Course Report 2016

Subject	Administration and IT
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. 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 assessment documents and marking instructions.

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Component 1: Assignment

Candidates performed well in this component. Very few candidates failed to complete the assignment, and even those features or functions that were designed as discriminators did not seem to cause candidates any significant issues.

Component 2: Question paper

Candidates were confident in approaching this paper, and feedback suggested that many felt the paper to be fair and accessible. However, many candidates did not answer the questions well.

The topics assessed were typical of a Higher Administration and IT paper. However, many markers commented on the lack of detailed knowledge across the range of candidates. Some candidates seemed ill-prepared for this component and were unable to answer in detail; many wrote in sentences but only gave an identification couched in amongst a repeat of the question.

The emphasis of the case study has changed and, where in the past it was considered only as stimulus, candidates now need to use the information provided. Questions 1 and 2 related to the case study, and many candidates either ignored this facet of the question paper or were unable to use the information provided to shape their answers.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Assignment

Most candidates coped well with the assignment.

Diary	♦ The majority of candidates selected the correct dates.
Presentation	♦ The logo was correctly inserted. ♦ All candidates printed all 6 slides on one page and correctly inserted their name in the footer.
Aggregated fields	♦ This was well done and there were few candidates who did not achieve full marks.
Quote	♦ Candidates correctly calculated the sub-total. ♦ The cost of marquee was found from the database and inserted correctly. ♦ VAT was correctly shown as an amount.
DB query	♦ Most candidates coped well with querying on north or west and omitting Glasgow records. ♦ Most candidates printed the correct fields.
DB report	♦ This task was well done and most candidates scored high marks.
Pivot table	♦ Most candidates used a pivot table to summarise the information.

	♦ Most candidates managed the total sales section and formatted for currency.
WP report	♦ This task was very well done.
	♦ The front cover and bordering was well done.
	♦ Most candidates received the marks for the footnote and for keying in.
	♦ The survey was inserted and sorted correctly.

Component 2: Question paper

Question 4 on Display Screen Equipment (DSE) regulations was well done by candidates who realised this was what the question was about. Marks were easily gained by giving information on furniture, computers, screens, etc.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Assignment

The following areas caused issues for some candidates:

Diary	♦ Candidates made typing errors in entering the details.
	♦ The starting time on Friday was sometimes wrong.
	♦ Print layouts were poor – sometimes showing the wrong date range, eg starting on the preceding Sunday and not showing the correct Sunday.
	♦ Many centres submitted screen shots.
	♦ Many candidates seem to lack knowledge in changing the default settings to print a full week.
Presentation	♦ The heading should have referred to NTS castles on one of the new slides.
	♦ The information was often not specific to a castle and was just about all of the properties which were wedding venues.
	♦ Some candidates had venues which were neither in Scotland nor National Trust properties.
	♦ Referencing of the review was rarely done.
	♦ Attention needs to be paid to the amount of text and clarity of print.
DB Aggregated fields	♦ Some candidates grouped on region id, not appreciating this is not fit for purpose as the reader may not know what the code/id refers to.
SS Quote	♦ Consistency in formatting for currency — candidates maybe did not look too closely at the value printout.
	♦ Many candidates did not absolute the cell showing the number of guests so had incorrect answers when replicating formula.
	♦ Nested if calculation of discount — most didn't show >=125.
	♦ Candidates still not sure about rates and amounts, and did not multiply by the subtotal, so only had a percentage.
	♦ Round-down was not correctly done by many candidates; some removed decimal places, others just used round.
DB query	♦ The wildcard for hair and makeup was difficult for some candidates – they had obviously used a wildcard but not placed it at the start and end of each word.
	♦ Candidates had to show the capacity of the marquee but some venues did not

	have a marquee. Some missed the need for 'not null' and just included the field showing marquee capacity.
DB report	♦ Formatting of currency to zero decimal places was not always done. ♦ New field headings not consistent with existing ones. ♦ There was truncation of some of the longer names in some fields.
Pivot table	♦ Headings in the pivot table either not amended or not consistent in style. ♦ Some found adding the second column to calculate the percentage to be difficult. ♦ Some missed the instruction to sort.
WP report	♦ The different headers proved difficult for some. ♦ A pie chart could not represent the data so there were no marks awarded for this.

Component 2: Question paper

Question 1

The case study intimated that the meeting was a regular monthly event for a group of managers, and that a draft agenda had already been prepared. Christine was taking over, not starting from scratch, and therefore candidate answers had to take this into account.

Candidates did not gain a mark for saying that an agenda should be created, but they would have gained the mark if they said that 'the draft agenda was to be finalised and sent to participants'. Similarly, any reference to finding and booking a venue was not awarded, but any comment regarding 'ensure the Board Room is ready for the meeting' was awarded. A statement about telling managers of the meeting would not gain a mark, but if the candidate mentioned 'checking to see who was coming and if some not able to attend, considering setting up an audio or video link', this would gain a mark.

Many candidates did mention organising travel and accommodation, but the case study states this is the responsibility of the manager.

Question 2

The question asked how Mark could use an e-diary for this meeting. Most answers were generic and did not answer the question. Candidates seemed to have many half-formed ideas as to what an e-diary can actually do. Many attributed skills more akin to a personal assistant. There seemed to be a lack of awareness that the e-diary actually needs to be set up by the user in order to carry out processes. There were many sweeping statements that the e-diary could solve all time management and personal organisation issues; but candidates struggled to substantiate this.

Question 3

Some candidates still struggled to answer the compare question. Those who structured their answer in the traditional way tended to gain marks.

There was also a lack of knowledge regarding what verbal and written communications actually are. Very few candidates seemed unable to acknowledge that texts, instant messaging and e-mails are all methods of written communication. Arguments about speed of

delivery and time taken to respond are now obsolete unless there is specific mention of the method of communication being used.

Many candidates used a broad brush approach rather than being able to answer in detail, which meant they were unable to gain all the marks available. Greater knowledge of different communication methods would have ensured that these two marks were easy to gain.

Question 4

Some candidates did not realise that the question was specifically about using IT with regards to Health and Safety. Answers were more about temperature, cleanliness, toilets, etc. Those that did realise it was about the DSE regulations had, in some cases, limited knowledge. There were many responses that said IT staff needed 'comfy' chairs, that glasses **had** to be provided, and that specialist equipment was to be provided, but no reference to what that should be. There was a tendency from some candidates to use words/measures which they were then unable to describe, eg anti-glare screen.

Question 5

Whilst this was well done by the majority of candidates, some improvements could be made. For this type of question, candidates should avoid using default answers about stress, demotivation, absences, etc.

There also has to be some realism to the impact. Many candidates could not give an immediate, relevant and realistic example of an impact, and tended to cast their net wider and come up with eventualities that were extreme.

Question 7

This question was generally well answered, but there was evidence that this topic had not been taught in depth by some centres. Some candidates did not know the difference between a to-do list and a priorities list. Both were accepted if it was clear that the candidate could differentiate between them.

Descriptions of Gantt charts were poor and did not give any specific details; in some cases candidates could have been describing a to-do list or an action plan. Many were also unable to give a good description of delegation.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Assignment

This assignment must be undertaken in one 2-hour block. If a centre is unable to do this, they cannot present candidates for the course, as SQA's conditions of assessment will not be met.

If for any reason a candidate has been allowed to print on a different day or has undertaken the assignment on a different day from the other candidates in the centre, centres should insert a note to explain the reasons for this.

Some parts of a question are designed to test 'A' candidates, eg the rounddown function and the different headers in the report. It would not be expected that all candidates in a centre can answer all questions.

Diary	♦ Centres need to ensure that candidates have had practice in printing an e-diary in different views. ♦ All systems should support all views and any issues need to be resolved before the assignment is undertaken. ♦ In future we will not accept screen shots unless it is to show that any truncated text in the printout is present.
Presentation	♦ It is acceptable for candidates to remove the background if they feel the printout is too dark. ♦ Candidates need to ensure that the PowerPoint is imparting information and that all information should be legible when printed. If this requires them to change formatting then they should do so. The presentation needs to be fit for purpose.
Aggregated fields	♦ In future, headings need to be amended, consistent and accurate. This will be awarded an additional mark.
Quote	♦ Vlookup formulae construction can vary greatly and there is some evidence to suggest that candidates are 'happening' upon a structure that works in one instance but would not work in another situation. This year the lookup table was in order so a vlookup without true or false worked.
Pivot table	♦ It was not acceptable to use another function to complete this task. The question asked for a pivot table to be used so subtotalling or using a formula to calculate the percentage was not awarded any marks.

Component 2: Question paper

Very few candidates did not complete the paper and all questions were attempted, however, candidates tended to write a lot but did not answer the questions. In many cases, their knowledge of most of the topics was actually very poor.

It can be difficult to design a timeline for the delivery of the Higher Administration and IT course as there is so little theory that even devoting a weekly slot to it across the academic year is maybe too much, but centres need to find some way of covering the theory and ensuring this knowledge is taught before the final exam. A very good standard was achieved in the theory paper of the previous Higher and, disappointingly, this seems to declining. It needs to be emphasised that underpinning knowledge of theory is still an important part of the overall course.

The qualification is a vocational one, so centres must equip candidates with the knowledge necessary to take up employment.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	3025

Number of resulted entries in 2016	3965

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	30.6%	30.6%	1212	70
B	26.1%	56.7%	1036	60
C	21.2%	77.9%	840	50
D	7.1%	85.0%	281	45
No award	15.0%	-	596	0

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.