



External Assessment Report 2010

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 2010 paper was of a similar standard to previous years. Candidates' responses in the objective style questions continued to produce a high score.

As in previous years 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 persist in giving commercial product names (Microsoft Excel, Bebo, Explorer) when asked for the **type** of application. Centres should reinforce to candidates that commercial product names will not attract marks.

Uptake statistics for the optional topics show that 'Information and The Internet' had the least candidates presented.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Question 2: Candidates were generally well informed in most areas.

Question 3: Graphics were generally well answered. The majority of candidates scored half marks in 3 (ii) and 3 (iii) (the two mark questions).

Question 4: Word processing was generally well answered with candidates able to apply word processing knowledge to a 'new' situation.

Question 5: A good general knowledge of the use of hardware and printing.

Computers and the Internet

Question 6: Use of hardware and the internet were generally well answered.

Question 7: Candidates had few problems with most parts of this question.

Information and the Internet

Candidates who selected this option tended to do well in both questions apart from the specific exceptions mentioned below.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Question 1(b): Several candidates were still giving answers of 'add £' rather than 'change to currency format'.

Question 1 (c) (i): Several candidates were still adding the function SUM although in this case it was a multiplication.

Question 1 (f): Candidates need to write down how they carry out a practical task.

Question 2 (d): Candidates were not good at explaining how to produce a database report.

Question 3 (b) (iii): As with the 2009 paper very few candidates were able to identify text effects.

Question 4 (c) (ii): Candidates confused text wrap with word wrap.

Question 5 (d) (ii): Type of text justification proved challenging for several candidates.

Computers and the Internet

Question 6 (f) Communication software: on several occasions candidates answered with commercial titles such as Facebook and Bebo.

Question 7 (a) (i): Calculation to be carried out was weak.

Question 7 (d) (ii): Candidates were unclear about the purpose of a server.

Information and the Internet

Question 6 (d): Use of manual information systems.

Question 6 (f) (i): Difference between database layouts.

Question 7 (b) Type of internet connection — dial up and Broadband: candidates were unsure of the difference between them.

Question 7 (g): The breaking of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act relating to copying and pasting images from the internet was weak.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Candidates should not use commercial product names, eg Microsoft Word but should give the type of software, eg Word Processing.

In all applications candidates should be able to describe the practical skills they have demonstrated in class and in the Coursework. For example, in databases centres need to ensure that candidates are clear in the steps undertaken to perform search and sort operations.

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

Surprisingly, in the 2010 examination several candidates made no attempt at objective style questions. Candidates should be reminded to attempt all questions and to only tick one box.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	2294
Number of resulted entries in 2010	1981

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	39.9%	39.9%	791	70
B	26.3%	66.2%	521	60
C	18.0%	84.2%	356	50
D	4.9%	89.1%	98	45
No award	10.9%	100.0%	215	—

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.