

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Financial Services and Accounting

Qualification area

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

Accounting and Finance — Int 1

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	392

Number of entries in 2003	314
Pre appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

Unfortunately there has been a significant reduction in uptake — down almost 20%, (ie 78 candidates).

Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

A	42	
B	36	
C	30	all out of 60

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 syllabuses evolve and change

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Grade boundaries much lower than in 2002 (back to the levels of 2000 and 2001). 2002 paper had a very easy Petty Cash question which inflated marks across the board. Grade Boundaries now in line with standardised 'a priori', that is 50%, 60% and 70%.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

At the top end, candidates did very well. However, after the significant improvement in standard last year, this year's results were disappointing at the lower end with a large number of poor candidates

In general terms candidates presented in class groups seemed to do significantly better than those where the centre presented only one or two candidates.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Trial Balance
Completion of business document
Cash Budget (but see Recommendations section)

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Question 1 — part (c) — very few produced the correct answer.

Question 3 — lack of knowledge of the formulae, the meaning and the use of ratios was very apparent. There also seemed to be a common difficulty in understanding what was required in part (b) where many candidates simply gave one answer eg 2002, where five answers were required — one for each ratio.

Question 5 — bank reconciliation — was not a popular choice and was not particularly well done by those opting for it.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Question 4 ought to have been the obvious choice for most candidates, but a number did this very badly.

Their “cash budgets” consisted of a list which did not distinguish between receipts and payments, and did not attempt to find any balance to carry forward? Perhaps the only experience of this topic was on a spreadsheet and the candidates did not understand the necessity to do any calculation. It might therefore be appropriate to revise cash budgets as a pen and paper exercise. (There was a very similar question in 2002 and this type of answer was very uncommon then.)

Given the high number of candidates scoring A Grade and the significant number within that group scoring in the 50's, is there a case for preparing and presenting many of these for Int 2?