



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Economics
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 overall standard was very high, with some centres gaining 100% 'A' passes.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Item A

Most candidates correctly explained the world coffee market, a surplus in trade in goods, and variable costs.

The majority of candidates drew excellent diagrams in Question (c) and correctly described a consequence of unemployment in Question (e).

The measures to reduce unemployment were also well explained by most candidates.

Item B

Most candidates knew what is meant by direct taxation and were able to explain the effect on inflation of a fall in government spending.

The trade questions — (d) (i) and (ii) — were also well answered by most candidates, as were the questions on opportunity cost.

Essay questions

Essay 1 was well answered in the main, although Part (b) caused problems for most candidates.

Most candidates scored highly in Essay 2 — especially in Part (b).

Most diagrams in Essay 3 (a) were correctly drawn, and although the quality of answers to (b) varied, the majority of candidates scored highly in (c).

Areas which candidates found demanding

In Item A, the questions on productivity — (g) (i) and (ii) — were poorly answered by the majority of candidates.

In Item B, only a minority of candidates correctly explained the difference between capital and current spending.

Essay 4 was poorly answered by the majority of candidates.

In Essay 5, although Part (c) was well answered, Parts (a) and (b) were not.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The time allocation for this paper is generous — very few candidates require the full 1 hour and 45 minutes. Candidates should therefore be encouraged to:

- ◆ take time to read all questions carefully
- ◆ make sure they explain all their answers in full
- ◆ examine all essay questions before deciding which one to answer

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	340
Number of resulted entries in 2010	362

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark — 60				
A	62.2%	62.2%	225	40
B	14.9%	77.1%	54	33
C	11.6%	88.7%	42	26
D	3.3%	92.0%	12	22
No award	8.0%	100.0%	29	–

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.