

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Engineering

Qualification area

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

Mechanical Engineering Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002	15
Pre appeal	15

Number of entries in 2003	5
Pre appeal	5

General comments re entry numbers

Only one centre entered candidates on this Higher in Diet 2003. This was disappointing.

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

Upper A	85%
Lower A	70%
B	60%
C	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 for each subject area

Standardised 'a priori' Boundary Grades were applied.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Candidate performance was generally poor. They did not appear to be adequately prepared.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

None.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Candidates appeared to have difficulty with all areas of the course.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Candidates need to be well prepared in all areas and be given plenty of practice on the more complex questions in sections B and C, particularly under exam conditions.