



External Assessment Report 2009

Subject	Administration
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

As in previous years the IT element of the paper tends to be well attempted, and candidates attain significantly better marks in this section. Most candidates were able to complete the paper in the time allocated.

Many candidates are still not including the correct printouts in their submission, especially formula printouts for the spreadsheet. Many candidates are losing print marks through not reading the paper and following specific printing instructions for example:

- submitting formula printouts instead of value printouts;
- omitting gridlines and row and column headings when specifically instructed to include them.

Candidates are not submitting work with their names printed on the paper, and are submitting sheets in the incorrect order.

Many centres did not submit the required printouts of electronic files. It is essential that these printouts are included.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Creation of the database was very well done and many candidates attained high accuracy marks. Candidates are getting better at extracting information to complete tasks instead of keying in everything in front of them. Most candidates who submitted a printout for the search task had the correct fields and records.

Most candidates attained highly amending the spreadsheet and most were able to centre the required headings.

Again accuracy in Task 3 – letter was good and the application of manuscript correct signs was an improvement on previous years.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Many candidates truncated fields and did not format the date field correctly in the database. Candidates had difficulty knowing if the sort was to be in ascending or descending order. Many candidates either did not attempt the database search, or did not include this printout in their submission.

As already mentioned many candidates did not include formula printouts of the spreadsheet. Although candidates tended to have formula in the correct cells they had problems working out what the correct formula should be. Many candidates did not embolden or increase the font size of the correct data and labels. The print instruction to exclude row and column headings was not followed by many candidates.

The chart was surprisingly poorly completed. Incorrect selection of data, legends missing, misuse of the dash and spelling errors in headings were all very common errors. Labels and legends tended to show that candidates did not understand what the graph was about, even though they were given clear instructions.

The layout of the letter was very poor – reference, date and subject heading were usually either omitted completely or in the wrong place. Many candidates included a memo layout within the letter, and used inconsistent spacing throughout.

The response to Task 4 was poor. Many candidates did not submit any response to some questions:

Question 1c – many candidates did not specify which documents information was in, and many did not understand what a person specification was.

Question 2a – candidates had real difficulty describing advantages of a network.

Question 2b – many candidates misunderstood this question and gave answers about health and safety.

Question 3a – few candidates knew the name of the legislation.

Question 3b – many candidates wrote one word answers instead of suggesting solutions.

Question 3c and 3d – many candidates did not attempt these questions.

Question 4 – information was frequently omitted from the analysis column, or written in the wrong analysis column.

Question 5 – poorly answered, answers were often vague and few candidates mentioned circulation slip or remittance book.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

As usual if candidates proof read their work more carefully they will achieve higher marks. Many submissions show that candidates are able to use the functions of the software, however they let themselves down by not reading the paper correctly, basic keying in accuracy and failing to complete simple print instructions.

Candidates must read the instructions on page 3. It is evident that candidates do not read the instructions and, therefore do not understand the scenario they are working with and do not use the table of printouts to ensure they are submitting the correct work. Many candidates are still not submitting work with their name keyed on the paper.

Too many candidates are still not able to understand what is required when questions are asked using higher order command words. Candidates need more knowledge about the workings of different departments as indicated in the arrangements documents.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	2207
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	2444
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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	28.7%	28.7%	702	74
B	28.7%	57.4%	702	63
C	20.1%	77.6%	492	52
D	7.2%	84.8%	176	46
No award	15.2%	100.0%	372	-

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.