



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Graphic Communication
Level	Higher

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

Candidate performance was slightly down from last year. There was an adjustment in the grade boundaries this year, with these set at two marks below the notional difficulty levels. The decision was taken that one question was more challenging than intended and that this affected all candidates.

Similar points to last year were considered when setting this year's paper:

- ◆ Care was taken with the grouping of lines for marks within the engineering question, which resulted in a better balance of marks being available.
- ◆ The new approach to marking the tangency question by grouping similar items together to allocate marks was adopted again, ie all positions of centres, arcs, correct radii and lines.
- ◆ In Section A, the allocation of marks was considered carefully to avoid situations where candidates could lose more than one mark for a single error.
- ◆ Most questions were appropriately accessible for the majority of candidates, and as a result a significant number of candidates completed all of the questions. In addition there was an even balance of candidates choosing between Question 12 or Question 13, with no significant difference in performance across the two questions.

It should be noted that, as with previous years, some candidates are being presented at Higher level when Intermediate 2 would be more appropriate.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Section A

Question 1: DTP terms

As in previous years this question was very well answered, and is now being consistently attempted well. The term 'header' did cause some confusion with 'headline', and many candidates did not recognise that it is a repeating item.

Question 3: preliminary, production and promotional

Candidates had a firm grasp of these terms, and this was very well attempted.

Question 5 (a) and (b): British Standards title box

Even though this question had not been asked recently it was well answered, with most candidates getting four of the five items correct.

Question 6 (a) and (b): illustration and presentation terms

It was pleasing to see that candidates are more aware of the difference between colour gradient and tonal scale. In previous years this has not been answered well, but candidates' performance was excellent this year.

Section B

Question 9: sectional assembly

For the second year in a row, candidates' performance was very good in this type of question. Traditionally one of the more challenging topics, this improvement is a pleasing trend. Draughtsmanship remains an issue though. There is some evidence from the materials submitted for Appeals consideration that some candidates are being leniently marked for poor draughtsmanship in their prelims.

Question 10: measured perspective

This was answered well but, as with last year, candidates' performance was not as high as in previous years. The question was an internal perspective and this encouraged candidates to think; however, few candidates spotted that a height line can be taken vertically up from the back corner.

Question 11: auxiliary plan

The most demanding topic, but it was answered extremely well.

Question 12: isometric

This was attempted very well, including the curve on two planes, which could have been a challenging part of the question. It should be noted that some candidates are still not taking an adequate number of points on the curves for accurate construction.

Question 13: planometric

This question was fairly straightforward and candidates responded well. The window curves proved challenging for most candidates though.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Section A

Question 2: DTP stages

Even though all candidates are clearly aware of these terms when producing their Thematic Presentation, this question received poor candidate performance. Centres are encouraged to ensure that candidates completing the Thematic Presentation are fully aware of what and why there are stages in DTP planning.

Question 4 (a): types of 2 ½ D views

This question was very poorly answered. A number of candidates clearly did not know what 2 ½ D views are.

Question 5 (c): sectional views

This question was poorly answered, given that there are only a limited number of sectional views that can be examined and that it is asked almost every year.

Question 5 (d): line types

The question received a very poor response because candidates are not aware of the correct terminology from British Standards. Only the correct terminology is acceptable.

Question 7: dimensioning

Some candidates (mainly from the same centre) knew this but the majority found this a challenging question.

There was a common theme that the areas of difficulty were from the Outcomes related to British Standards (BS). This topic had seen some improvement but regressed this year.

Section B

Question 8: tangency

After last year's improvement this was poorly attempted, largely due to poor draughtsmanship. Candidates lost marks due to tails at the ends of arcs. There were examples where candidates had drawn the arcs with instruments but then went over the arcs freehand. This resulted in a loss of marks and should not be done by any candidates.

Question 9: sectioning of the assembly

Even though the sectional assembly was well answered, most candidates could not identify the areas to be hatched. In addition, very few knew the correct convention for sectioning a threaded object.

Question 10: measured perspective

Usually this is one of the best-answered topics. This year it was not the typical house-type object with a regular gable to work from. This slight change of context appeared to cause difficulties for a large number of candidates. These difficulties were taken into consideration when setting the grade boundaries.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

General advice given last year is still relevant this year.

- ◆ Responses to BS conventions still require improvement. BS conventions will continue to be examined though, so centres are advised to prepare candidates for this topic.
- ◆ Centres are reminded that there are no longer any half marks within the marking instructions of the question paper, and this should be reflected in any prelim papers. Prelim papers produced with half marks will be invalid for use in Assessment Appeals.

Section A

There is still room for improvement in performance in this section, even for the most able candidates. An improvement in knowledge of British Standards would make a significant difference.

Section B

Transferring curves between views and drawing an isometric circle and the number of points taken must be considered. A minimum of 12 points is required for a complete circle (the quadrant points plus intermediate points). This is also relevant for the transfer of curves in geometry questions and other pictorial views.

The overall quality of draughtsmanship is still poor. The following points were highlighted in last year's report and centres are reminded that they still need to be addressed:

- ◆ There must be a clear difference between construction and completed outlines.
- ◆ Candidates must draw in an outline to be awarded the marks. Even when outlines are drawn, they often extend beyond the point where they should end, resulting in no marks being awarded for that line. This is something centres should consider when marking prelim papers.
- ◆ Tangent lines are also very poorly drawn, whether it is in a tangency question or with isometric curves.
- ◆ The quality of hidden and centre lines is poor.

Sectioning in both sections remains an issue and there is evidence to suggest that this is not being addressed. This potentially could improve most candidates by 5/6 marks.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	4,069
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	4,171
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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 200				
A	24.3%	24.3%	1,015	138
B	24.9%	49.2%	1,037	118
C	25.1%	74.3%	1,047	98
D	9.8%	84.1%	409	88
No award	15.9%	100.0%	663	-

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.