



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>Computing Studies</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 1</b>

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 2011 paper was of a similar standard to previous years. Candidates' responses in the objective-style questions continued to produce a high score.

Candidates' responses produced far fewer commercial product names. Centres have taken previous reports on board and must continue to reinforce that commercial names will not attract marks.

Candidates struggled with questions where they were asked to justify or explain answers, even in questions where the candidate had to answer the same style of question in the Coursework.

Once again, Information and the Internet was the optional topic with fewer candidates presented.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Questions 1 (a)–(d), (f): candidates were generally confident in answering questions about word processing in new situations.

Questions 3 (a), (d): candidates were very confident in recognising a spreadsheet and a pie chart.

Questions 4 (a), (b): candidates were confident in storage capacity and inserting graphics.

Questions 4 (d), (e) were generally well answered by candidates.

Questions 5 (c), (d), (e) were generally well answered by candidates.

## Computers and the Internet

Question 6 (a)(i): candidates knew the type of computer system.

Question 6 (d): candidates were generally confident about the software development process.

Question 7 (b): candidates were confident in identifying where data is stored and types of files.

Questions 8 (a), (b), (c) were generally well answered.

## **Information and the Internet**

Question 6 (a): candidates had knowledge of data types in a database.

Questions 6 (c)(i), (d), (e) were well done.

Question 6 (f): candidates were confident in knowing what a home page is.

Question 7 (a)(i): candidates were confident about types of information system.

Questions 7 (b)(ii), (iii) were generally well answered.

Questions 8 (a), (b), (d) were well answered.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

Question 1 (e)(ii): as with question 4 (c)(ii) of the 2010 paper, candidates were unclear about the difference between text wrap and word wrap, and frequently gave word wrap as the answer.

Question 1 (g): many candidates were unfamiliar with the use of tabulation.

Question 2 (c): several candidates were unclear about how text can be animated.

Questions 3 (b), (c), (d): many candidates were unclear about how calculations, adding new rows and sorting data within a spreadsheet were carried out. As with previous years, the use of the SUM function in a subtraction calculation was far too evident.

Question 4 (c): candidates were unclear about slide transitions and the effect they had within a presentation.

Question 5 (b): as in previous years, candidates had difficulty in writing down the steps to perform a search.

## **Computers and the Internet**

Question 6 (a)(ii): candidates were unfamiliar with input devices for palmtops and frequently gave stylus as an answer.

Question 6 (c): as with the 2010 examination, candidates were unfamiliar with the computer system that controlled a network.

Question 6 (e): candidates are still having difficulty with types of data.

Question 7 (a)(i): candidates did not answer in technical terms or just gave 'USB' on its own.

Question 7 (a)(ii): candidates were unclear on types of communication software.

Question 8 (d): most candidates were unfamiliar with security of passwords.

## **Information and the Internet**

Question 6 (b): candidates did not do well with calculated fields.

Question 6 (c)(ii): candidates were unsure of output formats for databases.

Question 6 (e)(ii): software development process and testing were areas of weakness for candidates.

Question 7 (b)(i): candidates were unfamiliar with the difference between data and information.

Question 8 (c): types of website was an area of weakness for several candidates.

Question 8 (e): very few candidates knew what interlinked pages of information on the internet were.

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

### **General**

Candidates and teaching staff should read this report while referring to the 2011 Question Paper and Markers' Instructions.

As with previous years, candidates should be able to describe the practical skills they have demonstrated in class and in the Coursework, for example the steps involved in database searching and sorting.

Candidates should continue to ensure they do not use commercial product names, for example Microsoft Word or Serif Draw, but should give the type of software (word processing, drawing).

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	1,981
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	1,681
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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	31.5%	31.5%	529	70
B	31.5%	62.9%	529	60
C	20.2%	83.2%	340	50
D	5.7%	88.8%	95	45
No award	11.2%	100.0%	188	-

## **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.