

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

Engineering

Qualification area

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

Fabrication & Welding Engineering Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2003	34
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Number of entries in 2004	29
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General comments re entry numbers

A slight reduction compared to last year with only two presenting centres. These totals reflect the candidates who attended the examination, the number entering is higher.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

No. of candidates	29
A	4
B	0
C	1
D	0
No Award	24

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

Last year no candidates received an Upper A pass. This year there was a good spread of results for the other grades. In previous years the majority received either a B or C pass The candidates receiving no award shows an increase from 29% to 34%.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	13.8	13.8	4	70
B	0	13.8	0	60
C	3.4	17.2	1	50
D	0	17.2	0	45
No award	82.8	100	24	

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 for each subject area

Standardised 'a priori' cut offs were set.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The paper covered all parts of the course as specified in the arrangement document. Again as in previous years some candidates seemed unaware of the detail contained in this document regarding the content of the external assessment. It appears that those who had been made aware of the weighting attached to each question provided an appropriate amount of detail in their responses and generally performed well.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Questions on welding processes (Q1), weld procedures, carbon equivalent and heat input (Q3) were answered well. The question on weld testing (Q7) was particularly well answered by candidates from one centre.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Responses to the question on weld preparation (Q2) from the majority of candidates were not well answered. Most candidates misinterpreted the question on preparation for surface protection (Q6) and gave responses relating to a procedure for painting.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

As in previous years the standard of sketching/drawing from the vast majority of candidates was very poor. Graphical material is an integral part of this course and as such candidates should be encouraged to develop skills both in interpretation and as an aid to communication.

Some candidates are still not aware of examination techniques and do not read or interpret questions correctly. (e.g. marks are lost when a list is required and the response is descriptive)

The required operations sheet (Q4) is again showing an improvement in its production from most candidates and centres should be encouraged to continue this progress.