



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Architectural Technology
Level	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

There was a disappointing number of centres offering the award, three as opposed to five in previous years. This is likely due to colleges concentrating on National Certificate qualifications. It would be unfortunate if school pupils lost the chance to study professional construction subjects which might lead them into interesting careers and further study.

The standard seems to be lower than last year but, because of the low numbers, the statistics tend to hide some very good performances. Low overall marks by three candidates, and four candidates not taking the exam, has tended to lower the averages. The percentage of candidates achieving a C pass and above is similar to recent years and is still encouraging at 80%.

There is evidence of candidates being well prepared for the exam.

Generally candidates performed similarly in both project and exam, ie those who did well did so in both areas. However, some projects only needed organisation to improve the mark, and some individual advice from tutors would have helped this.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates showed a good understanding of building design and the technology involved.

Areas which candidates found demanding

There are still a number of candidates who have problems with the basic numeracy involved in site surveying.

Questions about Ordnance Survey were poorly answered across the board. Some more time explaining the National Grid and terminology is advised.

Illustrations in answers were generally poor. This is also apparent in the project submissions where sketch designs were often of a very poor standard. Some time developing sketching skills is advised. This would also be useful for candidates hoping to follow a career path in the construction industry.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Focus on candidates with numeracy problems.

Concentrate on the candidate's ability to sketch the required details.

Centres seem to be using the past papers in preparing for the exam — this reflects in the high exam marks.

Project work could be improved by using more demanding design briefs. If the brief was to design a more interesting building than, say a two-bedroom janitor's house, this would allow the candidates some scope to let their imaginations loose. If such a brief had no cost restrictions, this would increase the candidates' enjoyment of the whole design process. Some examples of 'unusual' buildings and house designs might encourage candidates to experiment more with the design process.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	62
Number of resulted entries in 2010	39

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark — 200				
A	25.6%	25.6%	10	140
B	12.8%	38.5%	5	120
C	33.3%	71.8%	13	100
D	5.1%	76.9%	2	90
No award	23.1%	100.0%	9	—

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.