



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Administration
Level	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

As in previous years the IT element of the paper was well attempted, and candidates attained significantly better marks in this section. Most candidates were able to complete the paper in the time allocated. Candidates were better prepared this year.

Once again many candidates are not including the correct printouts in their submission, especially formula printouts for the spreadsheet. Many candidates are losing print marks through not reading the paper and following specific printing instructions, for example:

- ◆ submitting formula printouts instead of value printouts
- ◆ omitting gridlines and row and column headings when specifically instructed

Candidates are not submitting work with their names printed on the paper, and are submitting sheets in the incorrect order.

Again, many centres did not submit the required printouts of electronic files. A hard copy of the electronic setup files must be submitted to SQA.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Task 1, the recall and amendment of the database, was very well done, with most candidates attaining most marks. Candidates' skills in searching and sorting are improving.

In Task 2, the creation of the spreadsheet, the figures were accurately inputted by most candidates, and many candidates gained the majority of the formula marks.

The form, Task 3, was also well attempted by candidates, despite this being the first time a form has been used.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Many candidates were unable to consistently capitalise the main and column headings in the spreadsheet. Also, the apostrophe in the first column heading was often omitted. Some candidates struggled with the final payment due formula, due to the problem solving skills needed. Very few candidates were able to input the title of the graph accurately or show a meaningful legend.

Candidates also struggled to attain highly when inputting the block of text into the form. Many candidates also included the graph in the form, instead of, or as well as, the database search. Some candidates also included an inappropriate heading when integrating the database search.

The quality of the answers to Task 4 was generally very poor. Most candidates attempted most questions; however, answers tended to be very vague.

- ◆ Question 1 (c) — many candidates did not suggest an item of equipment
- ◆ Questions 2 (b) and 2 (c) — few candidates attained marks
- ◆ Question 3 (a) — solutions to problems were often given
- ◆ Question 3 (b) — poorly answered, answers were often vague
- ◆ Question 4 (b) — answers were often vague references to phoning friends/people

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

If candidates proofread their work more carefully, they would achieve higher marks — figures are inputted far more accurately than text. Centres are encouraged to insist on candidates' names being present on all printouts, as this will ensure that candidates receive and submit the correct printouts.

Too many candidates are still not able to understand what is required when questions are asked using command words. Candidates must be encouraged to read theory questions carefully so they know what they are trying to answer, eg when asked to name a piece of equipment, they must name a piece of equipment and not its use.

Centres should use the Understanding Standards website when preparing pupils for the exam. This details the mark allocation for tasks and the command words which are used. The sample candidate responses have also recently been updated on the website. Marking instructions for SQA papers are also available on the SQA website, and these are annotated for ease of use.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	2444
Number of resulted entries in 2010	2761

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	39.0%	39.0%	1078	74
B	27.6%	66.7%	763	63
C	16.8%	83.5%	464	52
D	4.4%	87.9%	122	46
No award	12.1%	100.0%	334	—

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.