



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Administration
Level	Intermediate 2

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

As in previous years, candidates attained higher marks for Paper 2. However, candidates are attempting to answer questions in Paper 1 where in previous years they would have left blank spaces, and very few candidates attained very low marks for Paper 1. Most candidates attempted the required number of questions in Paper 1. Almost all candidates completed both papers in the time allocation. In Paper 1, Section B, most candidates attempted Question 1 and Question 2, with few attempting Question 3; however, when this Question was attempted, marks attained were equivalent to the other two questions.

Many candidates are still not inputting their name on printouts, or putting printouts in the correct order when they are submitted.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Paper 1

Section A

Question 1: most candidates knew about customer service.

Question 2 (b): most candidates were able to identify responsibilities of an employee under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Question 4 (a): most candidates were able to identify storage devices used for backups.

Question 4 (b): most candidates were very good at suggesting benefits of communicating by e-mail.

Section B

Question 1 (a): most candidates were able to outline factors when choosing a method of travel.

Question 1 (d): most candidates were able to suggest an advantage and disadvantage of using the internet to source information.

Question 3 (a): though few candidates attempted this question, most candidates attained full marks.

Paper 2

Task 1 (a): most candidates gained high marks in this section of the task, following the instructions given. Almost all candidates keyed in the price per person column accurately and named the cell correctly.

Task 1 (b): again, keying in numbers was accurate. Most candidates accurately completed the IF function.

Task 2: most candidates attained highly in this task. Almost all candidates were able to add a field accurately and edit information.

Task 3: almost all candidates were able to use the itinerary template effectively, and attempted to insert the correct information from the question paper into the itinerary.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Paper 1

Section A

Question 2 (a): many candidates described the use of a fixed term contract, instead of justifying the use of it.

Question 3 (a): many candidates described features of an itinerary, rather than the purpose of it.

Question 3 (b): again, candidates described a travel and accommodation request form instead of the use of it.

Question 5: candidates did not relate their responses to the identified functional department.

Section B

Question 1 (b): many candidates did not even attempt to compare the two documents. They simply described both. Also, many who did try to compare them used random statements for comparison.

Question 1 (c): many candidates were able to name the method of communication, but were unable to expand or give examples.

Question 2 (a): many candidates did not know about features of good communication.

Question 2 (b): very few candidates were able to justify relating to a functional department.

Question 2 (d): many candidates used the word 'cash' when they should have referred to currency. Few candidates understood the purpose of a traveller's cheque.

Question 3 (b): though many candidates demonstrated knowledge of flexible working practices, few were able to compare similar features.

Question 3 (d): again, many candidates were unable to justify.

Paper 2

Task 1 (a): many candidates had difficulty sorting the whole spreadsheet — they sorted one column only. When using the IF function many put in \geq instead of just $>$. A number of candidates did not enter formula in specified cells.

Task 1 (b): a number of candidates did not accurately key in %CHANGE and ON TARGET? column headings. As in previous years, only the very best candidates were able to accurately enter formula for % change.

Task 2: as in previous years, many candidates were unable to sort on two fields. Many candidates inserted a page footer instead of a report footer, or inserted their name in the report footer. Truncation of fields was still an issue.

Task 3: most of the marks lost in this task were for accuracy, capitalisation, and consistency in use of 24-hour clock. A surprisingly high number of candidates did not know the manuscript correction sign STET. Many candidates did not know how to key in an asterisk, and did not know about spacing an asterisk even though it was very clear on the question paper.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

Centres must continue to impress the meanings of the command words so that candidates answer the question which is being asked. Although many candidates are extending their answers in Paper 1, many are still not answering the question being asked. Candidates must be aware that when a specific functional area is asked about, the response should relate to that area.

Only the very best candidates were able to compare — candidates can use ‘both’ or a linking word in order to be awarded marks. Candidates also had problems when asked to justify. These command words are higher order skills and need lots of practice before the final exam.

One of the best ways of preparing pupils for Paper 2 of the final exam is using timed past papers. This gives candidates practice of time management. It is important that pupils have a routine of inserting their name in the footer of all printouts; this ensures that they are used to doing this under examination conditions. Candidates should also have practice in putting all their printouts in the correct order by using the template in the ‘instructions for candidates’ section of the examination paper. This will ensure printouts are not missed and the correct value/formula printout is submitted.

Candidates should be encouraged to read instructions very carefully, especially those regarding cell reference in a spreadsheet.

Candidates must know how to sort on two non-consecutive fields in a database.

As previously highlighted, candidates should be encouraged to proofread their work carefully when keying in text.

Candidates must also key in their name on all pieces of work and ensure that the paper submitted is in the correct order.

Centres should use the Understanding Standards website when preparing pupils for the exam. This details the mark allocation for tasks and command words which are used. The sample candidate responses have also recently been updated on the website. Marking instructions for SQA papers are also available on the SQA website; these are annotated for ease of use.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	4,198
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	3,981
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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	14.6%	14.6%	582	70
B	27.0%	41.6%	1,073	59
C	27.3%	68.9%	1,087	49
D	9.9%	78.8%	395	44
No award	21.2%	100.0%	844	-

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, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.