

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Technical Education

Qualification area

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

Graphic Communication Advanced Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002	296
Pre appeal	

Number of entries in 2003	408
Pre appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

There is a continued increase in the uptake of Graphic Communication at Advanced Higher which is very encouraging considering that there is no previous history of a CSYS course for the subject area. A number of new centres came on board this year along with increased numbers from centres that had previously presented. The increase in numbers indicates that the course is attractive to the candidates and gives them a good experience. It would also appear that teachers are becoming more at ease with the course and its content and are making it more attractive to the candidates. There is already an indication of a number of new centres making enquires for 2003 – 2004.

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

Upper A	170
Lower A	142
B	121
C	101

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 boundary for the Upper A has remained constant for the third year and is in line with the standardised 'a priori': 85%. It is felt that the ability of candidates and the accessibility of the marks at this level were similar to that of previous years.

However the Lower A grade boundary was reduced by one mark, and B and C boundaries by two marks, to account for the 'degree of difficulty' of the integrated questions (Q9 and Q10).

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Candidates' responses were varied, from those achieving excellent results to those who did not appear to be aware of all aspects of the course. Some re-emphasis on examination techniques may be useful as it appears that some candidates do not read questions properly before answering, particularly Question 4, use of Solid Primitive and Boolean operations.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

- Question 3. (i) Gifted candidates demonstrated effort and skill in their business card designs. They produced professional designs and made use of the coloured pencils that should be provided for the examination.
- Question 4. This question was very well answered with the candidates demonstrating a good understanding of the 3D Modelling Techniques required.
- Question 8. As in previous years this question was very well attempted with most candidates gaining 10 and above.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

A large number of candidates had difficulty in answering: -

- Question 1. It was clear from the responses that the candidates did not have a full understanding of the Design Principles as applied to a Desktop Publication.
- Question 3. The variation in responses was very wide. A large number of candidates made very little attempt to alter the basic layout of the business card and add suitable graphic items to enhance the card. Many candidates did not gain what should have been an easy three marks for stating how they had enhanced the design by using Line, Colour and Texture. They gave a general answer not linked to the three headings.
- Question 6. Industrial Printing. This question was very badly done by the majority of candidates. Very few gained all the marks allocated.
- Question 9. The integrated question was not well done by candidates. Very few were able to breakdown the question and apply the techniques taught in class.
- Question 10. This question received an average response from candidates. Many candidates approached the question as if it were an oblique cone which made it more difficult for them.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

- There would appear to be a need for more direct teaching of the areas of Design Principles and Design Elements. It is important that the candidates are exposed to a variety of Desktop Publishing graphic items before they start their professional graphic presentation.
- Formalise the teaching of the Knowledge and Understanding elements of the 3D Modelling and Graphic Presentation e.g. solid primitives, industrial printing techniques is also needed.
- Candidates should be encouraged to analyse pages from these Desktop Publishing items using the Design Principles and Design Elements stated in the assessment document for the professional graphic presentation.
- Introduce an element of integration to technical drawing question set at the end of the Technical Graphic Unit.
- Ensure candidates are well equipped with the knowledge and understanding to answer all areas within the technical graphics as the question paper covers the full range of content here.