

Principal Assessor Report 2003

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 2002	
Pre appeal	Intermediate 1 – 90 Intermediate 2 – 1260 Higher – 5736
Post appeal	

Number of entries in 2003	
Pre appeal	Intermediate 1 –159 Intermediate 2 –1460 Higher – 5664
Post appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

The number of candidates at Intermediate 1 has risen considerably. Intermediate 2 numbers are up slightly, which might seem to indicate that Centres are trying to encourage candidates to sit at the more appropriate level, although this is not borne out by the Higher statistics

Higher numbers remain similar to last year.

After some investigation it would appear that more Centres are presenting candidates in S4 for the Intermediate courses – 30% of Intermediate 1 candidates and 4.7% at Intermediate 2.

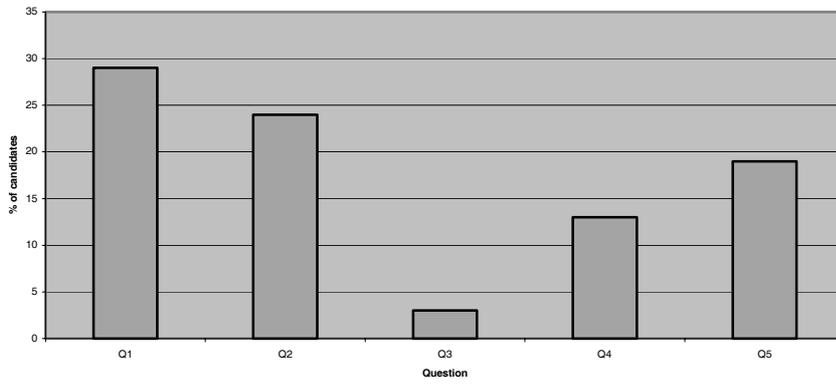
General comments

Intermediate 2 candidates performed at a similar standard to last year, but there is still a “tail” indicating that some are still being coursed above their ability.

At Higher the change in approach to Section One did not seem to pose the same problems as last year for candidates. However there is still evidence of candidates misunderstanding or confusing business terminology and not applying appropriate analysis at Higher level.

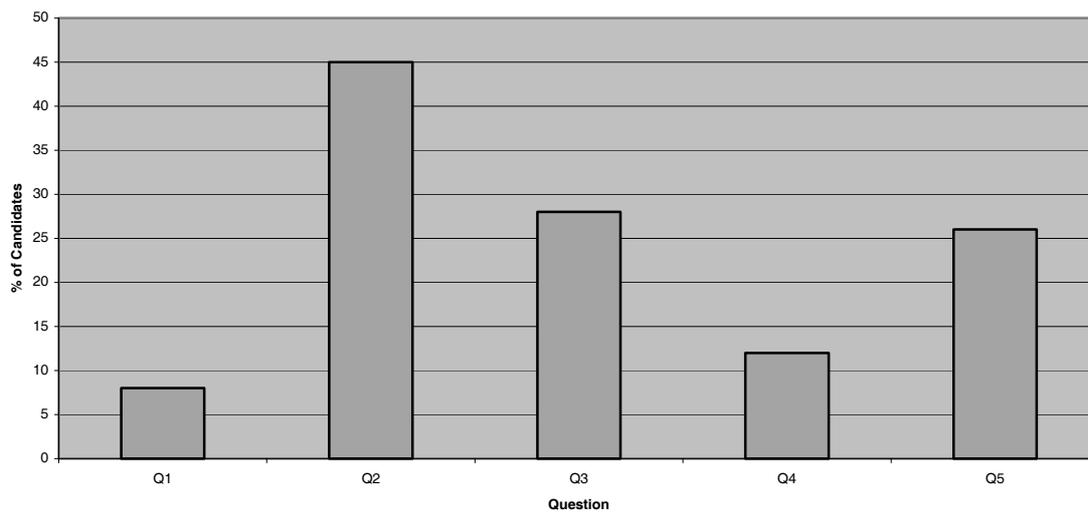
Question Selection Analysis (Section 2) Business Management INTERMEDIATE 2 2003
(sample of 30 candidates)

Int 2 BM 2003 Candidates' Selection of Questions



Question Selection Analysis (Section 2) Business Management HIGHER 2003
(sample of 60 candidates)

H Business Management 2003 Candidates' Selection of Questions



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

<i>Upper A</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>
Intermediate 1 (/50)			
45	35	30	25
Intermediate 2 (/75)			
66	52	44	37
Higher (/100)			
85	70	60	50

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

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

The Higher boundaries have varied a little over the 3 years, although consistently across all grades.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

In the first year of the new Higher, Section One contained one question which attracted 20 marks (out of the total 100) and which was not challenging enough at Higher level. In 2001 this question was reduced to 10 marks and the pitch of the question paper was deemed to be exactly right. However, in order to improve the question paper, the examining team wanted to move towards the use of more realistic “case” situations, in line with what candidates were doing in class. Also, candidates who go on to Advanced Higher are faced with real-life business case studies. Last year the new approach proved challenging for candidates, but through last year’s PA report and various quality meetings across the country, it seems to have caused fewer problems this year.

Areas of common misunderstanding

More generally, in Section Two at both Intermediate 2 and Higher levels, candidates showed misunderstanding and/or confusion in the use of business terminology used within the course. Also they were unclear about what the terminology used in the question papers required them to do. Some candidates misunderstood questions, or their answers were more in line with Intermediate 2 or 1 candidates. Analyses of situations at Higher level was often not to Higher standards or not offered where appropriate.

In order to address this, Marking Support Notes have been included in this report to clarify what is expected when specific words are used in questions for the Intermediate 2 and Higher examinations. These are intended as support notes to help teachers/lecturers to provide appropriate practice materials/prelims for students and they have been compiled with the assistance of the extended examining team.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

THE PRELIM

Section One

Use appropriate stimulus material for the current standard of exam; it is advisable not to use the pre-published materials (eg Harry's Glazed Expression, Short Cuts or any of the others from this pack which was issued as "practice" exercises) unless the questions are changed in line with the current format of this paper. Also make sure that questions asked (in Section One and in Section Two) cover the course content, eg in "Short Cuts" there is a question on the Business Plan, which is not currently in the course content. Change some questions if using a past SQA question paper or the Bonanza Bingo paper, remembering to try to maintain a balance of the course throughout the paper

Section Two

Questions should be INTEGRATED – ie come from more than one area of study (Outcome) – that means that old MIS questions (unchanged) are inappropriate, unless they are mixed around. Also the paper should be a "mix and match" from more than one past paper – a past paper (Section 2) in its entirety is unsuitable.

Ensure that over the 2 sections of the prelim paper the questions cover the whole course content. If you have not covered the whole course by the time of the prelim, for an Appeal, include additional evidence of the outcome(s) covered since the prelim, eg a NAB (although NABs are not **normally** evidence of candidates' being able to answer "integrated" questions).

Avoid the specimen paper altogether, as it is in the public domain.

Marking

In the marking of the prelim, show marks awarded CLEARLY, ie, not just ticks – bracket/underline the sentence or even paragraph for which you are awarding a mark.

SETTING A PRELIM PAPER

	DO	DON'T
1	Mimic the external exam	“Overlap” questions between Sections 1 & 2
2	Integrate section 2 questions	Use ½ marks in the prelim
3	Keep the marks available per topic more or less in the same proportion to the time spent on the topic	Use pre-published Section 1 stimulus material without checking (and probably amending) the questions
4	In Section 1 Question 1 on problems/issues should attract 10 marks.	Have a part of a question worth more than 10 marks
5	Restrict the marks available for “identification”	Use NABS questions without major amendment
6	Restrict the marks available for “definitions”	
7	Set maximums for aspects/parts of a possible answer	
8	Reward “development” only if it adds value within the marks available.	
9	Use internal moderation when papers are marked by more than one marker	
10	When more than one marker, use the same marker for the same questions in all scripts	

The marking scheme should be annotated with instructions to identify, for example, where maximums should be applied, where ID marks will be awarded, where comparisons must be made to gain marks, etc (dependent on complexity of question).

It should be remembered that cut-off scores are dependent on complexity of questions combined with quality and consistency of marking. If possible, a sample of scripts should be cross-marked (internal moderation). Cut-off scores should, therefore, be set appropriately.

**HIGHER BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
MARKING SUPPORT NOTES FOR TEACHERS**

- ✓ Marks awarded to questions are an indication of the depth of answer being sought
- ✓ Bulleted answers are acceptable but be careful to ensure that enough detail is given to merit the amount of marks available
- ✓ Relevant examples will be credited for development of points, where appropriate

KEY WORDS	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?	HOW SHOULD IT BE ANSWERED?
Advantages and Disadvantages (S1, Q5b 2002)	Pros and cons of option(s) – both advantages and disadvantages must be addressed but not necessarily in proportion to gain full marks.	Ensure that marks awarded for advantages are not repeated by straight negatives given for disadvantages.
Analyse (S2, Q2a ii 2000)	Consider, scrutinise, evaluate...	A detailed account should be given of the factors that are to be analysed. Use examples, if you can, to support your findings/opinions.
Compare and contrast (S2, Q4c 2000)	Evaluate – weigh up against – put options side by side. Draw up a distinction between the options.	Differences between items/options should be emphasised. Assess items being examined and stress the unique features of each in comparison to the other(s).
Describe (S1, Q4b 2002)	Explain/illustrate/express.	Definition and/or explanation should be given.
Differentiate	Make a distinction/distinguish between/set apart/separate.	Make a distinction by comparing options/items and defining items/options.
Discuss (S2, Q1c, Q3a 2000)	Debate, examine, confer, talk about, deliberate – infers “development”.	Negatives and positives of each option should be explored.
Identify and describe (S1, Q2c 2002)	Name/classify/categorise and then explain/illustrate/express.	Define item(s)/option(s) and then explain what it does/how it works/effects ...
Justify (S2, Q1b, Q3c, Q5c, 2000)	Give good reasons for/ Rationalise/give explanation for.	State why a course of action or option has been chosen.
Outline/suggest	Summarise/run through.	Description without too much detail.

Marks are not necessarily allocated purely for identification, but are dependent on the complexity of the question.

Lists attract few marks, eg POCCE (Planning, Organising, Co-ordinating, Controlling, Commanding), POGADSCIE (Problem, Objectives, Gather info, Analyse, Devise, Select, Communicate, Implement, Evaluate).

PRINCIPLES SPECIFIC TO HIGHER QP

SECTION ONE

Question One

- Always relates to the interpretation item/case
- Includes headings under which the question should be answered
- All 10 marks cannot be gained under one heading
- Headings will attract a maximum number of marks per heading (usually 3)
- There will be a maximum number of marks available if no headings are used
- If the question asks only for concerns/problems/issues, 'solutions' to the concerns/problems/issues will not be accepted – this question usually asks for identification of problems/issues only

Questions other than question one can be related to the case, but as with AH, they can also relate to any knowledge from other parts of the “course”.

BOTH SECTIONS

- If a diagram is asked for, it will attract marks, and the answer will not get full marks unless the diagram is there – if a diagram is NOT asked for, it is likely to attract marks but the diagram is not essential to gain all the marks
- Within SQA marking schemes, “professional” judgement is inferred – one word answers for “descriptions” are unlikely to gain marks – usually expansion of the answer is required (S2, Q4c 2002)
- No half marks are awarded – if part of an answer is almost right and the candidate goes on to expand on the point enough further through the answer, the whole section should be indicated and awarded the one mark
- Any VALID responses should be accepted even if they are not in the marking scheme
- Maximums are likely to be applied at markers’ meetings

**INTERMEDIATE 2 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
MARKING SUPPORT NOTES**

- ✓ Marks awarded to questions are an indication of the depth of answer being sought
- ✓ Bulleted answers are acceptable but be careful to ensure that enough detail is given to be awarded marks available
- ✓ Up-to-date examples will be credited for development of points, where appropriate

KEY WORDS	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?	HOW SHOULD IT BE ANSWERED?
Advantages and Disadvantages	Pros and cons of option(s).	Ensure that marks awarded for advantages are not repeated by straight negatives given for disadvantages.
Compare and contrast	Weigh up against – put options side by side. Draw up a distinction between the options.	Differences between items/options should be emphasised. Assess items being examined and stress the unique features of each in comparison to the other(s).
Define	Explain/illustrate – usually a business term.	Definition and explanation should be given.
Describe	Explain/illustrate/express.	Definition and explanation should be given.
Explain	Describe/illustrate/express.	Definition and explanation should be given.
Identify	Name/classify/categorise.	Name/term, eg stakeholders.
Identify/name and describe	Name/classify/categorise and then explain/illustrate/express.	Define item(s)/option(s) and then explain what it does/how it works/affects ...
Justify	Give good reasons for/ Rationalise/give explanation for.	State why a course of action or option has been chosen.
Outline	Summarise/run through.	Description without too much detail.