



Course Report 2018

Subject	Administration and IT
Level	Higher

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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 documents and marking instructions.

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

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: question paper

Most candidates attempted all the questions so from that we can presume that candidates found the paper accessible. Numbers not attempting specific questions vary between 1% and 2%, apart from question 3 where 4% of candidates did not attempt the question. Surprisingly the first question on customer service was not answered well by a large number of candidates. Candidates seemed not to read questions fully and often gave detailed answers that did not fully relate to the question.

There was a noticeable increase in the amount that candidates wrote, however, there still needs to be some work done on the refinement of written answers and the need for a more concise approach to structuring responses. Questions 2, 5, 6 and 8 were well done with the majority of candidates providing very good answers.

It was felt that the question paper came in at the appropriate level and the marks achieved were in line with candidates' abilities taking into consideration the prior attainment of the candidates

Component 2: assignment

Candidates were very well prepared for the assignment. There were strong performances in the communications tasks and in the word processing task.

The database report was not as well done, yet the formula required and the problem solving involved was no more difficult than in previous years. As data shown was very specific we wanted the heading to reflect this — in retrospect this was difficult to achieve. As a result, it was decided to change the boundary for an A by one mark. The reason being that in previous years an A candidate would have achieved a mark for headings we did not accept this year. It was decided not to change the grade boundary for B and C as frequently this level of candidate would make spelling or typographical errors in headings.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper

Question 2: Describe possible drawbacks of using social media for this purpose (4 marks)

The topic suited candidates and most had no issue with finding a number of reasons for not using Twitter to make a complaint.

Many gave the answers given in the Marking Instructions — correctly stating that Twitter was too public, could result in trolling, may not be seen etc.

Responses regarding the negative impact on the organisation were capped at one following on from last year's report where it was pointed out that too many candidates made unrealistic statements about the downfall of an organisation because of one mistake or error. However, not many candidates gave this as an answer.

Question 5: Discuss the use of an e-diary when organising meetings (4 marks)

This question was fairly well answered with most candidates having enough knowledge to make points regarding the use of an e-diary prior to a meeting taking place.

There were very good answers regarding networked diaries and the ability to check who was free and the way in which appointments could be accepted or declined. Candidates gained development marks when going into this facility in detail. The features to set up reminders and for recurring appointments also led to the opportunity for development marks.

Most candidates also discussed the ability to attach files and to add in more details in the notes section.

Question 6: Justify the importance of effective leadership within a team (4 marks)

This question was very well answered and responses tended to be well structured and more concise than in the past. There was much less written about feelings and emotions.

This was another question where candidates gained development marks, with many moving from effective delegation to improving staff morale and then onto preparing team members for greater responsibilities in the future. All of these points would gain a mark. It was good to see so many mature and realistic responses to a question on teams.

Question 8: Justify the need to send out an agenda in advance of a meeting (2 marks)

Candidates coped well with justifying two different reasons for an agenda to be sent out or gained a development mark.

Most candidates made a comment about attendees being able to inform themselves of the topics for discussion. Another common point was that attendees could decide if the meeting was relevant to them.

Component 2: assignment

DB Form

This was well done by most candidates and worked as a first task. It could be presented as a form or as a sub-form. Typical errors were truncation and the wrong record being printed.

Presentation

As usual this was well done and there were only minor errors in most cases.

Changing the text to a table resulted in some candidates choosing a style that did not have vertical lines and in some cases it was difficult to tell if the file had been converted to a table. It may be best to advise candidates to choose the most obvious style when doing assignments.

E-diary

Only issue with this was keying-in errors.

DB Query

This was well done and the only issue was that candidates did not include the full address in their printouts.

Some candidates seem to have used a filter to find packed lunch and evening meals however, when selecting the words they also picked up the comma. This resulted in those Bed and Breakfasts where evening meals were the last in the list not appearing, as there was no comma at the end.

Word Processing

This was an accessible task for the majority and most gained good marks for it.

Front covers were well done, however, it may be best to advise candidates to use the function to insert a cover page with caution. The time taken to remove extraneous data and to change formatting, given the number of marks, does not make it worthwhile.

Find and replace was very well done.

Insertion of bulleted points — some candidates did not ensure that the layout was consistent.

Speech bubbles — did not seem to present any problems although sometimes text was truncated maybe due to the difficulty of reading the handwriting font.

Pivot Table

This did not seem to present candidates with any issues apart from the more basic ones like changing headings and making sure to format for currency.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

Question 1: Outline the features of an effective complaints procedure Royal Mail may use (4 marks)

This had been intended to be an easy first question but many candidates did not have the knowledge to answer it. A number of candidates did not attempt it or did it at the end once they had given it more thought. Maybe candidates did not notice the word 'may' and thought that the question was looking for specifics.

Too many who did write an answer wrote far too much for an outline, often veering off into writing about the benefits of having a complaints procedure.

There was a high percentage of answers that showed little or no knowledge of complaints procedures — even common-sense answers would have gained marks.

A good answer was short and to the point — often in an outline we may feel that the answer is too short but in fact any further comment is not necessary.

Question 3: Compare two methods of evaluating customer service (2 marks)

This was very poorly attempted by the vast majority of candidates and in fact 4% did not even attempt it.

Very few candidates used 'both ...'. This is the simplest way to gain marks and all marks can come from similarities.

There appears to be two different reasons for candidates performing poorly in this question.

As mentioned in previous course reports marks are awarded if the candidate gives information about one method and then the other. Markers have to look for the same feature being compared and match the sentences up to award the mark. For a lot of candidates it is actually quite difficult for them to ensure that they have written about the same features. Many wrote a very accurate paragraph about mystery shoppers and then another accurate paragraph about postal surveys but did not compare the same features.

It is important that candidates compare features correctly, and candidates who structured their answers to directly compare features seemed less likely to lose their train of thought. A good answer included the comparison of features and the similarity/difference.

There was also an apparent lack of knowledge regarding different methods — too many committed themselves to mystery shopper as one of the methods but then found it difficult to marry it up with another method. Also there is a lot of ill-informed knowledge regarding mystery shoppers. One of the most common misconceptions is that they wear a disguise when visiting organisations. Also a lot of candidates spoke about the cost involved in different methods but this was rarely accurate.

Question 4: Outline the ways in which an organisation meets the requirements of the Data Protection Act (4 marks)

This question was designed to test candidates' knowledge of how the Data Protection Act would be complied with in practice. A question simply asking for four points regarding only the principles of the Data Protection Act is very similar to a National 5 question.

In their daily lives candidates comply with the Data Protection Act all of the time so answers regarding access to files, passwords, locked filing cabinets, secure deletion of old information, systems for ensuring data is up-to-date, etc should have been easy enough to supply.

There may have been a belief that this Data Protection Act would not be questioned as it was being updated however the above points will still be relevant under the new legislation.

Question 7: An organisation has changed its fire evacuation policy. Discuss the methods of communication that could be used to inform employees (6 marks)

Whilst the marking instructions show the answers grouped under different mediums it is not necessary to structure the answer like this.

Some of the methods given by candidates did not suit the context of a fire evacuation policy. A number of candidates wrote about sending letters to staff at home or using informal social media. Role play and/or drills were also deemed an inappropriate method for this context.

Candidates gave good answers regarding meetings but many then went on to talk about a presentation as if it was in some way different to the meeting. There was a lot of development marks available in discussing a meeting, especially if the negatives were explored as well.

Candidates who discussed posters had to have some inference that the poster was eye-catching and could not be missed, given that this was a health and safety issue.

Component 2: assignment

SS Staff Costs

A high number of candidates did not sort the information and/or did not hide columns as instructed.

VLookups and HLookups are both formulae that candidates seem comfortable with however the multiplication of the VLookup was missed by a large number of candidates.

The addition of the fields was good in most cases however many candidates did not know how to do the Roundup formula. There were still a number of candidates who did not use the SUM function and therefore lost the mark.

The main concern with this question was the truncation of the formulae — candidates had not checked their printouts carefully enough and as a result no marks could be given for the VLookup and the HLookup formulae.

SS Summary

Marks were awarded for consequential errors arising in the previous task.

The CountIF and the SumIF were fairly well done but the percentage change and the compound IF statement proved difficult. The IF statement was designed to be a discriminator and did test even the most able of candidates.

DB Report

This seemed to challenge candidates more than had been intended. There were the usual typographical errors in field headings, inserting superfluous fields and candidates not being able to do the calculation. However, a number of candidates did not query on the required fields.

The instruction to insert the total number in the footer did not need to be done by using the function as there is no way to test this. A lot of candidates left this out. Those who did put it in and the label, generally lost a mark because of a keyboarding error.

Word Processing

Keying in — as usual this was where most candidates lost marks.

Footer — this proved problematic for most, however, it was difficult and was designed to be challenging.

Form — a lot of the forms were poorly presented and often leader dots (lines) did not end at the same place or there was not enough space for information to be filled in. The ability to create a short sentence seemed to test the majority of candidates despite there being little need to change what was given in the assignment.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper

These points are especially important given that this component will have increased marks and weighting from session 2018/19.

- ◆ Candidates are not reading questions carefully enough. Still too many candidates see one or two words and proceed to write answers that do not bear any resemblance to what is required.
- ◆ There has to be some awareness of the context that is given — the ability to select options or courses of action given the situation is a higher order skill.
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to write in sentences and to keep these succinct.
- ◆ Development points can be awarded and teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are aware of how marks are awarded for each command word.
- ◆ Candidates may find the longer exam more difficult to complete and wasting time writing extensive answers to an outline may mean they lose marks elsewhere.
- ◆ Compare —Candidates should ensure that the structure of their answers allows them to directly compare features. Whilst the compare question is only two or three marks, too many candidates achieve nothing for this command word.

Component 2: assignment

A number of candidates submitted screen dumps of tasks. Where there was no letter from the centre saying why this had been inserted then no marks were awarded. In the case of the DB form the suspicion is that candidates cannot print a selected record.

The principle of the course has always been to accept a formula if it works and would work if used in the future. When doing SumIf and CountIf formulae a number of candidates are picking up the whole spreadsheet as the range. Some candidates are also choosing to use a complete column as the range when doing a CountIf. In spreadsheets to date this will work and we have accepted it, however, the suspicion is that it is not quite correct and if one of the words in the column was being used as a total or a heading further down then the count would be wrong.

No matter how much preparation time is given to candidates for this assignment it is the basic skills that cause problems. Keying in, presentation, accuracy, creating headings/text, truncation all seem to be an issue with candidates who have no problem doing complex compound IF statements and pivot tables. In the main, spreadsheet task complex formulae were well done yet candidates cannot sort, omit fields, print. It may be that the marks given to basic skills are increased in future years as this seems to be the area where there is true discrimination between candidates.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	4099
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	4052
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	30.0%	30.0%	1215	69
B	28.5%	58.4%	1153	59
C	19.6%	78.0%	793	50
D	8.4%	86.4%	339	45
No award	13.6%	-	552	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which 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.

Therefore SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.