



External Assessment Report 2009

Subject	Administration
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

As usual, candidates attained higher marks for Paper 2, however many candidates failed to achieve over 50% of the marks for Paper 1. Candidates did attain higher marks for both papers this year compared to 2008. Almost all candidates completed both papers in the time allocation, and most attempted the correct number of questions in Paper 1 Section B. Most candidates attempted Questions 1 and 3 in Paper 1, Section B.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Paper 1

Section A

Question 1 - completed very well. Candidates showed that they had knowledge of the HR department. Almost all candidates were able to identify flexible working practices – many wasted time by writing in great detail about them, however the command word was **identify**.
Question 3 - candidates had good knowledge of legislation in the workplace.
Question 4 (a) - customer service was also well done.

Section B

Question 1 - candidates had a sound knowledge of the use of the Internet and advantages of using email.
Question 3 - travel arrangements required prior to a business trip was also well done.

Most candidates attempted to answer both the compulsory questions and the options. There were very few blank spaces in the candidates' submission. Candidates are beginning to understand that they are required to write full answers for questions to gain all of the marks.

Paper 2

Candidates attained highly in the value printouts of the spreadsheet. They followed the instructions as required and appeared to understand what they were doing. Candidates selected the correct data for the bar chart.

Candidates demonstrated sound skills using the database software and many attained full marks for this question.

Most candidates submitted 2 sets of printouts as instructed for the letter. The spreadsheet was inserted correctly and the second page was numbered as required.

Candidates appeared to be able to show what skills they had. They had time to complete the paper and check it. Most candidates submitted the required number of printouts, and even when they had difficulty with one section of a question they moved on to attempt the rest of the question and paper.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Paper 1

Many candidates did not appear to take time to read the question properly, and often gave answers that were irrelevant. Although candidates are writing more many still find difficulty in interpreting what the command words require them to write, for example outline and describe require expansion whereas identify does not.

Section A

Question 2 - candidates tended to give vague answers to the questions about the Training Request Form and oral/visual communication.

Question 4 (b) – candidates showed that they did not know what a mailing list was.

Question 5 – candidates tended to give features of vague answers and often were not specific about the actual advantage. Many candidates did not seem to understand that a process is a list of stages rather than a vague description.

Section B

Question 1 – many candidates focused on security of data instead of employees and equipment.

Question 2 – most candidates seemed unaware of the concept of file management. Candidates gave rambling and uninformed answers in justifying the use of spreadsheets. Many candidates did not relate the business documents they were explaining to the Purchases Department.

Question 3 – a number of candidates confused fixed term contracts with part time working.

Paper 2

Although the spreadsheet task was well done candidates had problems with formula. Candidates knew what to do with the IF function, but many did not know how to include text in the first part of it. Similarly when using the Count function many candidates were unable to select the correct range.

Many candidates keyed in the number on both occasions, so attained no marks. Unfortunately many candidates still submit formula printouts which are truncated, so attain few marks. Most candidates were unable to calculate the percentage increase as instructed. A number of candidates are still sorting the spreadsheet on one column only. In many cases the graph was very poorly attempted, headings were inappropriate, axes labelled incorrectly and legends included series.

Although the database was well done, many candidates had difficulty sorting on the 2 specified fields as they were not in sequence.

The mail merge was very poorly attempted, with very few candidates having the full address and correct salutation. The layout of the letter was, in most cases, unacceptable – most candidates omitted the reference and date and if it was included it was in the wrong place. Most candidates were not awarded the consistency mark for layout/presentation. The accuracy of keying in text was poor and there was little evidence of proof reading. Many candidates still have difficulty understanding manuscript correction signs.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres must continue to impress the meanings of the command words so that candidates answer the question which is asked. Although many candidates are extending their answers in Paper 1 some are still not answering the question. As per last year, candidates must read what they are asked to do, think about it, do it, then read it again to ensure they have done what was asked.

In Paper 2 candidates must read the introductory instructions and the instructions for each task to ensure they complete the task correctly.

Candidates should be encouraged to proof read their work, even if it is just to ensure that cells are not truncated in a spreadsheet, especially for titles in the value printout and formula in the formula printout. If a marker cannot see all of the formula in a cell, the candidate cannot be awarded marks for the formula. Candidates must also be very careful about following printing instructions for values or formula and gridlines and row/column headings.

Candidates should be using appropriate formula at this level, ie SUM and AVERAGE, not adding each individual cell. This is not awarded marks. Candidates also need to know how to sort a spreadsheet – not simply sorting on one column.

Candidates should be encouraged to read the introductory instructions to try to understand what a graph is showing. This will enable them to devise a suitable heading, relevant axis labels and legends. Again proof reading to ensure there are no basic errors and that it makes sense is essential.

Fewer candidates than last year are inserting their own name within a field in the database. This can cause problems when they try to sort the database. Functions available within the software should be used to alleviate this issue eg publishing with Word (or naming the table candidate's name). Candidates are penalised if their name appears in a field within a record as this affects the validity of the information.

Candidates must know how to sort on 2 non-sequential fields in a search of a database.

As always, candidates must know the layout of word processing documents – very few candidates demonstrated the correct layout of a letter.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	3961
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	4494
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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	20.0%	20.0%	897	72
B	33.4%	53.3%	1500	61
C	27.4%	80.7%	1230	50
D	9.0%	89.7%	405	44
No award	10.3%	100.0%	462	-

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.