

## Principal Assessor Report 2002

**Assessment Panel:**

**Business Services**

**Qualification area**

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

**Administration — Higher**

## Statistical information: update

<b>Number of entries in 2001</b>	
<b>Pre appeal</b>	2,656
<b>Post appeal</b>	2,995

<b>Number of entries in 2002</b>	
<b>Pre appeal</b>	3,722
<b>Post appeal</b>	

### General comments re entry numbers

As expected, numbers continue to increase.

### General comments

The standard of candidates was similar to that of last year. Candidates are coming through from Standard Grade Administration and Intermediate 2, which articulates better to the Higher Course than OIS did previously.

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

Grade	Minimum Mark
A	84
B	72
C	60

### 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

As can be seen from the information above, the Grade boundaries are set at 50% for a C pass, 60% for a B pass, 70% for an A pass.

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

Overall, candidates performed significantly better in the IT paper than in the knowledge and understanding paper. Few candidates were well prepared for **both** papers. This has been a trend in the external assessment of Administration courses at Intermediate 1, 2 and Higher since the introduction of the Higher Still courses.

Separating the knowledge and understanding in the new format of the Higher paper emphasises the importance of knowledge and understanding within the course and allows the course content to be tested more fully in the external assessment.

While candidates often demonstrated an ability to recall facts, they did not demonstrate the higher order skills, eg justify, compare and contrast. It was obvious that some effort has been made to address the higher order skills, but much more work is clearly required in this area. Candidates tended to write repetitively (often filling several pages) without actually answering the question. Much of the knowledge was superficial, and lacked real depth of understanding. Candidates seemed to latch on to key words and start writing. Failure to read, interpret and answer the question asked led to candidates failing to gain marks. Some candidates produced good responses, but failed to gain marks because they had not actually answered the question – some examples of this are detailed below.

Spelling, grammar and sentence construction were generally poor. Candidates need help in structuring their responses in a way that directly addresses the questions asked.

Although candidates generally tackled the IT paper well, the areas which specifically tested their problem-solving abilities were not so well done, eg the formula in the spreadsheet. The new format of the paper sets out to test the candidates' ability to use the software to solve a problem, not just demonstrate routine use of the software.

### Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

The following questions in Paper 1 were generally tackled well:

#### Section 1

Questions 1 and 2

#### Section 2

Question 1 (a) and (c), Question 3(b), Question 4 (a) and 5 (a) and (c)

#### Paper 2

The vast majority of candidates completed this paper in the time allowed. The final document produced by many candidates was of a very high standard. The chart in particular was very well done – a very marked improvement on last year. Keying-in was generally more accurate than has been seen in the past. The mail-merge was also well done.

## Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

### Paper 1

#### Section 1

In Question 1 some candidates concentrated on how data could be lost, but failed to give the **implications** of the loss of data. In Question 3 candidates often gave very good responses, discussing networked and stand-alone systems without making any reference to **meeting planning** and therefore gained no marks. In Question 4 some candidates did not relate their answer to the Human Resource Department.

#### Section 2

##### Question 1

Candidates were asked to **compare and contrast** three methods of payment. Often candidates gave very good answers outlining the different methods of payment, but made no attempt to compare and contrast the methods, therefore could not gain full marks. In part (c) of this question candidates failed to outline the **possible consequences** of inadequate preparation – they simply stated what the administrative assistant might fail to do, eg take account of time differences – they did not state the consequences of this.

##### Question 2

In part (b) of this question candidates often did not tie in the implications of homeworking to **administrative staff**.

##### Question 3

In part (b) most candidates did attempt to compare and contrast on-the-job and off-the-job training. In part (c), however, candidates displayed little knowledge of the features of good information. Many interpreted the question to mean the presentation of information. Examples given had to relate to electronically accessed information to gain marks – candidates failed to do this.

##### Question 4

In part (b) few candidates were able to accurately name relevant legislation (to include the date of the legislation). In part (c) candidates generally gave good answers, discussing the use of three methods of communicating electronically, but then failed to give the **limitations** of the methods discussed.

##### Question 5

Part (b) of this question was poorly answered. Candidates did not use the focus points given to answer the question fully.

### Paper 2

#### Spreadsheet

Many candidates had difficulty with the spreadsheet. Candidates were not demonstrating problem-solving skills to analyse what was required in constructing the formula (ie the membership cost was given as an annual fee, and candidates were asked to calculate a weekly cost per person; therefore the annual fee should have been divided by 52). In calculating the discount, very few candidates used an absolute cell reference within the formulae. Although this was not a requirement to gain the marks for the formulae, it would have been expected that, at Higher level, candidates would have made use of this.

#### Database

Candidates are still having difficulty with sorting on two fields in the database. The interrogation on two fields was generally carried out correctly.

### **Compilation of the Newsletter**

Although, as previously stated, the final document was generally of a very high standard, marks were lost for inconsistencies in presentation, eg the format of the headings, line spacing.

The instruction to indent the bulleted section by 25 mm was not carried out by a significant number of candidates.

### **Areas of common misunderstanding**

#### **Paper 2**

The instruction to omit the header and footer from the first page of the document caused difficulties in interpretation, ie candidates were unclear whether or not the front cover was the first page of the document. The marking guidelines were amended to reflect this and candidates were allocated marks, regardless of where they started the header/footer within the document.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Feedback to centres**

More emphasis should be placed on the knowledge and understanding content of the Higher course.

Candidates need help with reading, interpreting and answering the questions asked. Recall of facts is not enough to gain marks at Higher level. Candidates need to know how to compare and contrast, justify, discuss, describe, etc.

The problem-solving aspects of the use of IT skills need to be developed.