

Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:

Management and Enterprise

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
included in this report**

**Business Management
Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher**

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	
Pre appeal	Intermediate 1 – 117 Intermediate 2 – 990 Higher – 5260
Post appeal	

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	Intermediate 1 – 90 Intermediate 2 – 1260 Higher – 5736
Post appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

The number of candidates at Intermediate 2 has risen considerably which suggests that more Centres are trying to encourage candidates to sit at the appropriate level.

An increase of almost 500 at Higher is also a healthy increase and indicates that the subject is becoming well established in schools.

It is less encouraging to note that the number of candidates at Intermediate 1 has dropped – may be an indication that Centres do not see Business Management as an appropriate subject at this level, but also it is not hierarchical with Intermediate 2 so it is unlikely that they could be taught together in the same class.

General comments

Low numbers at Intermediate 1 make comparisons difficult.

Intermediate 2 candidates performed at a similar standard to last year, but there is still an indication that some are still wrongly coursed and should, perhaps, have been entered at intermediate 1 level.

At Higher a change in approach to section one posed some difficulties for candidates which caused the pass mark to be lowered; there was also evidence of candidates misunderstanding or confusing recognised business terminology and not making the analysis required at Higher level.

Grade Boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

<i>Upper A</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>
Intermediate 1 (/50)			
45	35	30	25
Intermediate 2 (/75)			
66	52	44	37
Higher (/100)			
83	68	58	48

General commentary on grade boundaries

Notional percentage cut-offs for each grade

Question papers and their associated marking schemes are designed to be of the required standard and to meet the assessment specification for the subject/level concerned.

For National courses the examination paper(s) are set in order that a score of approximately 50% of the total marks for all components merits a grade C (based on the grade descriptions for that grade), and similarly a score of 70 % for a grade A. The lowest mark for a grade B is set by the computer software as half way between the C and A grade boundaries.

Comments on grade boundaries

Grade boundaries at Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 have remained static and at the right standard over the 3 years' duration of the courses.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

In the first year of the new Higher, Section One contained one question which attracted 20 marks (out of the total 100) and which with hindsight was not challenging enough at Higher level. In 2001 this question was reduced to 10 marks and the pitch of the question paper was considered appropriate for the level. However, in order to further improve the question paper, the examining team wanted to move towards the use of more realistic scenarios, in line with what candidates were likely to be doing in class. This approach dovetails with Advanced Higher when candidates are faced with real-life business case studies. Because it was a 'real' scenario, question one (which is always based on the stimulus materials) appeared more challenging for candidates. This may have been because the "concerns" (or problems) facing the business were not as clearly visible as in a fictitious situation. It was not enough for candidates to provide a summary of the text, nor were they asked for solutions to the problems. Many candidates wrote at great lengths about what Edinburgh Crystal should do instead of about the actual problems which were to be identified. It also seemed that a few candidates had learned "an answer" to question one which did not relate to the actual question asked.

More generally, in Section Two, candidates showed some worrying misunderstandings or confusion in the use of business terminology used within the course. Some candidates completely misunderstood questions, or their answers were more in line with Intermediate 2 candidates, thereby failing to make the analysis required of Higher candidates.

Areas of common misunderstanding

Quality Circles were frequently confused with TQM or checking products. Generally candidates failed to recognise what a Quality Circle is.

Many candidates confused product mix with marketing mix.

Candidates did understand the concept of demerging, but assumed that 2 different shops would be created. They failed to recognise that different stores may already operate under the Group before demerging.

There was a lot of confusion between channel of distribution and choice of transport method.

In Question 5 (d) candidates did not apply knowledge to their answers to the question; they simply described the features of the technology. "Quicker" is not an acceptable answer, especially at Higher level, for every type of ICT.

Some handwriting was particularly difficult to read.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Because it was a real situation, question one (which is always based on the “case”) was more challenging for candidates. The “concerns” (or problems) facing the business were not as clearly visible as in a fictitious situation. It was not enough for candidates to provide a summary of the text, nor were they asked for solutions to the problems. Many candidates wrote at great lengths about what Edinburgh Crystal should do instead of about the actual problems which were to be identified. It also seemed that a few candidates had learned “an answer” to question one which did not relate to the actual question asked. Candidates should also be encouraged to identify the issues/problems under the appropriate headings indicated (marks can be lost for failing to do this). Candidates should be discouraged from offering solutions when solutions to the problems/issues are NOT asked for. Section One will continue to feature a “real” case as stimulus material, so candidates should be aware that issues/problems will not be as “obvious” as in the past.

More generally, in Section Two, candidates showed some worrying misunderstandings or confusion in the use of business terminology used within the course. Some candidates completely misunderstood questions. Some answers were more in line with Intermediate 2 candidates, failing to make the analysis required of Higher candidates – Centres should be wary of entering candidates at the wrong level. It should be borne in mind that NABs (as they stand at present) test the topic which has just been taught, while the external examination is “integrated” and tests the candidates’ knowledge over the holistic aspects of Business Management (as indicated in the Arrangements)

Quality Circles were frequently confused with TQM or checking products. Candidates confused product mix with marketing mix. There was also confusion between channel of distribution and choice of transport method. Students should be encouraged to ensure that they are familiar with and understand business terms accurately.

THE PRELIM

Section One

Use appropriate stimulus for the current standard of exam; it is advisable not to use the pre-published materials (eg Harry’s Glazed Expression, Short Cuts or any of the others from this pack which was issued as “practice” exercises) unless the questions are changed in line with the current format of this paper. Also make sure that questions asked (in Section One and in Section Two) cover the course content, eg in “Short Cuts” there is a question on the Business Plan, which is not in the course content.

Section Two

Questions should be INTEGRATED – ie come from more than one area of study (Outcome) – that means that old MIS questions (unchanged) are inappropriate, unless they are mixed up. The possible exception to this would be the “Finance” question. Also the paper should be “mix and match” from more than one past paper – a past paper (Section 2) in its entirety is unsuitable.

Ensure that over the 2 sections of the prelim the questions cover the whole course content. If you have not covered the whole course by the time of the prelim, for an Appeal, include additional evidence of the outcome(s) covered since the prelim, eg a NAB (although NABs are not normally evidence of candidates’ being able to answer “integrated” questions).

Marking

In the marking of the prelim, show marks awarded CLEARLY, eg not just ticks – bracket/underline the sentence or even paragraph for which you are awarding a mark.

	DO	DON'T
1	Mimic the external exam	“Overlap” questions between Sections 1 & 2
2	Integrate section 2 questions	Use ½ marks in the prelim
3	Keep the marks available per topic more or less in the same proportion as the time spent on the topic	Use pre-published Section 1 stimulus material without checking (and probably amending) the questions
4	In Section 1, restrict the marks available for “problems (and solutions to problems) of the organisation”	Have a part of a question with more than 12 marks
5	Restrict the marks available for “identification”	Use NABS questions without major amendment
6	Restrict the marks available for “definitions”	
7	Set maximums for aspects/parts of a possible answer	
8	Reward “development”	
9	Use internal moderation when more than one marker	
10	When more than one marker, use the same marker for the same questions in all scripts	