



Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:

Economics

Qualification area

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

Economics – Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	
Pre appeal	1159
Post appeal	1161

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	1039
Post appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

After the slight increase last year, the fall in entries this year was disappointing. The fact that last year's exam proved to be relatively difficult (-0.24) may have been a factor.

General comments

The overall ability of the candidature was higher than in previous years, and, as a result, the majority of the candidates found both sections of the paper fairly straightforward.

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

Maximum Mark	100	
C	–	51
B	–	63
A	–	75
Upper A	–	88

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 a result of the exam being relatively more straightforward this year than previously, the grade boundary marks were the highest they have been for several years.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The average quality of response was significantly higher than in previous years. Although there were some very poor candidates (albeit fewer than usual), there was a relatively high number of excellent candidates - who had obviously been very well prepared for the exam.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Most candidates found the questions relatively easy to understand and tackled them in a logical manner. Item A was very well done; Item B less so. The essay paper was also very well answered by a high percentage of the candidates. Questions 2 and 5 were particularly well answered, with many candidates drawing first class diagrams (although some lost marks for diagrams which were poorly and carelessly drawn). Of the candidates who answered question 6, the majority showed a sound understanding of exchange rates.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Few candidates fully understood the long and short term effects of foreign direct investment on the Balance of Payments. Many candidates showed a poor understanding of certain basic terms eg unit wage costs, headline rate of inflation and real interest rates.

Areas of common misunderstanding

Some candidates misread the diagram in Item B, interpreting a fall in the inflation rate as an actual fall in prices. Too many candidates still do not fully understand the concept of scarcity and think that it is the same as a shortage.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Pupils would benefit from practising drawing clear, fully labelled diagrams. Teachers should stress to pupils the importance of answering the question that has been set - not the one they wish had been set. Teachers should tell pupils to study very carefully any diagrams which appear in the paper.