



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Business Management
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

Overall, candidates performed at a similar standard to last year. However, some candidates were clearly not yet ready for this level and should not have been presented.

The following weaknesses were shown by some candidates throughout the paper:

- ◆ Some candidates had difficulty in expressing themselves clearly through poor use of English and/or misuse of business terms.
- ◆ Some candidates still seem unfamiliar with the meaning of the command words used in questions at this level, in particular with 'describe' questions where many candidates only identified and failed to develop their answers enough to gain credit, and 'define' questions where features rather than definitions were given.
- ◆ Some candidates showed poor understanding of some of the basic business terms used in the questions.
- ◆ Some candidates failed to answer questions (sometimes a lot of questions), indicating poor preparation or poor presentation policy.
- ◆ The finance area questions were generally answered very poorly.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the following areas:

- ◆ automation benefits
- ◆ primary/secondary information
- ◆ promotion methods

Areas which candidates found demanding

- ◆ appraisal
- ◆ cash flow
- ◆ financial terms
- ◆ internal factors
- ◆ pricing methods
- ◆ public limited companies
- ◆ publicly funded organisations
- ◆ recruitment
- ◆ survival as an objective
- ◆ uses of information

In addition to the points raised above, some candidates had particular difficulties with the following questions:

Section 1

- ◆ Question 6 (a) — many candidates defined 'appraisal' solely in terms of 'praising'.

Section 2

- ◆ Question 2 (b) — some candidates only identified quality methods instead of describing them.
- ◆ Question 3 — some candidates described stakeholder interest instead of stakeholder influence.
- ◆ Question 4 — some candidates failed to read the question properly and thought 'internal' was 'secondary' and answered accordingly.
- ◆ Question 5 — some candidates described promotion only in terms of advertising methods, and this could only gain a maximum of two marks (one for the method and one for the description).
- ◆ Question 6 — many candidates included selection methods in the recruitment process.
- ◆ Question 7 (a) — many candidates were confused between publicly funded organisations and public limited companies.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Candidates must have a clear understanding of all appropriate business terms.
- ◆ Candidates must have a clear understanding of what the command words used in the questions require of them when answering.
- ◆ Candidates should be properly prepared by having the opportunity to practise past papers.
- ◆ Candidates must take care to read the questions properly. Every word is there for a reason.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	728
Number of resulted entries in 2010	1049

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark — 50				
A	17.1%	17.1%	179	35
B	20.3%	37.4%	213	30
C	24.9%	62.2%	261	25
D	11.0%	73.2%	115	22
No award	26.8%	100.0%	281	–

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.