

Principal Assessor Report 2005

Assessment Panel:

Modern Languages

Qualification area

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

Russian (Higher)

Statistical information: update

Number of resulted entries in 2004	17
---	----

Number of resulted entries in 2005	19
---	----

General comments re resulted entry numbers

The increase of two candidates is welcome, but statistically insignificant.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 100	-	-	-	-
A	78.9	78.9	15	70
B	5.3	84.2	1	60
C	5.3	89.5	1	50
D	0.0	89.5	0	45
No award	10.5	100.0	2	-

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 higher number of candidates presented from S3 (27.8% this year, compared to 5.9% in 2004) and some deficiencies in preparing candidates in certain centres led to a lower percentage of Upper A passes and an increase in No Awards. Grade Boundaries were set, as in the last two years, at the *a priori* levels.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

As previously mentioned, this year has marked a significant rise in the number of S3 Candidates entered for Higher Russian. The generally lower level of performance, as compared with last year, is attributable in part to this fact. Candidates showed a lack of maturity in both thought and expression in Russian (in the Essay papers) and English, particularly in the Translation element of the Reading Comprehension paper, as well as the ability to formulate convincing answers in English (which in the majority of cases was clearly not the Candidates' native language).

The other major contributory factor to Candidates' lack of success was inadequate preparation of them by Centres. This year, however, some Centres did not adequately familiarise Candidates with the format of the papers and inform them of what they, the Candidates, were required to do in the external exam. Examples of this were where one Candidate translated **only** the first and last phrases of the Translation Passage inserting the intervening section. Another Candidate, wrote the Directed Writing in English (instead of Russian).

In all cases, I would strongly recommend that Centres be made aware of their responsibilities, to Candidates.

All other aspects of the examination were satisfactorily dealt with by Candidates.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

--

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

--

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

See my previous comments under the heading 'Comments on candidate performance'.