



## External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Computing
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

There was a large reduction in the number of candidates presented for this exam, and nearly all candidates came from S5 or S6. Some of the candidate responses seemed to have been rushed, short and not always relating to the scenario of the questions.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Computer Systems and Software Development

Question 9: Most candidates knew how to improve the readability of a program.

Question 15(d): The requirements of the Data Protection Act seem to have been well understood.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Computer Systems and Software Development

Question 8: Candidates were not very clear about what constitutes extreme data, and some mixed it up with exceptional.

Question 14(a): Candidates did not understand objects and operations.

Question 14 (c) (iii): Some candidates were unable to give correct complex conditions.

Question 15(b): Some candidates were not able to accurately describe the functions of anti-virus software.

Question 15(c) (ii): The functions of operating systems was not well understood this year, which was a change to previous years.

Question 15(e): Candidates did not seem familiar with different kinds of design notation.

Question 16(b): Some candidates thought that the fastest time would be the minimum rather than the maximum.

Question 16(c): Few candidates either knew how real numbers were stored in computers or were able to articulate it meaningfully.

### Artificial Intelligence

Question 17 (c) (ii): Candidates were not able to relate the legal issues to the scenario.

Question 18(d): Candidates did not perform well answering this question in the context of the scenario.

Question 19(b): Performance was poor in the knowledge based search this year.

### Computer Networking

Question 22(b)(ii): Candidates did not perform well answering this question in the context of the scenario.

## **Multimedia Technology**

Question 24(c): Few candidates knew a technique for reducing file sizes.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

Candidates are reminded to take their time and read the questions carefully and answer relevant to the question that has been asked.

Practice papers may help candidates to understand the depth of response required to ensure success.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	2092
------------------------------------	------

Number of resulted entries in 2015	232
------------------------------------	-----

## 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	12.9%	12.9%	30	70
B	21.6%	34.5%	50	60
C	30.2%	64.7%	70	50
D	10.3%	75.0%	24	45
No award	25.0%	-	58	-

For this Course, the intention was to set an assessment with grade boundaries at the notional values of 50% for a Grade C and 70% for a Grade A.

## 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.