



External Assessment Report 2009

Subject	Computing
Level	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

The 2009 Question Paper was of a similar standard to previous years papers and, as has been the case in the last three years, the performance of the candidates in the Question Paper has been gradually improving.

The majority of candidates are attempting to answer all questions as fully as possible and it is good to see the improvement in the quality of answers such as the trace table in the Artificial Intelligence section.

It is obvious that candidates have been taught well in the answering of questions using past Question Papers, however, many students are not taking time to read the questions carefully and are giving formulaic answers which don't always answer the question that is being asked.

Many areas that are answered well obviously come from the candidate's own experience e.g. in the use of the Internet or multimedia applications.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Section 1

Question 12 – the standard algorithms are well known by most candidates.

Section II

Question 16(f) – candidates are very familiar with viruses and how they are spread.

Section III Artificial Intelligence

Question 17 (a) (ii) – The Turing Test is well explained by the majority of candidates.

Section III Computer Networking

Question 21 (b) (i) – The meaning of ISP is well known.

Section III Multimedia Technology

Question 24(a) – most candidates obviously have experience of web-cams from home.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Section 1

Question 4 – a surprising number of candidates are still unsure of what an operating system does.

Section II

Question 14 (c)(i) – Many candidates are unaware of what an editor is used for.

Question 15(c) – Many candidates mixed up the functions of an interface with the physical device used to connect a device.

Question 15(d) – Many candidates are still under the misapprehension that laser printers automatically have better resolutions than ink-jet printers.

Question 15(b) – This was well done in the main however many candidates lost marks by forgetting that 600 dpi is square inches and therefore they have to square 600.

Section III Artificial Intelligence

Question 17(c) – a more specific answer than “sorting the mail” was required.

Section III Computer Networking

Question 21(c)(i) – Few candidates were able to give the correct domain name.

Section III Multimedia Technology

Question 24 (b)(ii)(A) – Very poor explanation of colour depth.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Encourage candidates to read the questions carefully and ensure that they answer the question asked.

Ensure that students don't use commercial product names such as 'PowerPoint' even though some of these products are becoming generic.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	2865
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	2948
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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 - 100				
A	33.6%	33.6%	990	70
B	25.5%	59.1%	753	60
C	20.8%	80.0%	614	50
D	5.7%	85.7%	168	45
No award	14.3%	100.0%	423	-

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.