

Principal Assessor Report 2003

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 2002	34
Pre appeal	

Number of entries in 2003	25
Pre appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

There was a decrease in the number of candidates from the comparatively high number in 2002.

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

A	70%
B	60%
C	50%

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 pre-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

As previous years.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

More candidates chose Section A — History and Historiography than in previous years. One candidate did Individual and Community. There was no uptake for Orator and Audience and, for the first time, there was a minority for Comedy, Satire and Society. The best marks were attained by pupils choosing the last option.

It is a matter of some concern that a small number of candidates performed very well in the dissertation and poorly in the external assessment. This is exemplified by one candidate who gained 88% in the dissertation and yet failed to gain an overall award. At best an adjustment of focus is required on the part of such candidates.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Some very good dissertations on some interesting topics showed enormous research and hard work.

Part 2 of the external assessment provided many good rather than outstanding essay answers.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Some of the dissertations were underdeveloped, with few primary sources quoted and little relevant comparison with modern society. Part 2 in the external assessment was, in general, done no better than adequately by a majority of candidates.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

- ◆ Dissertation — primary sources and comparative material are not optional.
- ◆ Part 1 — more practice in this type of question is needed.