Course Report 2018

Subject	Photography
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

This course has only one component: the project. The component performed as expected with no unexpected issues. The general candidate response showed that candidates understood what was expected of them.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: project

The proposals for the project showed a marked improvement on previous years. Planning of assignment shoots also showed improvement.

Research when related to the theme was very good and the inclusion of effective contact sheets showed the development of the project.

The selected themes were varied and creative. Some excellent work resulted when candidates matched the equipment available to them with the proposed project.

Some of the themes were very challenging and at times were handled in a mature manner.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: project

Some candidates selected themes that presented challenges beyond their ability. Many candidates presented prints that were outside the stated print sizes, for example smaller than A5 or larger than A4. Candidates also presented prints that had been enlarged beyond the file size, resulting in a major drop in print quality.

In some cases, candidates did not understand the basic use of camera controls — such as focus, shutter speed and aperture.

Overuse of digital editing — for example sharpening and saturation — lowered the final print quality.

In some cases, contact sheets had too many images per sheet, resulting in very small thumbnails which were of little use as evidence for the project.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: project

Some simple themes, clearly researched, produced outstanding results. The use of high-quality mobile phone technology produced results as good as many DSLR cameras.

Many candidates included print tests to show how they decided on the final paper to use — this showed an understanding of the digital process and the decision-making process.

Centres should remind candidates that research must relate to their chosen theme or genre and it should influence the candidate's response to their project. Candidates must show clearly the process of image selection, for example: original shoot images; initial selection with justification; further selection with justification; final selection with justification.

Final images do not require to be mounted. However, if the images are mounted, candidates should be aware that adhesives can warp or damage their prints.

Centres should remind candidates that it is impossible to make an out-of-focus image sharp using digital software. Overuse of the vibrancy and saturation tools detracts from image quality. Candidates should use the lightest touch in digital editing.

Centres should remind candidates to constantly refer back to their original proposal to ensure that they are presenting work which directly relates to the proposal.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	2214

Number of resulted entries in 2018	2312

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	28.4%	28.4%	657	70
B	28.9%	57.3%	668	60
C	29.3%	86.6%	677	50
D	6.4%	92.9%	147	45
No award	7.1%	-	163	-

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 SQA's management team.

♦ 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.
♦ 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.