



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Administration
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests.

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

A much smaller cohort this year as it is the last presentation.

Almost all candidates were able to complete all questions/tasks in both papers. There was a fairly even spread of question choice in section 2.

Issues identified in Paper 1: poor answering of compare questions; lack of attention to 'use of'; poor knowledge of documents used in the sale of goods and methods of travel specific to business travellers; many candidates referred to the person spec being about individual applicants; very poor knowledge of use of WP and SS in the purchases dept.

Too many candidates regurgitated the question in their answers. Outline requires answers to be written in a sentence.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Paper 1

Improvements in describing — candidates were able to develop answers with examples, showing more in-depth knowledge. Candidates did well in the ID questions, though many described/explained answers when not required.

Many candidates showed good knowledge of the course (particularly customer service, flexible working, security of people, temp contracts, health and safety) and had clearly revised well.

Paper 2

Many candidates scored highly (ie more than 40 marks):

- ◆ **Database** — accuracy in data entry; printing single record; creating report, many set correct search criteria, accurate report footer.
- ◆ **Spreadsheet** — some good problem solving in price calculation, editing/cell border and shading, formatting; correct printing; use of SUM and MAX functions; accurate keying in; named cell/link.
- ◆ **Word processing** — use of template; applying bullets; inserting chart; quite good accuracy; manuscript corrections.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Paper 1

Some answers were poorly written, which resulted in marks not being awarded, especially with regard to the command words.

Paper 2

- ◆ **Database:** many candidates were unable to sort on two fields; many were unable to create an accurate and informative report title.
- ◆ **Spreadsheet:** use of SUM in calculating sales per category, particularly in the clothing calculation — many used =SUM(B9:E9) instead of (B7:E9); many struggled with percentage calculation — there were some very strange calculations resulting in answers like 1,045,987%; many candidates created a column chart instead of a pie chart for displaying percentage breakdown; poor accuracy in new column headings — not formatted to fit in with rest of sheet (ie centred); difficulties in complex formulae eg discount % and discounted price.
- ◆ **Word processing:** inserting of spreadsheet data where candidates inserted more columns/data than was required; few candidates were awarded the presentation mark, due to poor spacing; as in previous years, many candidates attained few marks for keying-in due to inaccuracies when keying-in from manuscript.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres should download and check the files against the **hard copy** provided by SQA in plenty of time before the examination. The files should then be kept secure until the day of the exam. Teachers should not be using the files or going into the files to make amendments, other than to print them for **each** group for submission with candidate printouts — there are still many instances where packs have no printouts in them. Any queries or concerns about the files should be directed to SQA in good time **before** the date of the examination.

Candidates must have the knowledge stated in the Arrangements Document.

Candidates should be more careful when checking the hard copy that comes out of the printer. It should be checked for truncation, accuracy and formatting.

It is good practice to export databases to a word-processed document, as it is easier to sort data in a table, fit the document to one page without truncating, and key-in name and school in the footer. This should be practiced often throughout the year to avoid problems on the exam date, specifically True/False or -1/0 when printing a Yes/No field.

Similarly, spreadsheet printouts can be easily set up to fit to one page and can be easily formatted to ensure all columns are visible — especially in formula printout.

Any chart should have a meaningful heading, legend and axis. This is a basic skill and should be easily achieved at this level.

Candidates must be familiar with the layout of word-processing documents. Many candidates are unsure of proper layout/content. Accuracy of keying-in is still a major issue for many candidates — they do not seem to be able to proofread their own work. Perhaps more emphasis should be given to this in normal class work — instead of teachers/lecturers correcting all inaccuracies for students, they should be allowed to find and correct them on their own.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	2039
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	86
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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 - 100				
A	26.7%	26.7%	23	70
B	27.9%	54.7%	24	60
C	22.1%	76.7%	19	50
D	9.3%	86.0%	8	45
No award	14.0%	-	12	-

For this Course, grade boundaries have been stable for a number of years and the intention was to set similar grade boundaries to previous years. The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which 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 very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore 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 Business Manager 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.