

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

Classical Studies

Qualification area

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

Classical Studies — Advanced Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2003	25
----------------------------------	----

Number of entries in 2004	25
----------------------------------	----

General comments re entry numbers

Numbers are fairly steady now. There were also some withdrawals from the 2004 examination.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

A	11
B	7
C	4
D	2
No Award	1

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

There were more top grades than in previous years — overall a very good standard both in the dissertation and in the examination itself.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	44.0	44.0	11	210
B	28.0	72.0	7	180
C	16.0	88.0	4	150
D	8.0	96.0	2	135
No award	4.0	100.0	1	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

A — 70%
B — 60%
C — 50%

As in previous years.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Dissertation

Good solid research skills are now in evidence from candidates. The examiners noted occasional over-emphasis on description and over-long quotes which lacked adequate interpretation. These aspects, however, were counterbalanced by evidence of real engagement with the subjects. Comparisons with present-day and other eras were very appropriate and very good.

Examination

Some candidates had not appreciated the relative demands of Part 1 and Part 2 of the paper, and spent too long on Part 1. Candidates found Question 13 (in Part 1) on Right and Wrong conceptually difficult. There were some excellent essays on Horace and Juvenal, and good efforts on Aristophanes.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

The “Individual and Community” topic was well done by the candidates in the one centre which chose it. The best of the dissertations were of a very high standard.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

- 1 A few of the dissertations focused more on the literary aspects than on the socio/political issues involved. Centres are advised to consider the dissertation titles carefully to ensure that the topics can be developed appropriately.
- 2 Re-emphasise the point about pacing during the examination and not taking too long over Part 1.