



## External Assessment Report 2009

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Subject	Economics
Level	Intermediate 1 and 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

### INTERMEDIATE 1

The number fell this year, from 11 to 7. Although only one candidate gained an A pass, there were no 'No Awards'.

### INTERMEDIATE 2

The upward trend in numbers continued this year, reaching an all-time high of 313. This year's pass rate of 95% is also the highest ever and reflects both the high average ability of the candidates, and how well they were prepared for the examination.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### INTERMEDIATE 1

#### ITEM A

Most candidates displayed a sound understanding of the concepts of markets, equilibrium price and opportunity cost.

#### ITEM B

Most candidates correctly defined Budget deficits and surpluses and knew the reasons for international trade. They also had a satisfactory knowledge of developing countries and overseas aid.

### INTERMEDIATE 2

- Item B was well answered and presented few problems for the majority of the candidates. Although Item A proved to be more difficult for some candidates, it was comfortably passed by the majority.
- Most answers to essay 1 were impressive, although some candidates did not know the difference between the level and rate of unemployment.
- Most candidates scored highly in essay 3.
- Essay 5 was also well answered, with most candidates drawing excellent diagrams, particularly in (b).

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### INTERMEDIATE 1

#### ITEM A

- In question (c) some candidates gave only the equilibrium price.
- Most answers to question (g) did not link the variable cost to the production of mince pies.

#### ITEM A

- In question (d) most candidates failed to mention the proportional element.
- Few candidates could correctly define National Income.

## **INTERMEDIATE 2**

### **PART 1**

#### **ITEM A**

- In question (d) a significant minority of candidates failed to calculate average variable cost correctly.
- In question (e) most candidates thought that the profit maximising output is the most efficient output.
- In question (h) around half of the candidates gave factors which could increase the general demand for garden seats rather than the demand for garden seats made by Rosewood Ltd.

#### **ITEM B**

- Most candidates failed to give full explanations in question (a).
- In question (b), some candidates confused injections and withdrawals.

### **PART 2**

- In question 1, some candidates did not know the difference between the level and the rate of unemployment.
- Although most candidates gave correct examples in question 2(b), few gave valid explanations.
- In question 4(a), some candidates confused a free trade area with the eurozone and many of the descriptions of economies of scale given in answer to (c) were disappointing.
- In question 5, most candidates drew the correct diagram for (b), but a large number drew the wrong diagram for (c).

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

### **INTERMEDIATE 1**

Candidates should be encouraged to read over their work carefully to make sure that they have answered what the questions ask.

### **INTERMEDIATE 2**

- As one hour 45 minutes is a generous time allocation, candidates should be encouraged to take time to read each item in part 1 very carefully before attempting the questions. They should also carefully read all the essays and take time to decide which one to attempt.
- Candidates should also link the length and depth of their explanations to the number of marks allocated to the questions.
- Candidates should be reminded that all diagrams must be fully labelled and neatly drawn using a ruler.

**Intermediate 1**  
**Statistical information: update on Courses**

<b>Number of resulted entries in 2008</b>	11
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<b>Number of resulted entries in 2009</b>	7
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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 - 40				
A	14.3%	14.3%	1	28
B	14.3%	28.6%	1	24
C	57.1%	85.7%	4	20
D	14.3%	100.0%	1	18
No award	0.0%	100.0%	0	-

**Intermediate 2**  
**Statistical information: update on Courses**

<b>Number of resulted entries in 2008</b>	294
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<b>Number of resulted entries in 2009</b>	340
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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 - 60				
A	68.2%	68.2%	232	40
B	16.5%	84.7%	56	33
C	8.2%	92.9%	28	26
D	1.8%	94.7%	6	22
No award	5.3%	100.0%	18	-

## 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.