

Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:

Computing and Information Systems

Qualification area

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

**Information Systems
Advanced Higher**

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	
Pre appeal	47
Post appeal	51

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	110
Post appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

116% increase on entry figures in 2001, increasing as expected.

General comments

The increase in uptake was not reflected in overall performance of the cohort resulting in a fall in the pass rate, bringing it below the average pass rate for Advanced Higher over all subjects.

The candidature seemed poorer than the previous year. Questions requiring skills of analysis were very poorly attempted – disappointingly so.

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

A Band 1 – 85
A Band 2 – 70
B Band 3 – 65
B Band 4 – 60
C Band 5 – 55
C Band 6 – 50
Compensatory Band 7 – 45
No Award Band 8 – 40
No Award Band 9 – 0

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 for each subject area

Grade boundaries are the same as those set for session 2001.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

In general, candidate responses were disappointing.

Candidates tended to score very poorly in Section I. Responses in Section 2 were poor – although better than Section I. Difficult to determine the reason for decline after such a positive performance in 2001 but it may be that candidates were entered for Information Systems after completing Computing at Higher level, which may account for the disappointing demonstration of analytical skills.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Section 2 produced better quality responses but candidates couldn't be said to have performed well.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Any question requiring candidates to demonstrate skills of analysis. Both questions in Section I and question 10 of Section 2 part C (Data Flow Diagram) were poorly attempted. The majority of descriptive answers lack sufficient detail.

Areas of common misunderstanding

No areas of misunderstanding were apparent. Candidates did attempt all questions, although responses were poor.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Question 1(a) was very poorly completed. Candidates could apply process of normalisation correctly. Many candidates had difficulty at 1NF removing repeating data and identify correct primary keys. A significant number of candidates confused 2NF and 3NF processes.

Question 1(b) was also poorly completed. Entity event matrix produced by the majority of candidates lacked the amount of detail required; the ten events described in the questions were simply not recorded in candidate responses. Many candidates simply listed create, amend, delete events for each entity rather than relating the events to the particular scenario. This lack of attention to detail was also apparent in the entity life history diagram. Details not relevant to the Book entity were often mentioned while details essential to the Book entity were ignored – even if they had been included in the entity event matrix.

Candidate responses in Question 2 were extremely vague with many candidates unable to justify their selection or explain the necessity for particular actions. This is despite having achieved generally high marks in the coursework project which requires choices and decisions such as those required in the exam.

Section 2 Part A: Multimedia

Candidate descriptions and justifications were disappointing and lacking sufficient detail at this level. Responses often focused on small-scale products such as those completed by the candidates themselves rather than considering the issues surrounding the development of a large-scale project such as that described in the scenarios presented. Questions relating to the planning, development and testing of a product were particularly poorly answered.

Section 2 Part B: Natural Language Processing

Insufficient presentations on which to base feedback. Only 1 candidate attempted NLP this year.

Section 2 Part C: Systems Analysis and Design

Candidate descriptions and justifications were poor and lacking sufficient detail at this level. For example, in Question 9(b), many candidates described an interview as a discussion between 2 people and provided no further details. In Question 11(c) candidates were expected to discuss the merits or otherwise of the options being considered – too many candidates simply provided facts without considering the implications of each option.

Question 10 was poorly attempted. Many candidates failed to include important details in the DFD produced – despite having a very clearly laid out list of user requirements for the system. Details of file sizes necessary for the file descriptions in part (b) were provided in the stem of the question but ignored by most candidates. Suitable file descriptions were required for both the Stock File and the Parts Order File and candidates were expected to indicate file size, file type together with details of necessary fields.