

## Principal Assessor Report 2004

**Assessment Panel:**

**Business Education**

**Qualification area**

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

**Economics — Advanced Higher**

### **Statistical information: update**

|                                  |    |
|----------------------------------|----|
| <b>Number of entries in 2003</b> | 63 |
|----------------------------------|----|

|                                  |    |
|----------------------------------|----|
| <b>Number of entries in 2004</b> | 63 |
|----------------------------------|----|

### **General comments re entry numbers**

No obvious trend given small entry numbers.

## Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of awards

|          | % Candidates |
|----------|--------------|
| A        | 30.2%        |
| B        | 23.8%        |
| C        | 17.5%        |
| D        | 15.9%        |
| No Award | 12.6%        |

### Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

Little change on previous year with a slightly larger number of weaker candidates.

## Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

| Distribution of awards | %    | Cum % | Number of candidates | Lowest mark |
|------------------------|------|-------|----------------------|-------------|
| A                      | 30.2 | 30.2  | 19                   | 68          |
| B                      | 23.8 | 54.0  | 15                   | 57          |
| C                      | 17.5 | 71.5  | 11                   | 47          |
| D                      | 15.9 | 87.4  | 10                   | 42          |
| No award               | 12.6 | 100   | 8                    | -           |

### 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

Grade boundaries fixed at lower levels to reflect the level of difficulty of ITEM A (see below “Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty”).

## **Comments on candidate performance**

### **General comments**

Performance of the strongest candidates impressive, but only one achieved an A1. Some candidates particularly from centres with small numbers of presentations scored low marks in the written examination paper.

### **Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well**

Good responses to Section B questions on the EU (Q3) and inflationary policy (Q4). Many candidates took advantage of the increased word length in the dissertation and submitted thorough pieces of work.

### **Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty**

Poor reading of the passage in ITEM A is a problem. Many candidates rush into answering the questions without giving the passage more than a cursory glance and thereby lose many marks. Few understood what was meant by trying to 'buck the market' (A5a). Weak responses in Section B on exchange rates (Q1) and, on recent competition legislation (Q5c). Alarming, a number of candidates did not know the difference between a trade deficit and a budget deficit and as a consequence scored low marks in this area (Q6). The last point was mentioned in last year's assessor's report.

## **Recommendations**

### **Feedback to centres**

1. Centres making effective use of the increased word length in the dissertation, but too many candidates are ignoring the issued instructions about structure, presentation and content.
2. Too many candidates are failing to keep up to date with their own reading of *The Economist*, broadsheet newspapers and readily available magazines and publications — for example *Economics Today*, *The Economic Review*, *Recent Developments in Economics* and *The British Economy Survey*. It is expected that a significant part of AH education is based on intelligent discussion based on individual research by the students. AH should be seen as an excellent preparation for the different teaching and learning styles that will be met in higher education.
3. Candidates must read all parts of the questions set in the written examination paper to avoid some of the silly mistakes made on the paper.