SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:	**Management and Enterprise**

Qualification area

Subject(s) and Level(s) included in this report	**Business Management** **Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher**

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2003	
Pre appeal	Intermediate 1 – 163 Intermediate 2 – 1460 Higher – 5664

Number of entries in 2004	
Pre appeal	Intermediate 1 –193 Intermediate 2 –1701 Higher – 5863

General comments re entry numbers

The number of candidates at Intermediate 1 has risen slightly. Intermediate 2 numbers are up considerably, which might seem to indicate that Centres are trying to encourage candidates to sit at the more appropriate level. Higher numbers continue to rise gradually. All levels have shown an increase in candidate numbers – up by almost 500 overall.

General comments

At Intermediate 1, candidates seemed to have improved on previous years.

Intermediate 2 candidates performed at a similar standard to last year and with less of a "tail" indicating that teachers/lecturers are presenting candidate at an appropriate standard.

At Higher the change in approach to Section One posed more problems than it did last year, particularly in question 1. However there is still evidence of candidates misunderstanding or confusing business terminology and not applying appropriate analysis at Higher level.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

Level	Award	
Intermediate 1	A	50.3%
	B	14.5%
	C	11.4%
	D	4.1%
	No Award	19.7%
Intermediate 2	A	24.1%
	B	22.6%
	C	20.8%
	D	7.6%
	No Award	24.9%
Higher	A	16.2%
	B	24.1%
	C	28.2%
	D	9.6%
	No Award	21.9%

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

Disappointing to note high percentage of no awards at Higher.

Grade Boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Intermediate 1 (/50)				
A	50.3	50.3	97	35
B	14.5	64.8	28	30
C	11.4	76.2	22	25
D	4.1	80.3	8	22
No award	19.7	100.0	38	

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Intermediate 2 (/75)				
A	24.1	24.1	410	52
B	22.6	46.7	385	44
C	20.8	67.5	353	37
D	7.6	75.1	129	33
No award	24.9	100.0	423	

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Higher (/100)				
A	16.2	16.2	948	68
B	24.1	40.3	1406	58
C	28.2	68.5	1646	48
D	9.6	78.1	561	43
No award	21.9	100.0	1281	

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

Grade boundaries at Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 have remained static over the 4 years' duration of these courses.

The Higher boundaries have varied over the past 3 years, but consistently across the grade boundaries. Last year grade boundaries were 'a priori' (ie they were C at 50, B at 60 and A at 70) but this year boundaries were slightly lower to account for the level of difficulty of Question 1 Section 1.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

At Intermediate 1, candidates seemed to have improved on previous years.

Intermediate 2 candidates performed at a similar standard to last year and with less of a "tail" indicating that teachers/lecturers are presenting candidates at an appropriate standard.

At Higher the change in approach in Section One posed more problems than it did last year, particularly in question 1.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Candidates at both Intermediate 2 and Higher who attempted questions containing finance questions generally did them well.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

In Section Two at both Intermediate 2 and Higher levels, candidates showed some misunderstanding or confusion in the use of business terminology used within the course. Also there was some confusion about terms used in questions. Some candidates completely misunderstood questions, or their answers were more in line with Intermediate 2 candidates. Candidates seem to find it hard to "analyse" at Higher.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

At Higher:

- There were clear difficulties between “types” and “sources” of information
- Section 2, question 3 was confusing for candidates
- Cash flow caused problems for candidates
- “Influence” of stakeholders was still being confused with “interests” of stakeholders
- Candidates were often weak on evaluation of decisions based on SWOT analysis
- Candidates often did not take account of mark allocation
- There is still evidence of candidates being presented at the wrong level.