



Principal Assessor Report 2007

Assessment Panel:

Computing

Qualification area

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

Intermediate 2 Computing

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The standard of students papers has been improving which is reflected in the slightly better results and the decrease in the poorly attempted papers. Students seem better prepared and are more willing to write more detailed answers.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Section 1 was generally answered well.

Computer Systems

All aspects of the Internet and computer viruses seemed to be well understood by the majority of candidates.

Software Development

The Standard algorithms are well understood.

Artificial Intelligence

The vast majority of students answered the query questions well.

The Turing Test is well known.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Computer Systems

Many students mis-interpreted the term transmission media.

Many students seem to be under the misapprehension that LCD always gives a better screen display than a CRT.

Software Development

The ability to write code and pseudocode seems to be a very difficult task for the majority of candidates. Graphical design notation was unknown to many candidates.

Artificial Intelligence

Poor descriptions of vision systems.

Traces are still problematic, although better attempted than previous years.

Networking

Converging technologies did not seem to be understood by the vast majority of candidates.

Answers regarding E-government were very vague.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

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

Computer hardware concepts need to be clear in students minds e.g. Hard drives do not necessarily have more memory than tapes, CRT monitors are not necessarily poorer quality than LCD monitors, etc.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2006	2,735
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Number of resulted entries in 2007	2,682
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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	23.5	23.5	631	70
B	22.6	46.1	606	60
C	23.6	69.7	633	50
D	8.7	78.4	234	45
No award	21.6	100.0	578	-

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.