

Principal Assessor Report 2005

Assessment Panel:

Construction

Qualification area

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

Construction - Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of resulted entries in 2004	47
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	64
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General comments re resulted entry numbers

Entries show a marked increase from last year, but still considerably less than 2002.
All candidates were from colleges but one college class consisted wholly of school pupils.
It is believed that some colleges are offering the Units without the external assessment required for the Higher.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 100	-	-	-	-
A	4.7	4.7	3	70
B	15.6	20.3	10	60
C	10.9	31.3	7	50
D	3.1	34.4	2	45
No award	65.6	100.0	42	-

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 arrangements evolve and change.

Comments on any significant changes in distribution of awards/grade boundaries

The overall pass rate (A to C awards) shows a significant improvement from last year. This, with the increased numbers, is encouraging.

The distribution of awards showed the usual wide range of ability within the group.

There was a significant increase in A awards from last year.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The mean mark for the question paper was 49% (up from 42%) and for the project was 58% (down from 61%).

The mean overall mark for both components was 51% (up from 48%).

Results continue to be disappointing particularly in the question paper. Some projects were very good but only contribute 30% of the total mark.

Question Paper

Some very poor scripts with the standard of sketching and numeracy continuing to give concern. Candidates performed better in the mandatory Section A (average mark 50%) than in Section B (average mark 47%).

Project

All centres presenting projects were visited and some very good practice and submissions were observed. The average mark for the projects was 58% with this mark being dragged down by some very indifferent work by some candidates. However, there were some very good projects showing how well committed candidates can perform.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Candidates generally did well in the following questions:

- Q8 Contouring and cross-section.
- Q9(a) Booking and calculating reduced levels.
- Q10(b) CAD question was well answered.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Candidates generally performed poorly in the following questions:

- Q6 Not popular and poorly done when attempted.
- Q7 Not popular with very poor sketching and lack of understanding of timber frame construction.
- Q9(b) Not understood by most candidates.
- Q10 Very popular but wide range of quality.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Candidates still seem unprepared for an examination situation. Some candidates answered all questions in Section B. Commonly used technical terms in the paper were frequently misunderstood.

If candidates were to use the readily available past papers and support materials in preparation for the exam they would certainly improve their performance.

Concentration on the building technology aspects of the Building Design unit would help the basic knowledge of construction techniques. This, along with more practice in sketching in proportion, would make significant differences.