

Principal Assessor Report 2005

Assessment Panel:

History

Qualification area

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

History Intermediate 1

Statistical information: update

Number of resulted entries in 2004	673
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	944
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General comments re resulted entry numbers

The rise of nearly 300 entries was due to increased S4 entries.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 45	-	-	-	-
A	17.8	17.8	168	31
B	29.2	47.0	276	25
C	21.7	68.8	205	20
D	9.5	78.3	90	17
No award	21.7	100.0	205	-

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 grade boundaries were raised by 1 mark across the board to reflect the rise in the total mark to 45.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

For the first time more than 50% of candidates came from S3-S4.

A wide range of contexts were studied. Many centres study medieval and early modern topics, so avoiding difficult modern concepts.

There was a wide variety of candidate response. Many candidates seemed to “run out of steam” ie produce a third unit which was poorer than the other two. A small number of candidates did not attempt a third context. Most candidates tended to attempt contexts in the order they appeared in the examination paper, but in a few centres they chose a different order, suggesting candidates were attempting their stronger contexts first.

There is still a considerable amount of copying directly from the sources. In a few cases candidates mistakenly think that writing “Source A says – whole sentence copied” and “Source A also says – second sentence copied” – is not copying.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Most candidates did well in Outcome 1 (describe) and Outcome 2 (explain) questions.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Outcome 3 (how useful) questions tend to be badly done with many candidates simply restating the content.

Candidates found difficulty in commenting on visual sources (drawings, photographs).

Some candidates run several points together.

In several centres where a very small number of candidates were presented, candidates only attempted one question from each of three contexts. They did not seem to know they should attempt all four questions in each context.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Where candidates clearly find one context more difficult than the others, they should be advised to do this context last.

Candidates must not copy the whole source or complete sentences in their answers. They should write the answer in their own words.

In Outcome 3 questions (apart from content) marks can be gained by identifying accurately whether a source is “a primary source from the time” or “a secondary source with the benefit of hindsight”. Marks are also awarded for commenting on authorship, purpose or content limitation.

Candidates need more practice in dealing with visual sources.

Candidates should take a separate sentence for each point so they give a developed point.

Candidates must attempt all four questions in each of their three contexts.