

## Principal Assessor Report 2003

**Assessment Panel:**

**Engineering**

**Qualification area**

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

**Fabrication & Welding Engineering Higher**

### **Statistical information: update**

<b>Number of entries in 2002</b>	8
<b>Pre appeal</b>	8

<b>Number of entries in 2003</b>	34
<b>Pre appeal</b>	34

### **General comments re entry numbers**

A welcome increase in candidate numbers although the number of centres presenting candidates remains at two.

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

C = 50%
B = 60%
Lower A = 70%
Upper A = 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

Standardised 'a priori' Boundary Grades were set.
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## **Comments on candidate performance**

### **General comments**

The paper covered all parts of the course as laid down in the course arrangements document. As happened last year some candidates seemed unaware of the detail contained in this document regarding the content of the external assessment. Those who understood the weighting attached to questions provided an appropriate amount of detail in their responses and performed well.

### **Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well**

As in previous years the question on weld procedures and specification (Q3c) was particularly well answered. In addition the question on surface protection and finishing (Q6) was well answered by the majority of candidates.

### **Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty**

Both centres' candidates had some difficulty in answering the question on materials and the results of working (Q5).

The candidates in one centre consistently answered the question on weld symbols poorly while the other centre's candidates gave consistently poor answers to the question on non-destructive testing.

## **Recommendations**

### **Feedback to centres**

Some candidates still provide very poor sketches/drawings in their responses. The interpretation of graphical material is an integral part of the course, is covered and assessed in the units and candidates should be encouraged to develop improved skills in this area.

The importance of general exam techniques should be covered by centres in preparation for undertaking the external assessment.

There is an on-going concern that candidates are still not reading and interpreting the questions properly.

Centres should emphasise the logical layout of answers and make this a priority in their preparation of candidates.

Centres should be reminded of the course arrangements document which clearly details the weighting of subject content which influences the spread of marks in the external assessment.

The production of the operations planning sheet is being improved on year by year by candidates and centres should be congratulated for taking this on board.