

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Business Services

Qualification area

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

Administration – Intermediate 2

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	3339

Number of entries in 2003	
Pre appeal	3387

General comments re entry numbers

Additional 48 candidates presented – a 1.4% increase. No of candidates presented stabilising as Standard Grade Administration and intermediate courses in Administration are now established in centres.

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

MARK (lowest)	
Upper A	90
Lower A	80
B	68
C	57

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

Upper A – lowest mark 90. In order to demonstrate excellence across the range of skills and knowledge and understanding tested, a candidate had to score at least 60% of possible knowledge and understanding marks (75% of marks can be achieved in the practical tasks).

C – Candidates had to score more than half marks to achieve a pass. This is a reasonable expectation bearing in mind the potential for accumulating marks due to the process based nature of the question paper.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

More candidates performed very well in practical IT related tasks this year and this is reflected in an increase in the pass rate. Performance in knowledge and understanding tasks varied considerably from centre to centre.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

The letter and database tasks were generally well done. However very few candidates dealt correctly with “Date as postmark” in letter. Where marks were lost in the database question it was mainly as a result of poor keying in of details from manuscript records. Some candidates performed well in Task 3 knowledge and understanding.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Many candidates had difficulty with calculations required in spreadsheet Task 2c and few made use of absolute cell referencing. Several candidates omitted the pie chart in the spreadsheet task. Quality of responses to knowledge and understanding questions in Task 3 was very varied.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Overall performance in practical IT tasks continues to improve. Reasons for this could include better progression from Standard Grade Administration and the impact of 5-14 developments in IT. Some centres showed an improvement in knowledge and understanding responses with candidates giving more in-depth responses while there is room for improvement here by other centres.

Some practical issues still need to be addressed by some centres:

- teacher errors in files submitted – mainly in the spreadsheet file in this year's paper
- no printouts included in return envelopes – these are required for marking scripts
- increasing number of candidates submitting printouts with no name displayed despite clear instructions given in examination paper
- many candidates submit tasks in wrong order and often include irrelevant sheets