Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:	**Computing**

Qualification area

Subject(s) and Level(s) Included in this report	**Computing Studies – Intermediate 1**

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2003 (Pre Appeal)	1023

Number of entries in 2004 (Pre Appeal)	1488

General comments re entry numbers

Many schools are opting for Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 exams rather than Standard Grade, only 35% of candidates were from S5/S6.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

A	34.3%
B	27.6%
C	16.6%
D	5.9%
No Award	15.6%

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

Slight increase in percentages achieving awards at each grade with corresponding increase in “no awards”.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	34.3	34.3	511	72
B	27.6	61.9	410	61
C	16.6	78.5	247	50
D	5.9	84.4	88	44
No award	15.6	100	232	39

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 arrangements evolve and change.

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

The Question paper was intentionally made more difficult by excluding questions where, for example, a choice was given between two choices. This allowed the boundaries to be set more towards a priori (ie standard boundaries of C at 50, B at 60 and A at 70).

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The majority of students attempted most questions but still with non-technical vocabulary. The Internet option is still the most popular although the other two options have increased slightly in popularity.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Internet questions were answered well and there was an improvement in the responses to the systems questions.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Many students confused the terms backing storage and backup. The explanation required in the problem solving aspects of computer applications was not always clear enough to enable the candidates to be awarded full marks.

Within the Information Technology section it was clear that many students lacked the knowledge of the correct terminology.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Good improvement in the Computer Systems part of the course. Support required with students explanations and technical vocabulary.