

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

History

Qualification area

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

History Intermediate 1

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	434

Number of entries in 2003	
Pre appeal	503

General comments re entry numbers

The increase of 69 candidates seems to have come from pupils in S4 who have entered Intermediate instead of Standard Grade.

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

A	29
B	25
C	21

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 pre-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

The grade boundaries remained the same as in 2002.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Most contexts were attempted and very few candidates failed to complete the paper. There did not seem to be evidence of candidates answering on the wrong contexts. Less than a handful of candidates attempted to work their way through all the contexts.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

There were some very strong candidates and candidates were overall well prepared for the examination. Markers noted there was less copying of sources in candidates' answers. There seemed to be a slight increase in the use of recalled information.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Some candidates still seem unable to differentiate between “describe” and “explain” questions and simply tell all they know about a topic.

In source evaluation questions, some candidates only paraphrased content.

Questions which causes some difficulty were:

Part 2

- 8 The Red Flag – Question 4 – difficulty in gaining full marks in the evaluation despite the fact the author (Lenin) is a key figure.
- 9 Free at Last – Question 3 – difficulty in gaining full marks in evaluation despite the fact the author (Martin Luther King) is a key figure.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Teachers/lecturers should continue to emphasise the differences between “describe” and “explain” to candidates.

Candidates should not list points but give each point in a sentence.

Source evaluation continues to be the weakest element in candidates’ responses and centres should continue to emphasise work on origin and purpose.