



## External Assessment Report 2009

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Subject	Computing Studies
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

The 2009 Question Paper was of a similar standard to previous years. Candidates' responses in the objective style questions continued to achieve high scores.

However, where candidates were asked to justify or explain their answers, many failed to give sufficient depth or the technical detail that would be expected at Intermediate 1 level.

Despite having been noted in previous reports, several candidates still continue to give commercial product names (e.g. Microsoft Word, Dreamweaver, Serif) when asked for the **type** of application. Centres should reinforce to candidates that commercial product names will not receive marks.

Uptake for the optional topics shows that 'Information and The Internet' had the least candidates presented. A proportion of candidates still answered both optional sections.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Apart from the objective questions candidates performed well in:

### Section 1

Questions: 2a, 2b, 2d, 3b, 4c, 5a, 5c, 6a (ii), 6c

### Section 2

Computers and the Internet

Questions: 7a, 7c, 8a, 10b

Information and the Internet

Questions: 7b, 8a, 9b 10b

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Section 1

Question 1(c)(i) Only a few candidates were able to give a description of how on-line help could be used to find out about fill down – they could describe on-line help, but not linked to the context of the question.

Question 1(e) – Although candidates like to use the SUM function in any spreadsheet answer, many failed to state the SUM function for adding up a total.

Question 2(e) - Very few candidates were able to identify text effects.

Question 4(a) (iii) – Very few candidates could explain the term “high resolution”.

Question 4(d) – Despite candidates using templates in the Coursework, several candidates were unable to explain why a template should be created.

Question 5(b) - Candidates did not have a clear understanding of the input devices available with a laptop computer.

## **Section 2**

### **Computers and the Internet**

Question 7(d) – Candidates need to make sure they are clear on the difference between setup cost and running costs connected with the Internet.

Question 8(b) – Candidates gave commercial product names. Centres should reinforce to candidates that commercial product names will not receive marks.

Questions 9(a) and 9(c) – Candidates still struggle with the software development process. Candidates could state the steps in 9(b), but had difficulty in explaining what these steps were in 9(a) and 9(c).

### **Information and the Internet**

Question 7(a) – The majority of candidates just restated the question rather than breaking down the search. Centres should read the marking instructions with care to make sure all candidates are clear in the steps involved in a database search which is linked to a scenario.

Question 7(c) – Candidates were unsure of the calculated field type.

Question 8 (b) (ii) – The majority of candidates answering this section did not know what an electronic information systems was.

Question 9 (c) – Candidates need to make sure they are clear on the difference between setup cost and running costs connected with the Internet.

Question 9 (e)(ii) – Candidates were unclear about the information contained in a Technical Guide.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

Candidates should not use commercial product names e.g. Microsoft Word but should give the **type** of software e.g. Word Processing.

Within databases, centres need to ensure that candidates are clear in the steps undertaken to perform search and sort operations. Candidates should also be confident in the use of field types.

Within spreadsheets candidates should be able to describe the practical skills used in spreadsheets.

Candidates need to have a clear understanding of text effects (e.g. flashing, dissolving, fade in/out).

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	2402
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	2294
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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	49.3%	49.3%	1131	69
B	24.1%	73.4%	553	59
C	14.7%	88.1%	338	49
D	3.4%	91.5%	78	44
No award	8.5%	100.0%	194	-

### 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.