

Principal Assessor Report 2006

Assessment Panel:

Computing

Qualification area

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

Int 2 Computing

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Paper was of a similar standard to last year and candidates have performed as well as in previous years. Improvements in describing solutions to problems are still required but this may well reflect the standard of English skills rather than students computing knowledge.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Section 1 & 11

The difference between RAM and ROM is well understood.
“Fit for purpose” is well memorised by the majority of candidates.
Effects of a virus on systems is well known by students.

Artificial Intelligence Option

The Turing Test is well explained by the majority of candidates.

Computer Networking option

Filtering services are well understood.

Multimedia Technology Option

Image editing features are well known to candidates.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Section 1 & 11

Floating Point Representation requires to be better explained.
Descriptions of how to create a Macro were poorly answered.
The functions of operating systems were not well known.

Artificial Intelligence Option

Completing Trace Tables and rules was not well attempted.

Computer Networking option

Neural Networks was poorly explained.
Most candidates could not adequately describe Unicast Transmission
Domain Name Resolution was answered poorly with not enough technical detail.
Convergent Technology was not well understood.

Multimedia Technology Option

Very few students gave good answers to the meaning of Colour depth.
Attributes of notes stored in MIDI format.
Attributes of 3D images

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The ability to problem solve and relate knowledge to new scenarios is still a problem and I would suggest more practice for the candidates in this area, especially in the use of objects and operations and trace tables.

Many candidates get mixed up and lose marks needlessly between concepts such as interpreters and compilers or memory (as in RAM) and backing storage capacity. A little more thorough study in these areas would save wasted marks.

Areas of new course content such as convergent technologies, Midi technology, neural networks etc. still require more intense study.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2005	787 (Old) 1,307 (New)
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Number of resulted entries in 2006	2,735
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Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 100	-	-	-	-
A	21.0	21.0	574	70
B	21.4	42.4	585	60
C	23.1	65.5	633	50
D	9.1	74.7	250	45
No award	25.3	100.0	693	-

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.