



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Economics
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 limited number of centres entered their candidates this year, so comments pertain to a relatively small cohort.

Overall, candidates had been well-prepared for this examination and performed to a high standard.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Part 1

Item B was particularly well-answered with many candidates demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding of government policies, the budget and unemployment. The impact of a decrease in the value of the currency presented the most challenge to some candidates.

Part 2

Essay 1 was popular with candidates and was generally well answered. Most candidates were able to define the concept of opportunity cost and give accurate examples. The diagram to show total cost curves was also well done. A few candidates merely identified economies of scale and did not describe them.

Essay 4 was generally well done. Many candidates were able to accurately draw the basic circular flow of income diagram and demonstrated excellent understanding of injections and leakages.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Part 1

Item A (c): Some candidates were unable to use the correct economic terminology to describe the impact of an increase in exports on the UK's Current Account of the Balance of Payments.

Item A (f) (i): Some candidates were unable to distinguish between average and total profit and make the appropriate calculation to switch from average to total.

Item A (f) (ii): Some candidates did not understand that the optimum level of output is the lowest point on the ATC curve. A few were confused between this point and profit-maximising position.

Part 2

Essay 2 (c): A few candidates misinterpreted the question confusing a rise in inflation with a rise in interest rates.

Essay 3 (b): Some candidates wrote generally about factors which shift the demand curve and did not write specifically about how changes in these factors lead to an increase in demand.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	181
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	100
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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 - 60				
A	76.0%	76.0%	76	40
B	12.0%	88.0%	12	33
C	7.0%	95.0%	7	26
D	1.0%	96.0%	1	22
No award	4.0%	-	4	-

For this Course, the intention was to set similar grade boundaries to last year. 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.