



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Administration
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

This year's cohort was very different to previous years' due to the introduction of the Nationals. This meant that there were fewer S4 candidates being presented, which, although expected, resulted in a slightly lower standard of performance. However, there were very few candidates who were not Intermediate 2 standard.

Almost all candidates were able to complete both Paper 1 and Paper 2 in the required time.

In Paper 1, Section 1, many candidates attained at least half marks.

In Section 2, there appeared to be a more even spread of attempted questions than last year, and most candidates attempted all parts of their chosen questions.

Many candidates still have difficulty in answering higher-order command words. Some candidates still demonstrate poor knowledge and exam technique, often failing to read keywords within the question, eg 'the use of'. Spelling and grammar still remain poor in many instances.

In Paper 2 there are still printouts without printed candidate names on them, despite instructions to candidates that their name must be included on each sheet. Candidates are getting better at putting the correct printouts in their submission, though a minority of candidates still lose marks unnecessarily by submitting incorrect printouts. There were very few extraneous printouts this year.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Paper 1 – Section 1

Question 1(a): Most candidates answered this question well. They have a good working knowledge of mobile technology and flexible working practices.

Question 2: Customer care is an area that is always well attempted and this year was no exception.

Question 5: Most candidates dealt with this question comfortably with the justification of using e-commerce well answered.

Paper 1 – Section 2

Although the marks for this section were less than those for Section 1, the overall attainment for this section showed a slight improvement on previous years. Most candidates try to compare and outline quite well.

Question 1(a) and (d): Most candidates were able to gain at least the outline mark (x2) for the disadvantages of using the internet to source information and the responsibilities for the employer for Fire Precautions.

Question 2 (a): Many candidates were able to gain one mark for the comparison of the role of the Sales and Purchases department — a distinct improvement on past performances in this area.

Question 3 (a) and (c): These questions were generally well attempted with many candidates gaining more than half the marks available.

Paper 2

Overall Paper 2 was well done by many candidates. Most candidates attempted all tasks.

Task 1 — Spreadsheet: Generally well done — a better attempt at formulae than previous years. Most candidates followed the instructions for formatting heading and bordering cells. In the chart, most candidates were awarded the marks for using the correct data and chart type.

Task 2 — Database: Most candidates created the Form. Almost all candidates demonstrated their ability to insert a record and a field (including formatting), most gaining all the marks available. Search for the Report detail was well done.

Task 3 – Merge Letter: Almost all candidates used the letterhead template provided. Most candidates understood the manuscript correction signs and were able to complete the whole document.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Paper 1

Generally candidates still struggle with the command word 'Describe', in that the outline and additional comment must match. Similarly with 'Compare' — many candidates are only able to link two things for one mark. Mostly marks are lost because candidates do not read the questions, especially questions which specify 'the use of'.

Section 1

Question 3(a): Many candidates had little or no knowledge of the HR department's role regarding training.

Question 4(b): Candidates were unsure of the use of Expenses Claim Form — many simply outlined what it is.

Question 5(a): Many candidates use the phrase 'dealing with' when outlining an activity — this is too vague to be awarded any marks.

Question 5(b): Most candidates could not justify the use of e-commerce, but merely named or outlined the use.

Paper 1 – Section 2

Question 1(a): This was surprisingly poorly answered. Many candidates simply repeated the words in the question — paper-based resources — and failed to mention what they were, eg books.

Question 1(b): Many candidates described a mission statement, not its use.

Question 3(b): Most of the responses referred to security of information and not equipment, eg using passwords.

Paper 2

Task 1 — Spreadsheet: Many candidates did not achieve the formatting mark, forgetting to format **all** cells for currency and two decimal points. Many candidates did not use the absolute cell in formula, and used cell values instead of cell references — although the task clearly requested the use of an absolute cell reference. Very few candidates completed the *Countif* formula.

Similarly the formula for projection value was poorly done, showing poor problem solving techniques.

In the chart task, few candidates attained marks for the appropriate heading — usually due to spelling errors — and several candidates failed to include clear or appropriate legend.

Many formula view printouts still show truncated columns, resulting in unnecessary loss of marks.

Task 2 — Database: Many candidates still seem to be unable to insert their name on printouts, many resorting to handwriting on the printout. Some candidates also had difficulty with sorting the database on two fields — a major issue at Intermediate 2 level as it is always examined in the database task.

Many candidates submitted a Report printout which showed an inappropriate Report Heading and truncated field headings.

Task 3 — Merge Letter: The content of many letters was very poor — particularly the reference, date, salutation and complimentary close. In fact, many candidates had little idea of how to set out business letter with appropriate merge fields for address.

Many candidates attained few marks for keying-in due to inaccuracies when keying-in from manuscript.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres should download and check the files against the **hard copy** provided by SQA in plenty of time before the examination. The files should then be kept secure until the day of the exam. Teachers should not be using the files or going into the files to make amendments, other than to print them for **each** group for submission with candidate printouts. There are still many instances where packs have no printouts in them. Any queries or concerns about the files should be directed to SQA in good time **before** the date of the examination.

Candidates must have the knowledge stated in the Arrangements Document.

Extended writing for higher-order command words still requires greater focus — especially to facilitate progression to Higher level. When answering 'compare' questions, the comparisons must be linked with a suitable word, eg 'whereas', 'however', 'but'. The command words and exemplar answers are on the SQA Understanding Standards website. Candidates must

especially be aware of the amount of writing required when answering higher-order command words, specifically 'Describe' — many candidates are still not giving two matching/related points.

Candidates should be more careful when checking the hard copy that comes out of the printer. It should be checked for truncation, accuracy and formatting.

It is good practice to export databases to a word-processed document, as it is easier to sort data in a table, fit the document to one page without truncating, and key-in name and school in the footer. This should be practised often throughout the year to avoid problems on the exam date, specifically True/False or '1/0' when printing a Yes/No field.

Similarly, spreadsheet printouts can be easily set up to fit to one page, and can be easily formatted to ensure all columns are visible — especially in formula printout.

Any chart should have a meaningful heading, legend and axis. This is a basic skill and should be easily achieved at this level.

Candidates must be familiar with the layout of word-processing documents. Letters have been tested in the last few years, yet still many candidates are unsure of proper layout/content.

Accuracy of keying-in is still a major issue for many candidates — they do not seem to be able to proofread their own work. Perhaps more emphasis should be given to this in normal class work. Instead of teachers/lecturers correcting all inaccuracies for students, they should be allowed to find and correct them on their own.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	3594
Number of resulted entries in 2014	2039

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	19.0%	19.0%	388	70
B	24.7%	43.7%	504	60
C	28.8%	72.6%	588	50
D	8.9%	81.5%	182	45
No award	18.5%	-	377	-

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.