

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Art and Design

Qualification area

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

**Art and Design Research & Appreciation:
Advanced Higher**

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	21

Number of entries in 2003	
Pre appeal	23

General comments re entry numbers

While the number of candidates is not large I suggest that a set of exemplars to be made available to centres would be helpful.

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

C	48
B	60
A (lower)	73
A (upper)	85

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

There are no significant changes from 2002.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

There was, as always, a wide variety of responses to the considerable challenge of researching a particular area of interest to the candidate, writing it up intelligibly, and producing a relevant visual presentation.

There has been a trend in past years to move away from hackneyed and tired topics such as French Impressionism, Charles Rennie Mackintosh et al...

However a number of candidates are now giving us essays on the topic of “Fashion”. These, unfortunately tend to be fairly weak – as thin as the subject is ephemeral. Generally, candidates who showed real **personal** interest in their chosen topic gained a better grade than those whose interest was clearly perfunctory.

There were some **excellent** visual presentations, in some cases boosting a candidate’s final grade.

Unfortunately, in one or two cases candidates’ Visual Presentations brought down their final grade.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

I was very impressed with the best of the Visual Presentations. This is an area of assessment which has been a considerable success.

The best candidates produced work which was excellent in the research/written area **and** the Visual Presentation.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Candidates stand or fall on the quality of their thought and their ability to put these thoughts and ideas into intelligible and cogent argument.

Garbled and incoherent thoughts and ideas were expressed in equally poor English.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Make sure that the topic a candidate chooses is of genuine interest to them. It is equally important to make sure that a topic is reasonably easy to access for research purposes. It is very difficult to assess a candidate's work which has been thinly researched.

Visual presentation is vital. Candidates should be advised and guided as to which of the two methods (integral or discrete) will suit them best. It is **very** important that the integral approach results in a piece of immaculate desk-top publishing, properly and logically illustrated and bound in a reasonably permanent way. The discrete (separate) approach must be based on the research findings. A totally irrelevant Visual Presentation will gain no more than half-marks, no matter how good it may be intrinsically.