



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Administration
Level(s)	Higher

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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

The majority of candidates found both Paper 1 and 2 very accessible. The trend continues to improve with overall passes and A grade awards increasing. This year saw a slight increase in the number of candidates accessing the Upper A Band.

There is strong evidence that candidates are fully prepared for the exam and are well-equipped to cope with the majority of tasks and questions.

In Paper 2 the Database and Spreadsheet questions are structured to become more challenging with each part. Statistical analysis showed that this worked very well with most candidates doing well in part A of both questions and with part C competently completed by the most able.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Paper 1	
Section 1	
1	For most candidates this question was well answered and they gained 3 or 4 marks. Some gave only an ID without any further development.
2	Job Description and Person Specification were well answered. Most candidates could give both an outline and an additional comment.
3	The 'discuss' question on teams was very well done. The candidate could answer from either the individual's point of view or the organisation's or both — this enabled most candidates to gain 3 or more marks. However, some candidates tended to give 'catch all' phrases eg sales will increase.
4	Most candidates have a very good comparison technique.
Section 2	
2(a)	Whilst this question was not a popular one, candidates could give good answers on the benefits of outsourcing.
2(d)	Answers on benefits of an intranet were good.
3(b)	Descriptions of Notice of Meeting and Agenda were fairly well done, although some candidates gave repetitive second points. There was some confusion over Minutes — many candidates stated that they are a word-for-word record of the meeting.

3(c)	Candidates who had read the question carefully gave very good answers, and many gained full marks. There were a significant number who did not read the question carefully enough and gave answers relating to before the meeting.
4(a)	Good answers to this question — most candidates gave four scoring points and had a solid understanding of the topic. Some, however wrote about features of good information.
5(a)	Candidates gave good responses to this question. It was much better answered as an outline question than when it has been asked as a 'describe'.
5(b)	Most candidates gained the outline mark but struggled to find a development point.
5(d)	Those candidates who knew what a job analysis is achieved very good marks for this question.

Paper 2	
Database 1(a)	Most candidates gained 4 marks for this. The only issue was not picking up on fact that the property could not be let already.
Database 1(b)	Very well done — this question now gains full marks for most candidates. A small number of candidates struggle with the problem solving element of this and fail to gain any marks.
Spreadsheet 2(a)	This was well done, with most candidates gaining full marks. There were very few problems with the vlookup — most knew exactly what to do. The only issue was in not omitting specified columns.
Spreadsheet 2(b)	Those who knew to use Sumif had no problems. The conditional statement was an easy mark for most as was the countif. Some less able pupils had problems with devising a formula to calculate Total Net Income and tried to sort the Tour Bookings sheet and then totalled. Many of these candidates made errors and picked up the wrong cells.
Word processing	<p>Very well done and there was some evidence that pupils are taking the advice of teachers and doing this question before attempting the spreadsheet.</p> <p>Candidates coped well with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Creation of front page ◆ Footnote ◆ Deletion of comments ◆ Deletion of watermark

	◆ Table – insertion of additional line and sorting
--	--

Areas which candidates found demanding

Paper 1	
Section 1	
2	<p>Surprisingly, candidates found it difficult to gain 2 marks for their descriptions of an Application Form. All too often the answer was simply 'form filled in when applying for a job'. This was not accepted.</p> <p>Many could only give one point on Person Specification.</p>
4	<p>Sometimes candidates gave a very simplistic comparison, eg 'can see with one and hear with the other' or 'can see with video but can't with audio'. Neither of these would have been accepted.</p> <p>Some candidates struggled to gain 2 marks and it was surprising how many could not come up with two similarities.</p>
5	<p>There was very poor knowledge of fixed-term contracts, so most candidates did not gain 2 marks for this. Some confused with fixed-term with permanent contract.</p>
Section 2	
1(a)	<p>Many struggled to outline online surveys. This question has been asked before as a 'describe' question, but seemed to present a problem to a lot of candidates. Maybe the phrase 'field research' was unknown to them.</p> <p>This question was not a popular choice. 'Justify the provision of a staff counselling service' was misunderstood by many of the candidates who did do this question. Many did not know what the benefits of a counselling service are.</p>
1(c)	<p>In-depth knowledge of appraisals seems to be lacking and many candidates listed without going into detail.</p>
2(b)	<p>Features of a website to encourage customers to buy online were mainly answered as the benefits of e-commerce. Candidates found it difficult to gain the second mark for each description.</p>
2(c)	<p>Candidates ran out of steam for this answer — many could only give reasons as to why it is important to handle complaints effectively rather than coming up with what a business should have in place to deal with complaints.</p>
3(a)	<p>Some found it hard to give skills or qualities that are relevant to a senior</p>

	Administrative Assistant.
3(d)	This question seemed to confuse candidates — ‘justify the expense’ has been used many times in the past and is a higher-order type of question. There also seemed to be a number of candidates who were unable to specify what external training is.
4(b)	Secondary information — there is a great deal of confusion about this source of information. Many candidates state that it is from outwith the organisation and is expensive.
4(c)	Surprisingly this question was not well done — many ran out of points to make, and many candidates lack detailed knowledge about e-mails. Answers were restricted to very basic features of e-mail. Very little reference to delivery and read receipts, out-of-office automatic replies or redirection, distribution lists, etc.

PAPER 2	
Database 1(c)	<p>This question proved challenging for a lot of candidates. Many did not understand that they needed to do a query on those properties that had been rented.</p> <p>Headings were often inadequate or had an error.</p> <p>There were a surprising number who made an error in calculating 6% and must have keyed in 0.6 rather than 0.06 in the calculation.</p> <p>There was widespread misunderstanding of what commission actually is. Many added it on to the rental cost and showed an additional column with the commission and rent added together. It was decided at the markers’ meeting to penalise additional fields to take account of this. (Normally if fields are not specified there is no penalty for extraneous fields.)</p> <p>Few candidates understood that for each Agent the commission due was to be sub-totalled. Even those who did do this often did not ensure that the labels were accurate or that amounts were formatted for currency.</p> <p>It was rather surprising that this question did not gain high marks. It is not markedly different from past paper questions.</p>
Spreadsheet 2(c)	<p>As in previous years this question is a discriminator and it is usually only the A candidate who will be completely successful with it.</p> <p>Many struggled with the nested if statement, and many keyed in the percentages in the formula rather than using the cell reference. This was</p>

	<p>required in order to ‘future-proof’ the formula.</p> <p>Some candidates are still not aware of what VAT is and subtract the amount rather than add.</p> <p>Some candidates do not know how to use print selection and deleted the table so formulae then did not work.</p>
Word processing	<p>The issues below could be due to candidates running out of time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ different fonts ◆ justification ◆ errors in paragraph keyed in ◆ presentation <p>The following issues are more likely to be due to a lack of knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Headers – different left and right ◆ Find and replace – a significant number did this manually and made spelling errors

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

In the main candidates are doing very well in this higher, and centres should be reassured that they are providing highly effective learning and teaching environments. There are and always will be some candidates who are presented for this Higher but poor literacy and numeracy skills are a barrier to their success. Markers felt that there was an increase in the number of centres where the majority of candidates were of a very low ability, and it may be that these pupils had been presented at the wrong level.

The best preparation is to be fully familiar with the past paper questions and to have completed the IT papers on a number of occasions, each time trying to reduce the time taken. For the theory paper, candidates are advised to sort the past paper questions into topics and analyse what has been asked over the years.

Candidates need to be reassured that the IT paper can be attempted in the order that best suits their own strengths, and that there is no reason not to do the word processing task first.

Repeating the question

Some candidates simply take the question and reword it — eg ‘form filled in by applicants’ for an application form, or ‘people working in teams can be highly effective’ for the benefits of effective teams.

Command words

Outline — it is difficult to get the balance right between writing enough to merit a mark to writing too much. Some candidates give very long and detailed answers which will gain a mark but they may run out of time for other questions.

Misinterpretation of questions

Most markers commented on the fact that a significant number of candidates seemed to misunderstand questions — candidates made statements on the topic but did not directly answer the question. For example, the question on features of good information handling was answered as if the word 'handling' was not present. Similarly the question on technology used during a meeting was answered as if the word 'during' was not there.

It is difficult to surmise if this is a lack of knowledge and candidates just write what they do know about, or if they are careless when reading questions. Markers did say that the questions were fairly straightforward and, given the quality of the candidates other answers, it would appear to be that in a lot of cases candidates did not read the question carefully enough or refer back to it whilst writing their answer.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	2403
------------------------------------	------

Number of resulted entries in 2014	2686
------------------------------------	------

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 200				
A	27.2%	27.2%	731	84
B	26.4%	53.6%	710	72
C	23.6%	77.2%	633	60
D	8.9%	86.1%	239	54
No award	13.9%	-	373	-

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, SQA therefore 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 Business Manager 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.