



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Economics
Level(s)	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

Many candidates performed to an extremely high standard and had been well-prepared for the examination. There is evidence that a higher percentage of students have spent two years studying the course, and this is leading to an improvement in the pass rate and achievement at all levels.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Item A

(b) and c (i) (ii) (iii) were well done by candidates who were well prepared for the graphical and numerical aspects of the questions.

Item B

(a) Excellent definitions of the term 'recession' were given.

(c) and (d) were generally well done as unemployment was well-understood by candidates.

Essay 2: this was the most popular essay by far and many candidates produced excellent responses, with the exception of (c) (ii).

Areas which candidates found demanding

Item A

1(a) (i) and (ii): some candidates struggled to accurately define 'productivity' and 'the long run'.

(d) (i): some candidates were not familiar with the term 'division of labour'.

(ii): some candidates struggled to explain why the substitution of labour might be difficult in a particular industry.

Item B

(b): some candidates struggled to apply their understanding of an increase in National Income to the effects on other economic variables.

Essay 1 (b): some candidates struggled to explain how the price mechanism allocates resources in a market economy.

Essay 2 (c) (ii): some candidates explained the advantages to the UK firm rather than the newly industrialised country.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Encourage students to fully explain their points and take heed of the mark allocation.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2011	318
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	238
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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 60				
A	64.7%	64.7%	154	40
B	18.1%	82.8%	43	33
C	7.1%	89.9%	17	26
D	3.8%	93.7%	9	22
No award	6.3%	100.0%	15	-

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.