

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Mathematics

Qualification area:

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

Applied Mathematics – Advanced Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	409

Number of entries in 2003	
Pre appeal	319

General comments re entry numbers

Disappointing. There are no known reasons but it is likely that the reduction is due to schools being discouraged from taking both AH courses after studying only four units.

The number taking each core dropped but Statistics suffered more (down by 78). NA dropped by 8 and Mechanics by 10.

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

(Pre Appeal)

Distribution of Awards	%	Cumulative %	Number of Candidates	Lowest Mark
Upper A	14.1	14.1	45	81
Lower A	21.3	35.4	68	69
B	16.9	52.4	54	58
C	17.2	69.6	55	47
No Award	30.4	100.0	97	
Total			319	

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

The mean mark rose by 3%. The fact that the Grade boundaries did not also rise by 3% reflects the view that the smaller cohort was felt likely to be somewhat stronger.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

With such a wide range of content, comments cannot be too particular. As with the maths paper, there was a wide range of marks, from 6 to 99 but low marks were rare (just 15 scoring 20 or less).

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

None apparent.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

None apparent.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

The comments of standards of presentation apply equally well in this course.

Badly presented mathematics is unsatisfactory.

Untidy work is likely to lose marks.

Centres should note that the structure of the Applied Mathematics paper in 2004 is the same as in 2001, 2002, 2003.