a) and (b) on cost curves elicited some poor responses and diagrams. Weaker candidates were also unable to distinguish between short-run and long-run costs.
- ◆ Essay 5(c) and (d): Too many candidates chose this essay because they felt confident at (a) and (b) and then performed badly on the final parts of the question. Candidates should be encouraged to consider their choice of essay question based on a full reading of all parts.

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

Please ensure that all areas of the syllabus are covered. Please ensure that candidates are aware of the rubric of the examination — ie there is a choice of six essays, and all should be considered.

Candidates should be competent in the graphical areas of the course.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	584
Number of resulted entries in 2013	590

## 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	38.2%	38.2%	226	70
B	23.4%	61.6%	138	59
C	17.1%	78.7%	101	48
D	8.3%	87.0%	49	42
No award	13.0%	100.0%	77	-

## 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.