



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Photography
Level(s)	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

Many centres had a formulaic approach, which worked well for most candidates. This system has developed over the years of this course.

Where candidates clearly identified the theme they had selected and how they were interpreting it, and then followed this with relevant research, they did well. Unclear, vague themes with general research did not achieve such good marks.

There was some excellent planning dealing with challenging 'Youth Culture' issues. It was felt that the Research section has shown the greatest improvement over the period of this course.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Well-structured plans linked to related research resulting in thematic images gained high grades. Candidates who showed an understanding of the process of photography — both the technical and the creative — produced excellent images. Where candidates had taken care to ensure that file size matched output, and that the material onto which it was printed reflected the quality required, achieved high marks.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Candidates must remember that an evaluation is not just a narrative passage — it is where they can reflect on what they have gained and where they did not achieve as they had hoped. The evaluation should be totally honest — if something has gone wrong, this is the point to discuss that, their opportunity to show their depth of understanding about all the elements of the assignment.

Engagement with the research or the candidates' own work is not just 'like/dislike' — it is about making comment or observation as to why the image was selected or rejected, or how the image was achieved, and with what technique

Research must be directly related to the selected theme — it is not there just to 'pad out' this section.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Selecting an achievable theme, linking this to relevant research, carrying out test shoots, making valid choices and explaining why those choices were made; then producing images that reflect the original proposal, making those images on the correct medium at the correct quality; and then finally producing a reflective honest evaluation of the whole process — if

these steps are carried through, this will help any candidates following the New Higher (or in fact any photographic course).

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	1759
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	800
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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 - 200				
A	26.5%	26.5%	212	140
B	36.6%	63.1%	293	120
C	25.8%	88.9%	206	100
D	5.0%	93.9%	40	90
No award	6.1%	-	49	-

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.