



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Building Construction
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

This is the fourth year of this new Higher Course and the number of candidates dropped from 37 to 7. All candidates were from one centre.

There were no changes to the Course content or structure this year and the marking criteria and standards remain the same.

Candidate performance was very poor this year.

Project

Work was generally of a poor standard. The research was basic and the standard of sketches in construction detailing was very poor. Many candidates displayed very similar errors in their work.

In the evaluation section many candidates acknowledged that they failed to spend sufficient time on the project and failed to begin the project on time.

Question Paper

The paper was at the same standard as previous years but the candidates response was poor and below the standard of previous years.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Some questions in Section A were answered to a reasonable level, eg Questions 1–4 which have been used in previous papers.

Overall, it is hard to identify any part of the paper where candidates performed well.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Most candidates found from Question 5 onwards demanding and this showed a lack of preparation for the examination.

Questions that constantly cause confusion are those relating to stair design and checking to confirm compliance with current standards. In this paper, Question 8 and Question 11 (c) relate to this topic.

Question 9 was not a common choice for candidates.

A further area that candidates found demanding was completion of the worksheets in Question 10 and Question 11. This relates to the sketching of construction details.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

This advice has been published before but it needs to be repeated.

Construction details produced as sketches were out-of-date. Many recent changes in construction detailing have taken place which relate to energy conservation, such as insulation, prevention of cold bridges etc, and tutors need to ensure they keep up-to-date with current standards.

This can be easily achieved by reference to, and use of, the accredited details available from the Building Standards section of the Scottish Government's website:

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Building/Building-standards.

Candidates must be given as much practise as possible in sketching construction details which will assist them to improve their exam performance.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	36
Number of resulted entries in 2010	7

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	0.0%	0.0%	0	140
B	0.0%	0.0%	0	120
C	14.3%	14.3%	1	100
D	14.3%	28.6%	1	90
No award	71.4%	100.0%	5	—

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.