



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Economics
Level(s)	Advanced Higher

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

Question paper

Many candidates were well-prepared and demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding of course content. However, there was a small minority who struggled to demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding in key elements of the syllabus to attain a pass. Those candidates who read widely were most able use up to date examples which are credited in the examination

Dissertation

The strongest candidates produced dissertations which were well-structured, well-presented and which covered appropriate topics in a detailed, analytical and well-balanced manner. Evidence was up to date, from a variety of sources and well-referenced. However some candidates relied on historic data and failed to back up their assertions with evidence/statistics. Weaker dissertations had titles which were too wide eg on all the BRIC countries and therefore candidates were unable to cover their question in sufficient depth.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Item A was generally well done by most candidates. Many candidates had studied the oil market and performed particularly well on 2(a) (i) and (ii).

Section B

Essay 1 was well done. Many candidates demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding of monopoly and monopolistic competition, although for full marks in (a) it was necessary to compare rather than describe characteristics. Part (b) demonstrated that many candidates can produce accurate diagrams and were able to explain them.

Essay 2 was well done by some candidates who demonstrated that they had detailed knowledge of the Eurozone in parts (a) and (b).

Areas which candidates found demanding

Section A

2(b) A small minority of candidates were unable to accurately draw a demand and supply diagram containing inelastic demand and supply curves.

6 Some candidates still struggle to do more than describe policy measures, and do not attempt to justify them.

Section B

Essay 2(b) (i) and (ii): some weaker candidates misinterpreted this part of the question. Instead of explaining the arguments made for raising or lowering interest rates, they explained the impact of altering rates.

Essay 4(c) Many candidates wrote only about the impact of immigration and not migration including emigration. A few candidates only concentrated on the possible negative impacts of immigration and therefore lost marks.

Essay 6: This essay was generally poorly done. Some candidates who chose this essay lacked sufficient relevant knowledge to score highly. In particular, they struggled in (a) and (b) due to lack of knowledge. Part (c) was conceptually demanding, and very few candidates were able to discuss either the negative or positive implications of income inequality.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Encourage students to read widely and keep abreast of current economic issues. Help them to choose appropriate dissertation topics, and make sure that they find sufficient relevant evidence to back up their points.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	66
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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	55.8%	55.8%	48	70
B	18.6%	74.4%	16	60
C	14.0%	88.4%	12	50
D	2.3%	90.7%	2	45
No award	9.3%	-	8	-

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.