



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Photography
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the Examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Generally, candidates engaged well with the themes, producing some creative and inspiring work. The quality of the images was generally good, but print quality was poor in some cases.

The themes 'Natural World', 'Visual Elements' and 'The Urban Environment' proved the most popular.

Candidates should ensure that their selected work does actually fit within one of the given themes.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The Plans were generally more consistent; the research element continues to improve.

When candidates' Plans were well considered and researched the development was of a much higher standard.

Candidates who displayed an understanding of the basics of photography, eg focus, aperture control, and shutter speed, produced work of a very high standard.

Understanding the limitations of the equipment candidates have at their disposal resulted in high-level responses to the themes.

Areas which candidates found demanding

The theme: 'Photo Surrealism' gave rise to a number of problems. In some cases there was a lack of understanding of what surrealism is or was. Research for this theme was generally poor or unrelated. A number of candidates wrote ambiguous Plans, and it was unclear as to whether the theme was 'Youth Culture' or 'Photo Surrealism'.

Research for this theme was generally poor or unrelated. There were a high number of 'Alice in Wonderland' submissions, many of which did not link to 'Photo Surrealism'.

Candidates often did not include any reference to other photographers or included reference to photographers that were unrelated to the theme.

Plans that were unrealistic in terms of equipment, experience and timescales led to low-level responses.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

Ensure that candidates:

- ◆ clearly identify the selected theme
- ◆ produce plans that are not in the past tense
- ◆ submit the correct number of images
- ◆ identify the images to be used
- ◆ include the images used in the research
- ◆ include research
- ◆ include research of other appropriate photographers
- ◆ show engagement with the research
- ◆ show that selection for the final images has taken place
- ◆ produce evaluations which are not purely descriptive
- ◆ remember to include a realistic timescale for the development
- ◆ produce images which are of photographic quality
- ◆ do not over-use digital sharpening, filtration etc
- ◆ ensure that the digital files used are big enough to be printed
- ◆ produce prints that are a minimum of A5 size; maximum A4

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	-
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	1,153
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 200				
A	24.4%	24.4%	281	140
B	33.7%	58.1%	389	120
C	32.4%	90.5%	374	100
D	3.3%	93.8%	38	90
No award	6.2%	100.0%	71	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary), and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary). It is, though, very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Head of Service and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

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, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in say, Higher Chemistry, this 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.

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as Arrangements evolve and change.