

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

Computing & Information Systems

Qualification area

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

Information Systems Intermediate 2

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2003 (Pre Appeal)	3453
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Number of entries in 2004 (Pre Appeal)	3191
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General comments re entry numbers

A disappointing drop in entries of just over 7% - it appears that some centres have moved to Computing. Information Systems however remains one of the most popular Intermediate 2 courses.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

A	28.8%
B	25.5%
C	21.4%
D	5.9%
No Award	18.3%

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

Fewer candidates achieving grade A than last year leading to an overall lower pass rate for the subject.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	28.8	28.8	920	73
B	25.5	54.3	814	63
C	21.4	75.7	683	53
D	5.9	81.6	189	48
No award	18.3	99.9	585	

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

Standard and level of demand of examination paper same as last year, so grade boundaries remain the same.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Overall performance of candidates was good. Very few candidates achieved very low scores, demonstrating schools' ability to correctly judge presentation level. The standard of English was good but many markers commented on the poor standard of handwriting.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Section 1 was answered well with most candidates scoring over 20 out of 30.

The Multimedia and Internet optional sections remain far more popular than Applications of IT in Society, and are usually better answered. Candidates performed slightly better in the Internet section than in Multimedia.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Overall, candidates performed less well in their optional section than in Section 1.

In Section 1 Q12 and Q14 were found challenging with few candidates scoring the full 2 marks. In Q4 many candidates failed to relate their answer to the multimedia database mentioned in the stem of the question.

In Q18 many candidates confused *telecommuting* with *teleconferencing*.

Question 23(c) had few correct responses.

In general, questions requiring a definition of a term were not well answered e.g. 20(a), 21(c)(i).

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Candidates seemed well prepared for the exam.

There is still a problem of candidates using non-technical terms when answering questions e.g. “look for” instead of “search”.

Many candidates give single word answers even when asked to describe something.

As has been noted in previous years, candidates continue to use proprietary names in answers instead of generic terms e.g. “Microsoft Word” instead of “word processing software”.