

Research and Information Services

Monitoring Standards Report



Comparison of Intermediate 2 Business Management for 2003 2006 and 2007

Information about Monitoring Standards

Since 1998 SQA has been monitoring a sample of qualifications annually to determine whether standards in the level of demand in the syllabus and question papers are being maintained year on year and whether any changes to marking instructions have had an impact on candidates' examination results.

NQ teams are asked to compare the Arrangements, Question papers and Marking Instructions for the years in question and consider whether there have been any changes to these which have resulted in any change to the level of demand or difficulty. Teams decide whether the breadth and depth of the syllabus has remained the same and if not, how these changes have altered the level of demand in the question papers in the years being compared. The clarity of instructions and allocation of marks in the marking instructions across the years is also considered. The candidate evidence is compared and the teams decide whether or not the evidence is demonstrating the same standard of performance across the years.

NQ Monitoring teams comprise a subject specialist from Higher Education or a Professional Organisation, who is the chair of the group, the Principal Assessor for the subject, who is the SQA expert in the group and a practicing classroom teacher who can be an SQA marker.

Summary of Findings

The panel which comprised a University lecturer (Chair and report writer) the Principal Assessor and a classroom teacher, found minor changes only, which had no overall affect on demand, ie the level of demand was consistent over the comparable years of 2007, 2006 and 2003, concerning the Arrangements, Assessment Instrument, Marking Instructions and Grading.

◆ Cohort of candidates

- There was a significant increase in pass rates.
- There was a significant increase in percentages achieving 'A' Grade passes.
- Above increases are attributed to a notable increase in S4 presentations.

◆ Level of demand of Arrangements/ syllabus

- No overall change in level of demand.

◆ Level of demand of Assessment instruments

- No overall change in level of demand.
- Slightly wider coverage of syllabus, involving slightly less depth

◆ Level of demand of Marking instructions

- No overall change in level of demand.

◆ Grading of scripts

— No differences were identified over the comparable years.

1 Introduction

General Changes

There was a marked increase in numbers of candidates from 2003 to 2007 of 71% increase. As well as the increase in numbers of candidates, there was also a notable change in the various stage percentages. This was particularly the case concerning the S4 stage, where the 2003 figure was 5%, the 2006 figure was 23% and the 2007 figure was 25%. Please see Appendix 1.

Importantly there was a significant increase in the overall pass rates with a 75% pass rate in 2003, an 84% pass rate in 2006 and an 83% pass rate in 2007, ie a notable increase from 2003 to 2006 and an insignificant change between 2006 and 2007. Further to the increase in pass rates, there was also a highly significant increase in the number of 'A' Grade passes, with 22% in 2003, 40% in 2006 and 41% in 2007, ie a notable increase again from 2003 to 2006 and once again an insignificant change between 2006 and 2007. As might be expected, given the increase in 'A' Grade passes, there was a decline in both 'B' and 'C' Grade passes. Please see Appendices 2-3.

Given the improved pass rate and numbers achieving 'A' Grade passes, there may be an assumption that there has been a notable change in demand. However, the panel did not find this to be the case. Please see further report sections.

The panel considered that the notable improvement in pass rates and level of pass could be attributed to the following factors –

- ◆ Variance in population/cohort
 - Notable increase in entries from the S4 stage – the panel assumes that given an almost 9-fold increase, that strong, credit level standard grade students are now being presented for Intermediate 2.
 - Candidates in 2006/2007 were presented at a more appropriate level than those in 2003, eg many students, suitable for Intermediate 2, are now presented for Intermediate 2, whilst in the past they were presented for Higher.
 - Improved teaching arrangements where many more candidates in 2006/2007 were being taught in dedicated Intermediate 2 classes, rather than bi-level classes.

2 Level of Demand of Arrangements/Syllabus

Overall, the panel found no notable change to demand. Very little concerning depth has changed and the small number of additions and reductions concerning breadth counteract each other. No notable change to demand is illustrated by the fact that the change of arrangements were implemented for the 2007 Assessment Instrument, but the notable increase in pass rates occurred for the 2006 Assessment Instrument.

2.1 Depth of Arrangements

The panel found no significant changes concerning Depth of Arrangements. However, it was found that there were 2 instances of minor reductions in Depth of Arrangements.

These were:

- ◆ Costs and Benefits of Sources of Information, in Business Enterprise Area, Business Information and ICT Section – not provided in 2006.
- ◆ Purpose of Ratios, rather than Ratios, in the Business Decision Area, Financial Management Section is now the case in the 2006 Arrangements.

The panel would stress that these are minor and possibly open to misinterpretation, ie may not have affected what is actually taught.

2.2 Breadth of Arrangements

The panel found no significant changes concerning Breadth of Arrangements. The panel found 2 reductions and 2 increases in the Breadth of Arrangements. The reductions were:

- ◆ Monitoring of Procedures, in Business Decision Areas, Human Resources Section – not provided in 2006.
- ◆ Local and National Agreements, in Business Decision Areas, Human Resources Section – not provided in 2006.

The increases were:

- ◆ Role of Operations, in Business Decision Areas, Operations Section.
- ◆ Role of HRM in Business Decision Areas, HRM Section.

2.3 Other Changes in Arrangements

The panel would like to note that the 2006 Arrangements contain a number of additional Sections, not provided in the 2003 Arrangements. Please see Appendix 4. These additions had no affect on demand, but did provide greater clarity for anyone teaching to these Arrangements.

3 Level of Demand of the Examination Questions

3.1 General Approach in the Assessment Instruments

The panel discerned one change only:

- ◆ Questions in Section 2 show much more integration of different content areas in 2006 and 2007 compared to 2003. This resulted in greater breadth and less depth and correspondingly no change to overall demand.

3.2 Coverage of the Syllabus

The panel found that coverage of the Syllabus was satisfactory over all 3 years. However, due to the integrative nature of questions, mentioned above, the coverage of the Syllabus was slightly improved in 2006/2007. Also, the marks allocated to different

areas of the Syllabus indicate a more balanced approach and therefore better coverage of the Syllabus. Please see Appendix 5 for marks allocation.

3.3 Structure of the Total Assessment Task

There have been no changes in the general structure of the Question Paper. Please see Appendix 6. However, the panel noted that there were less long questions in 2006/2007 relative to 2003, involving a continuing trend. See Appendix 7 for figures concerning single long questions versus clusters of related smaller questions.

3.4 Demand of Assessment Tasks

There are 2 Sections in the Questions Papers.

Section 1, with less long questions in 2006/2007 and greater Syllabus coverage, as mentioned above, was found to have slightly more breadth, but correspondingly slightly less depth. Therefore, overall demand was unaffected.

Overall demand in Section 2, was also unaffected, due to the same argument made for Section 1.

4 Level of Demand of Examination Marking

The panel found no variation in level of demand, regarding the Marking Instructions over all of the relevant 3 years. The Marking Instructions provide one mark per point made within the maximum allowed for each question.

Conclusive evidence of the absolute consistency of the Marking Instructions can be found by comparing said Marking Instructions for similar or identical questions. Some examples of such questions are: Section 1, Question 2 in 2003 and Question 5 in 2007; Section 2, Question 1A in 2003 and Question 3D in 2006 and Question 2D in 2007. In all instances the Marking Instructions were in essence identical.

5 Grading of Candidates Performance

5.1 Grade A and C Scripts

The panel scrutinised Grade A Band 2, Grade B Band 3, Grade C Band 6 and Grade D Band 7. The panel agreed that for each relevant Grade, scripts were of comparable value over all 3 years. It should also be noted that the boundary marks were identical over all 3 years. Please see Appendix 8.

5.2 Specific Weaknesses or Strengths in Scripts

No discerned comparable weaknesses or strengths were identified by the panel.

Appendix 1

Population of Candidates Sitting the Exam

Year	Entries	S3	S4	S5	S6	FE
2003	1,466	----	5%	61%	15%	18%
2006	1,971	1%	23%	53%	16%	8%
2007	2,507	1%	25%	52%	17%	6%

Appendix 2

Pass Rates

Year	Pass Rate	S3	S4	S5	S6	FE
2003	75%	----	93%	76%	74%	66%
2006	84%	100%	94%	82%	80%	72%
2007	83%	94%	95%	81%	79%	52%

Appendix 3

Percentage Grade Distribution

Year	'A' Grade	'B' Grade	'C' Grade
2003	22%	30%	23%
2006	40%	25%	18%
2007	41%	25%	17%

Appendix 4

Additions to Arrangements

Assessment Objectives
Unit Assessment
Relationship between Unit and Course Assessment
Estimates and Appeals

Appendix 5

Marks Allocation

Unit	2003	2006	2007
Business Enterprise	73	55	52
BDA – Marketing and Operations	42	49	37
BDA – Finance and HRM	10	21	36

Appendix 6

Assessment Paper Structure

- ◆ 2 Sections
- ◆ Section 1:
 - 25 Marks
 - All questions compulsory
- ◆ Section 2:
 - 50 Marks
 - Choice of 2, 25 mark questions, out of 5

Appendix 7

Types of Assessment Instrument Questions

Year	8 or More Marks Available	2 or Less Marks Available
2003	7 questions	6 questions
2006	5 questions	9 questions
2007	2 questions	12 questions

Appendix 8

Grade Boundary Marks

Year	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C
2003	52	44	37
2006	52	44	37
2007	52	44	37