



Course Report 2015

Subject	Administration and IT
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors 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 assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Component 1: Assignment

The Assignment comprises a series of linked IT tasks set within a context. Tasks assess candidates' abilities in word processing, spreadsheets, databases, presentation and personal productivity software. There are 70 marks — approximately 20 allocated to each of the main applications and the remaining 10 for presentations, e-mails, internet research, etc.

Component 2: Question Paper

This is a short question paper of 30 marks — marks for questions can vary from 1 to 6. All questions are compulsory. There is a short stimulus paragraph and 10 marks are based on this. The other questions can range across the syllabus.

Questions can ask candidates to give brief outlines, or to discuss topics and issues, or to justify courses of action.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Assignment

The Assignment was well done, with most candidates completing all tasks. There was strong evidence to suggest that some candidates had not been given enough opportunity to tackle specific functions.

Candidates coped well with structure of the Assignment.

Component 2: Question paper

The majority of candidates coped very well with the question paper and there was evidence that teaching staff and candidates had invested a great deal of effort in ensuring both a solid understanding of the Course content and in how to structure answers to comply with the command words.

Candidates found the question paper accessible, and there were very few candidates who did not attempt all questions. Some questions were more challenging than others but, in the main, candidates were able to respond to all questions. The average mark for the paper was 20 out of 30.

Some markers commented that the standard of English used by candidates was poor.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Assignment

Letter	<p>Most candidates gained over 14 marks for this question. It was a good starting point for many.</p> <p>Letter layouts were good, in the main.</p> <p>Most candidates made a good attempt at the layout of the form.</p> <p>Landscape orientation and moving footer over to the Right Hand Side (RHS) was well done.</p>
Database Form	<p>Most pupils gained full marks or only lost one mark.</p>
Database Payment Calculations	<p>This tended to be very well done by most. This is a familiar type of question and the majority of candidates knew exactly what to do.</p>
E-diary	<p>Most candidates gained 3 marks. There were very few who did not work out the correct date.</p>
Presentation	<p>This was well done by the majority.</p>
Spreadsheet Lunch costs	<p>Those who did well also tended to use named ranges, which have the benefit of being faster to use and easier to read if there is an error or issue with the formula.</p>
Spreadsheet Additional Activities	<p>The Vlookup and Hlookup were well done, as was the little 'if' statement.</p>
Database Query	<p>Most candidates gained some marks for this. It was intended to be challenging but it proved to be accessible.</p>
Spreadsheet Fundraising	<p>Most candidates coped well with this.</p> <p>Some candidates did not use a pivot table but sub-totalled instead. This was awarded marks. It may be that in the future a pivot table will be specified.</p>

Component 2: Question paper

Question 1 (a): Some candidates had a very good knowledge of the Data Protection Act and wrote short, succinct outlines which gained all 4 marks. As this was an outline, there was no need to go into additional detail.

Question 1 (b): Candidates had a clear understanding of legal and other implications of breaching the legislation. Many gave two different implications for each and answers were well presented making it obvious to whom they were referring. It was also acceptable to only give one implication for one entity and three for the other.

Question 2: This question was well done by most.

Question 3: Candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge across a wide range of methods. It was decided to accept answers that referred to customer service techniques as long as the candidate referenced it to the employee's performance.

Question 4: Able candidates demonstrated excellent discussion technique and gave fully rounded points. Many structured their answer as one point about the organisation and then one about the individual. Others constructed a paragraph on one and then tackled the other. Both layouts are acceptable. There is no need to preface each sentence with a 'linking word(s)'— it is enough to have linked thoughts with some element of joining.

Question 5: Those candidates who found two similarities only required two short sentences and were more likely to gain both marks. This would be an ideal way to answer this question: *Both save the organisation time and money as staff do not need to travel/leave the office to participate in the meeting.*

Question 6: Able candidates were able to give very good answers to this, and it appeared that some centres had taught this topic well. These candidates were able to differentiate between a description of the barrier and the consequence that would ensue.

Question 7: This question was well done by the majority and appeared to be a topic that candidates are comfortable with. Many wrote at length, giving more points than required.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Assignment

Letter	<p>There were a number of common issues/errors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Reference and date was missing in a few.◆ In the layout of the complimentary close, the name and designation were on the same line.◆ Very few candidates realised that there was an enclosure.◆ Marks were lost quite quickly in the form as it was only possible to award four marks for it.◆ There was a lack of attention to detail with regards to capitalisation.◆ Find and replace did not include the last 'Studies'.◆ Presentation mark was lost by the majority as there were spacing and page break issues. (The presentation mark covered a number of different types of errors in order to minimise the effect of inconsistencies.)
Database Form	<p>Common errors included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ name of department not inserted in the header◆ truncation of data◆ destination missing
Database Payment Calculations	<p>Some candidates did not attempt the calculations in the query.</p> <p>Some candidates showed poor numeracy skills and found creating appropriate formulae demanding. Also some candidates had answers that were improbable, eg an instalment that is 10 times the total cost. Candidates need to be reminded to look at answers and try to ascertain if they are within a realistic range.</p> <p>Other issues included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Spelling/capitalisation/truncation of new field headings.◆ Information not summarised – all pupils' details printed.◆ Overly complex headings – candidates then tended to make typographical errors.
E-diary	<p>Again, typographical errors lost the details mark.</p> <p>In some printouts it was not possible to see the full day — the mark for appointment time could not be awarded. Whilst accepting that some centres have difficulties with software, this should have been addressed in advance of the external assessment.</p>

Presentation	The main issue again was typographical errors and inconsistencies in capitalisation across the slides. In some printouts it was not possible to see the shows because the graphic was too dark.
Spreadsheet Lunch Costs	A small number of candidates did not attempt the Sumif. This could also have been done as a Vlookup. Others took a row-by-row approach and had formulae that would not support a change to the original data — this was not accepted.
Spreadsheet Cost of Trip	Many candidates managed the Hlookup but did not then multiply by the cost. The information was not double sorted.
Database Query	This question was designed to be challenging and some candidates struggled with the concept but did manage to gain some marks.
Spreadsheet Fundraising	Common errors were typographical errors in headings, showing data for all three trips.

Component 2: Question paper

Question 1 (a): Some candidates did not realise that they were only to give the principles of the Data Protection Act and tried to find more from the stimulus material.

Question 1 (b): In some answers it was unclear who was being referred to. Candidates should be advised not to use 'they' in responses but to use a noun.

Question 2: Some candidates named a quality or skill but could not justify it. Others gave a skill that was not relevant to the job title.

Question 3: Some candidates confused buddy systems and mentoring systems. Other candidates referred to 'to-do' lists and priority lists which are not monitoring or evaluation methods.

Question 4: Whilst many candidates gained high marks for this question, this was sometimes due to repetition of the theme motivation/morale/well-being, with candidates using it as a benefit for both the individual and the organisation. There was little reference to different skills/qualities, learning from one and other, support, preparation for promotion.

Question 5: This was the question that most candidates found difficult. Many did not know what web-conferencing is. Those that did know found it difficult to structure their answer. Many wrote a lot but did not give anything in their response that merited a mark.

Question 6: This question proved demanding for some candidates. A good number of candidates could only describe the barrier and not the consequence. If a consequence was given, it was often repeated. Candidates need more practice at this type of question.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Assignment

There are a large number of printouts in the Assignment, and it is easy for candidates to become disorganised. Candidates need to be prompted to place all of the tasks in the correct order and to double check that every printout has been inserted in their envelope.

Teaching staff should reinforce the importance of ensuring that both value and formulae views of spreadsheet tasks are inserted.

In future where the instruction is given to print a spreadsheet or database on one page, this will mean on **one** side only. All column/field headings should be on the same page. It may be that there are enough rows to take the printout to two pages, which is fine. Where the column/field headings are across more than one page then the print mark will not be awarded.

A number of candidates lose keyboarding marks. Many cope exceptionally well with what can be considered more complex features but struggle with capitalisation, spacing before and after punctuation, and consistency. Attention to detail is important and impacts on candidates' marks where it is not evident.

The word processing task at the start of the paper gave many candidates a good start. However, the Assignment will not always be structured in this way. Whilst the generic instructions state that the Assignment should be attempted in the order given, there is still some benefit in encouraging less able candidates to search out those tasks that they can approach with confidence, thereby maximising their potential marks.

Component 2: Question paper

Teaching staff should continue to enforce the high standards set with regards to complying with the command words.

Candidates need to be aware of the difference between an 'outline' answer and 'describe', where more detail is required.

When answering 'compare' questions some candidates write overly long answers where they seem to lose the thread of what they want to impart. Many would be better to look for similarities rather than differences. There is no need for there to be both a similarity and a difference.

There were some pupils who had limited knowledge, using a similar strand throughout an answer — and in fact over several answers. This tended to be around the theme of motivation/morale/happy at work/staff retention, where these benefits were listed without expanding on the thought. These terms seem to be becoming catch-all phrases that candidates use, hoping to gain marks. In future there will be more stringent measures taken when marking these types of answers.

Candidates need to be advised not to use 'they' in responses but to use a noun. In question 1 (b) and in question 4, candidates did not clearly state who they were referring to in their answers and it was not always possible for markers to award marks.

Good exam preparation should include the layout and presentation of written answers. Many candidates wrote additional comments at the end of their answer booklets but did not reference this at the original point.

It may also be beneficial to candidates if they take a new line when moving on to write a new point/mark. This would help them to identify how many points they have made, eg in an 'outline' answer some candidates write something more akin to a 'discuss' answer and this must make it difficult to ascertain if they have made the requisite number of marks.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	0
Number of resulted entries in 2015	3025

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	42.8%	42.8%	1296	73
B	24.4%	67.3%	739	63
C	17.9%	85.1%	540	53
D	5.7%	90.8%	171	48
No award	9.2%	-	279	-

For this Course, the intention was to set the boundaries at notional. Overall, the assessment was slightly less demanding than anticipated with a lack of depth in the theory knowledge tested. The boundaries were adjusted by 3 marks above the proposed notional boundaries of 50/70/85.

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.