

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

Business Education

Qualification area

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

Accounting and Finance — Intermediate 2

Statistical information: update

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|----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of entries in 2003 | 593 |
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| Number of entries in 2004 | 515 |
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General comments re entry numbers

Reduction of 78 — returns numbers to the level of 2001 after two years when the entry approached 600.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

| Grade | % |
|----------|-------|
| A | 28.9% |
| B | 15.9% |
| C | 17.1% |
| D | 7.0% |
| No award | 31.1% |

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

Reduction in all levels due largely to a significant “tail” of candidates who were totally unable to make a reasonable attempt at this examination paper.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

| Distribution of awards | % | Cum % | Number of candidates | Lowest mark |
|------------------------|------|-------|----------------------|-------------|
| A | 28.9 | 28.9 | 149 | 54 |
| B | 15.9 | 44.8 | 82 | 46 |
| C | 17.1 | 61.9 | 88 | 38 |
| D | 7.0 | 68.9 | 36 | 34 |
| No award | 31.0 | 31.1 | 160 | |

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

Question paper was intended to be of similar in standard to last year but perhaps on balance was 2 marks harder at C , hence lower cut offs than last year.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

As usual there were numerous examples of able candidates who were well prepared. However there were many who were totally unfit to sit this examination with any expectation of success. Frequently less than five questions were attempted and many answers to individual questions were almost totally worthless. Dates, labels and headings were repeatedly omitted or incorrect and some candidates could not even make a reasonable attempt at question 1.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Question 1
Question 3(a)
Question 4
Question 6

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Question 3(b)
Question 7
ALL theory questions

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

The following caused candidates difficulty:

- ◆ Placing and labelling Prime Cost accurately in question 2
- ◆ Most candidates simply changed the sales figure in 3b and left the cost and expenses unchanged.
- ◆ Question 5 was not well done as expected, significant numbers seemingly unaware of the concept of limiting factor.
- ◆ Question 7 was a very popular choice but as is usually the case with break-even questions it was not well done, many candidates seeming unaware that in part (b) the commission would have the effect of reducing contribution, and simply used the break-even figure from part (a)
- ◆ Question 8 was not a popular choice but was either very well done, or very badly done by those attempting it.
- ◆ Theory was poor once again. In particular, factoring, leasing, capital and revenue expenditure, fixed, variable and semi-variable costs were not well done. In the last instance, in many cases there was no reference to quantity in the answers.

In general terms, centres with a number of candidates sufficient to suggest a teaching group did well and produced quality scripts across the majority or all of their entry. Those with only one or two candidates frequently did badly.