

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

MATHEMATICS

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
Included in this report**

APPLIED MATHEMATICS AH

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2003	320
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Number of entries in 2004 (pre-Appeal)	234
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General comments re entry numbers

Disappointing drop in numbers. The reasons are unclear. Data on whether centres have dropped out or whether there are fewer presentations at centre is not available. It would be of considerable interest to compare the number of double subject presentation (AH Maths and AH Applied Maths) over time.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

Please see next page.

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

Mean mark was down by 2% on 2003. The C boundary was lowered slightly more than this.

Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

Distribution of awards (pre-Appeal)	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	33.8	33.8	79	69
B	17.9	51.7	42	57
C	16.2	67.9	38	45
D	5.6	73.5	13	39
No award	26.5	100.0	<u>62</u> 234	0

General commentary on passmarks and grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create mark schemes which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum 50% of the available marks (notional passmark) and a very well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70%, it is almost impossible to get the standard absolutely on target every year, in every subject and level
- Each year we therefore hold a passmark meeting for each subject at each level where we bring together all the information available (statistical and judgmental). 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 senior management team at SQA
- We adjust the passmark downwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly more demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- We adjust the passmark upwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly less demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- Where the standard appears to be very similar to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries
- 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 are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. And just because SQA has altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry 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
- Our main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain standards across the years, even as syllabuses evolve and change

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Very close to what they were in 2003.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Even with a smaller group, there was a wide spread of marks – from 2 to 99. There was no evidence of difference in performance between the three core sections.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

None apparent.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

None apparent.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

This was the last of the current format of AH Applied Mathematics Papers. In 2005, there will be separate papers in the three topic (although the questions on the mathematics unit will be common to all three papers).