



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Economics
Level(s)	Higher

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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

Many candidates were well-prepared for the examination and demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding. The best candidates were able to apply their knowledge and understanding in Section A of the paper. A few centres presented candidates who seemed to have not covered some areas of the syllabus, which placed them at a disadvantage.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Section A

Generally candidates did well on Item B, particularly parts (b),(c),and (d), which related to unemployment. Candidates were able to explain and account for the difference between the Claimant count and Labour Force Survey with accuracy.

Section B

Essay 5(a)(i) and Essay 5(a)(ii) and 5(b) gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate excellent understanding of FDI and development.

Essay 6(a) and (b) was well done because many candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the PED and factors that influence it. Many candidates used good examples to develop their points.

Essay 4(b) Many candidates produced accurate Circular Flow of Income diagrams and explained the impact of an increase in imports on National Income.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Section A

Item A (a) and (b): Too many candidates were unable to calculate marginal and average costs accurately, which was disappointing. Question € required a shift in both the demand and supply curve, and quite a few candidates shifted only one curve. Question (f) on the PES confused some candidates who wrote on the PED. Some candidates knew very little about the CAP and performed poorly on questions (g)(i) and (ii) and (h).

Section B

Essay 3(a): Many candidates were unable to explain the difference between a Budget deficit and the National Debt.

Essay 4(c): Most candidates were unable to describe the components of the Balance of Payments. A few candidates were unaware that the items formerly in the Capital Account of the Balance of Payments are now contained in the Financial Account.

Essay 5(d): Many candidates struggled to explain the relationship between Technical and Economic Efficiency.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Make sure that the course is covered in full.
- ◆ Accurate and fully labelled diagrams should be practised by candidates.
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to take heed of mark allocations and make sure they develop points using relevant points or examples when appropriate.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	591
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	620
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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	38.9%	38.9%	241	70
B	25.0%	63.9%	155	59
C	20.8%	84.7%	129	48
D	6.9%	91.6%	43	42
No award	8.4%	-	52	-

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.