



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Computing
Level(s)	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

The 2012 paper was of a similar standard to previous years', though the grade boundaries were reduced by two marks as, on reflection, the marking of technical terminology was thought to be too strict. Examples of this are when candidates gave file extensions rather than file types, or used loose terms such as 'memory stick' rather than 'Flash drive'.

At times candidates don't read the questions carefully enough and will give answers that don't always relate to the question. This loses them marks.

As in previous years, many candidates are not answering questions as fully as they could, especially when they are asked to describe or explain.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Computer Systems and Software Development

Section 1: The majority of candidates answered these questions well.

Question 15(h)(ii): Most candidates know that there are 1024 bytes in a Kilobyte.

Question 17(c): Candidates are well versed in the reasons why high-level programming languages are used rather than machine code.

Artificial Intelligence

Question 20: More candidates are now making a good attempt at the trace tables.

Networking

Question 22: Candidates are very familiar with the technology required to access the Internet, securely from their homes.

Multimedia

Question 24(d): Candidates are well versed in the use of digital video.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Computer Systems and Software Development

Question 15(b): Too many candidates are still unclear as to the differences between RAM and Backing storage.

Question 15(f): The meaning of a character set is unknown too many candidates.

Question 16(d): Many candidates understood that it was the beginning of a loop but failed to say how many times it was to be repeated.

Artificial Intelligence

Question 19(a): Candidates are not good at describing what is meant by an 'expert system'.

Networking

Question 21 (e) (ii): Few students were able to describe how Domain Name Service works.

Multimedia

Question 24 (b) (i): Many candidates are unsure as to the function of a CCD in a digital camera.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Take time to read the questions and answer as fully as possible.

Ensure that candidates understand the difference between memory (RAM) and storage.

Ensure the correct use of technical terms such as 'USB flash drive' **not** 'USB pen'.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2011	3154
------------------------------------	------

Number of resulted entries in 2012	3074
------------------------------------	------

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	30.8%	30.8%	947	68
B	23.8%	54.6%	731	58
C	21.7%	76.3%	666	48
D	9.0%	85.2%	276	43
No award	14.8%	100.0%	454	-

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.