



## External Assessment Report 2009

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Subject	Economics
Level	Advanced Higher

**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

Performance in Section A of examination paper was disappointing. The topic, exchange rates, although topical and clearly within the scope of the arrangements, was one for which candidates were not fully prepared. Responses in Section B were stronger with many candidates opting for questions on the “Credit Crunch” (Q2) and “Recession” (Q4).

Performance in dissertations was little changed. More detailed advice has been published on the SQA website to assist schools when preparing candidates for this component of the examination from 2009/10 onwards.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

As indicated answers on “The Credit Crunch” (Q2) and “The Recession” (Q4) were generally of a good standard. Many candidates demonstrated evidence of wide reading and good understanding of complex topics and issues.

Dissertations were mostly well researched and well presented demonstrating a sound understanding of chosen Economic issues, problems and contemporary developments, most candidates showed a strong awareness of the contemporary economic matters integral to the examination.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

1. Limited understanding of exchange rates was revealed by the mediocre response to the compulsory item in Section A. Many of the questions should have been answered better because they were rooted in the Higher Grade course.
2. Poor diagrams in Q5 of Item B undermined some responses.
3. Few candidates answered Q6 on public sector deficits.
4. A number of candidates failed to distinguish between a credit crunch and a recession (Q2 & Q4)

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

1. Candidates should not assume that knowledge acquired at Higher Grade becomes redundant at Advanced Higher as economic understanding is cumulative.
2. Candidates are still reluctant to include diagrams in their answers and some are unable to produce accurate diagrams especially in relation to market failure (Section B Q3) and competition (Section B Q5).
3. With the issue of more specific evidence on dissertations, it is hoped that **all** candidates will improve the structure (Intro, Main Text, Conclusion), application of Economic theory and use of sources and references in their presentations.
4. In a few instances, candidates' knowledge was dated. Candidates should keep abreast of developments right up to the time of the examination. The Course is planned to be contemporary; failure to keep up-to-date has a serious impact on a candidate's prospects.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	92
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	78
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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	33.3%	33.3%	26	69
B	34.6%	67.9%	27	59
C	19.2%	87.2%	15	49
D	3.8%	91.0%	3	44
No award	9.0%	100.0%	7	-

### 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.