

## Principal Assessor Report 2003

**Assessment Panel:**

Computing and Information Systems

**Qualification area**

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

Information Systems Intermediate 2

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### **Statistical information: update**

<b>Number of entries in 2002</b>	3426
<b>Pre appeal</b>	3187

<b>Number of entries in 2003</b>	
<b>Pre appeal</b>	3271

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

Number of candidates increased from last year. Subject remains a popular choice.

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

Grade C=53  
Grade B=63  
Grade A=73

### **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**

The grade boundaries were slightly higher this year as the paper was perceived to be slightly more accessible than in previous years both by presenting centres and by markers.

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

There was a marked improvement in the standard of candidates over last year. Very few candidates achieved very low scores demonstrating that they had been presented at the correct level. The bulk of candidates clearly demonstrated their competence and knowledge of the subject and accordingly the pass rate this year is significantly higher, at 84%, to reflect this. There was a substantial number of candidates who performed superbly and achieved the highest band this year. In fact, 3 times more candidates achieved a Band 1 this year than last.

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

The Multimedia option was done particularly well by candidates, with many gaining full marks in at least one of the questions. This may indicate that teachers are becoming more practised at “question spotting” in this section and preparing their candidates well.

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

The Applications of IT in Society section was again poorly answered.

Individual questions that caused difficulty were:

- Q1 — there were few candidates who gained the full 2 marks.
- Q5 — few candidates gave 2 examples of validation
- Q12 — lack of appreciation that the professional use had to be job related
- Q19 b — properties of vector graphics
- Q21 a — reasons for using a DTP package
- Q21 c (ii) — reason for choosing a presentation package
- Q22 c (ii) — explain user interface and functionality

## **Recommendations**

### **Feedback to centres**

Most candidates seemed well prepared for the exam. The standard of English was good and the use of correct terminology was well demonstrated, particularly in the Multimedia section.

Many candidates continue to lose marks by using proprietary names instead of generic ones i.e. they write about Microsoft Excel or Word instead of spreadsheets and wordprocessors. Candidates should be taught that only generic terms are acceptable.

Similarly, when asked to describe a process candidates fail to use technical terms like “sort” and “search” and instead use “arranged” and “look for”.

Unfortunately, an increasing number of candidates still attempt more than one of the optional sections, which causes problems for the markers.

Candidates should be made aware that when a question asks them to describe something then a single word answer is insufficient.