

Principal Assessor Report 2005

Assessment Panel:

Business Education

Qualification area

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

Economics Advanced Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of resulted entries in 2004	63
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	79
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General comments re resulted entry numbers

Candidates up by almost 30%, this is a significant increase after stable figures of recent years.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 100	-	-	-	-
A	24.1	24.1	19	68
B	21.5	45.6	17	59
C	27.8	73.4	22	50
D	10.1	83.5	8	45
No award	16.5	100.0	13	-

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

Fewer A grade candidates this year, but distribution of marks are more evenly spread. C level set at 50% because the distorting factor of the previous year was not present in 2005.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Average marks in both elements of the paper remarkably similar to 2004.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Many well presented and developed dissertations.
Answers on oil and pensions and globalisation (except c) of good quality.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Ability to supply a suitable microeconomic diagram to ITEM A Q 6a) on labour markets and national minimum wage was surprisingly weak.
Essay Q 5c) poorly done. Many candidates failed to mention the WTO or the IMF in the year in which the G8 summit was taking place in Scotland!
Many weaker candidates failed to follow the instructions laid down for dissertations. Omission of contents, introduction, a properly argued conclusion and a list of references. Some candidates also failed to specify word length or use the appropriate type face. Too many candidates failed to support their arguments with relevant examples and charts.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Follow dissertation guidelines. This will become part of the NAB requirement from August 2005 for the Economic research unit

Centres are reminded that, although the course concentrates on contemporary economics in the last eighteen months, candidates are expected to have reasonable background knowledge on such subjects as the development of the UK's monetary policy and the UK's relationship with the WTO, the IMF and the European Union.