



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Computing Studies
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

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'.

Candidates' responses in the objective-style questions continued to produce a high score. Candidates are still struggling with questions that require them to justify or explain answers. Candidates need to read the problem and then answer in context, the majority of questions link to practical tasks that the candidates will have demonstrated in the classroom and in the coursework.

Information and the Internet was the optional topic with fewer candidates being presented.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Section 1

Word processing, Hardware and Software – 1(a),1(b),1(c) (i) and (ii),1(d), 3(f) (i) candidates were more familiar with the stored dictionary.

Interpretation of an advert – 2(a)

Databases – number of records – 2(d)(i)

Presentation/Multimedia – candidates were still giving powerpoint as an answer to 3(a) (i) instead of the TYPE – presentation/multimedia.

Section 2

Computers and the Internet

Applications – 5(e)

Hardware – 5(f), 5(h)

Websites/Internet – 6(b), 6(d)

Information and the Internet:

Laws – 5(b), 6(d), 6(g)

Areas which candidates found demanding

Section 1

Hardware – 1(c) (iii)

Generally candidates confused Databases with Spreadsheets and visa versa, in particular 4(f)

The applications of searching and sorting a database — 2(d)(ii) and (iii)

Generally candidates were uncertain as to how to alter the page layout of a document – 3(g)

Optical Character Recognition, several candidates confused optical character recognition with voice recognition – 3(h)

Section 2

Computers and the Internet

Hardware — 5(a)

Running costs 5(g) (i)

Software Development Process 6(a) (i)

Information and the Internet

Databases – 5(a)(ii), 5(a)(iii), 5(a)(iv)

Networks – 6(f)

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Candidates and teaching staff should read this report while referring to the 2012 Question Paper and Markers' Instructions.

Candidates should ensure they practise questions that require them to justify and explain answers to practical exercises.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2011	1681
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	1994
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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	31.7%	31.7%	633	70
B	31.6%	63.3%	630	60
C	21.5%	84.8%	428	50
D	6.0%	90.8%	119	45
No award	9.2%	100.0%	184	-

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.