
HEARING AID COUNCIL

EXAMINATIONS 2006(2)

MODERATOR'S REPORT

March 2007

G R Kirk

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the eighth report to the Hearing Aid Council on all parts of the HAC examinations (written examination, practical examination and early resits for the practical examination). Procedures carried out were similar to those used by the Moderator to produce reports on previous examinations and includes comments from the invigilator's team, candidates, their trainers and members of the examining team.

The Hearing Aid Council's "**Protocol for Conducting Examinations**" - approved by Council 29.09.2005 (PFCE) was the guide document for running these examinations and will be used as the basis for this report. From the candidates' point of view, the written and practical examinations proceeded efficiently. It is to the credit of the examining team, invigilators and the partnership between Hearing Aid Council staff and staff from Anglia Ruskin University that these examinations were so successful during a period of considerable change and transfer of administrative responsibilities.

In order to clarify further administrative responsibilities regarding future examinations, a meeting was held after the written examinations and comprised the Chief Examiner, Alan Torbet (BSHAA), John Wenn (ARU) and the Moderator.

2. WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

The written examinations took place in the Abbey Suite at the National Hockey Stadium, Milton Keynes on 27th Sept 2006. There were 94 candidates taking Papers 1 & 2 and 13 candidates taking Paper 3. Sue Gray was the Invigilator.

- (a) The Moderator attended both sessions of the written examinations. All procedures for running these examinations are well established with the Invigilator and her assistants in clear control at all times. Candidates using hearing aids had these aids checked. Two other candidates had special arrangements following written reports from appropriate professionals. The morning session started slightly late.
- (b) Examination scripts were collected, checked, sealed and given to the John Wenn (ARU) after the close of each session. The Chief Examiner and Invigilator checked candidate papers against their master index.
- (c) A total of 107 candidates sat the written papers. Papers 2 & 3 were answered in the morning with Paper 1 being answered in the afternoon. Once again, this rearrangement does not appear to have had any consequences for the candidates. Once again, there were two errors in the printed written papers which may have caused some candidates some confusion. One question was split over two pages and one question had incorrect sub-sections.
- (d) After the close of the examination sessions, 3 queries were raised by candidates and were dealt with by the Moderator.
- (e) The Invigilator produced a report on the written examinations. The full report is attached to this Moderator's report.
- (f) The candidates' scripts were marked by a team of experienced examiners. There appeared to be some delay in collecting and collating marks for the written papers.
- (g) Following the initial marking of the scripts, there were 6 borderline fails which were remarked by the original marker and checked by the Moderator resulting in 3 passes and 3 fails. There were 2 borderline distinctions which were second marked and produced one further distinction. A further selection of 12 candidates' scripts was sampled to assess the spread of marks across Distinction, Pass, and Fail. Therefore, approximately 20% of written examination scripts were seen by the Moderator.
- (h) In common with examination practice, a full report has been prepared by the Chief Examiner showing the spread of marks for each question and includes individual comments from examiners on each question. Frequency plots of marks for each question have been prepared and are attached to the Chief Examiner's report.
- (i) Previous reports pointed out that borderline category definitions apply only to Papers 1 & 2 and it was recommended that these definitions should also apply

to Paper 3 scripts (aptitude candidates). There were 3 aptitude candidates whose scripts fell into the borderline distinction category and, on second marking, produced 2 distinctions.

- (j) Close scrutiny was made by the Moderator of the scripts from 9 candidates.
- (k) Only borderline scripts are remarked by original examiner and second-marked by the Moderator. All other scripts are single-marked.
- (l) Despite being prepared and checked by both Chief Examiner and the Moderator, errors are still appearing in the final version of the written question papers. Although the errors in the 2006(2) paper were minor and handled well by the invigilator steps do need to be taken to ensure the printed written papers are error free.
- (m) The Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and its implications for candidates and examiners need to be clearly discussed at Council with directions given appropriately. One candidate from a previous examination set has approached the Council with a request under the FOI
- (n) An analysis of previous **pass rates for written examinations** has been done for all written examinations from 2003(1) to 2006(2) inclusive. Data are attached.
- (o) An analysis of the **compulsory Code of Practice questions** (Questions 2B1 and 3B1) has been done and the data are attached. Scrutiny of the percentages of candidates who *would have passed* the compulsory question 2B1 by achieving 50% marks for that question indicates quite poor performance in some examinations, e.g., 2005(2) and 2006(2). Trainees can do badly in this question yet pass the written examination as marks gained for all questions are aggregated and, therefore, compensable. Consistently better performance for question 3B1 is shown by aptitude candidates, perhaps because they know that the marks gained in Section A and Section B of Paper III are not compensable. They must pass both sections independently. Comments will be made on these data in the Summary and Recommendations sections later in this report.

3. PRACTICAL EXAMINATIONS - OSPEs

- a) This was the third time that the practical examinations were held in the format of **Objective Structured Practical Examinations** (OSPEs). Once again, from the candidates' point of view, the OSPEs ran without any serious mishap. The only change from previous formats was the change round of stations 7 & 8. This did not cause any problems as the Information & Guidance to Candidates pack had been revised in Sept 2006 and distributed to all candidates.
- b) A full examiners' meeting took place on the evening of Sunday 19th November 2007 in Milton Keynes. One of the Agenda items was a presentation by the Moderator of the pass marks that had been set for each station for the 2005(2) and 2006(1) OSPEs and the subsequent pass rates for those OSPE stations. The challenge for the team of examiners is to consolidate their experiences and

development of the OSPEs so that they can confidently set the pass mark for each station to indicate those who are minimally competent. After discussion, it was agreed to consolidate the pass marks for each station and set a permanently agreed mark for each station based on over 200 candidate pathways.

- c) 105 candidates attended the OSPEs in 8 sessions over 5 days at the National Hockey Stadium (20th – 24th Nov 2006).
- d) The Invigilator has provided detailed written comments about the practicals and the resits (Jan 2007). A copy of the Invigilator's report on the full OSPE and OSPE resits is attached to this report.
- e) The Chief Examiner has provided a full and detailed report on the OSPEs and the resits with comments on each station. Some additional comments are outlined below.
- f) An analysis and overview of the pass rates for the 12 stations over the OSPEs from 2005(2) to 2006(2) inclusive is attached. The data are collated from candidates employed by companies with 5 or more trainees. Aptitude candidates are simply all grouped together. All data are anonymous. Inspection of the data shows dramatic differences in the success of candidates as displayed by company. The data merits further discussion.

MARKING OF OSPEs

All stations were marked at the end of each session and pooled during the examiners' meetings each day.

OSPE RE-SITS – Jan 2007

As is customary, an examiners' meeting took place on the evening of 29th January 2007. Further discussion (continuing from the examiners meeting in Nov 2006) took place on the development of the OSPEs over the last 3 examination cycles. The moderator used data to illustrate trends and explained that the next stage in OSPE development would be an audit of each station to identify recurring errors so as to support trainers and trainees in preparing for their OSPEs. A further step would be to consider an external review of the current OSPEs.

- (a) The OSPE resits were planned for 59 candidates taking 183 stations on 30th Jan 2007 at the same venue. There were no changes to the OSPE stations or marking schemes. 8 candidates had to undergo full OSPE resits, 23 candidates took 1 station, 20 candidates took 2 stations and 8 candidates took 3 stations.
- (b) It would have been easy to underestimate the organisation and administration needed to run OSPEs for resits. This did not happen and the resits were efficient and without mishap.

4. SUMMARY

- **The written examinations took place in Sept 2006 at the National Hockey Stadium, Milton Keynes. This is the same venue as previous years and the examinations were carried out in an organised and efficient manner. Scripts were marked by experienced examiners who have been working with the Council over a number of years.**
- **Attached are some statistics showing the pass rates for registered trainees for the written papers for all examinations from 2003(1) to 2006(2) inclusive. The data is presented in two formats. Candidate numbers seem to be rising, mean marks are very static between 50-60% and the pass rate hovers around 80%.**
- **Attached is an analysis of the marks obtained by registered trainees for the Code of Practice compulsory question 2B1 and the marks obtained for aptitude candidates for their first compulsory question, i.e., 3B1. (Often, these questions are the same for both groups).**
- **There needs to be some thought given to these compulsory questions. Registered trainees do not actually have to pass Q2B1 but do have to ATTEMPT it. As all their questions on Papers I & II are compensable, candidates can do badly on their compulsory question and still pass the written examination. On the other hand, aptitude candidates have to pass both Section A and Section B of Paper 3. In effect, they have to pass their compulsory questions. This would appear to treat the two groups of candidates differently.**
- **The practical examinations were carried out in Nov 2006 at the same venue as the written paper examinations in the format of 12 Objective Structured Practical Examinations. The practicals started on time and the examinations went without any serious mishap. As expected, there were some minor incidents which were all handled efficiently by the Invigilator's Team, the administrative support staff and the examiners. The results and outcome of these examinations have been fully discussed in the Chief Examiner's Report. Frequency counts for each assessed OSPE station are attached. Additionally, data on pass rates by training companies / aptitude candidates (all data anonymised) are attached.**

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) The administration of the examinations has been efficiently and quietly run for some years now and care needs to be taken that any changes in the administration are handled with consistency and precision as more responsibility for the administration passes to ARU. A series of meetings has taken place to ensure continuity and efficiency**
- b) Generally, marking schemes are improving and should continue to do so. It was recommended in a previous report that serious consideration be given to the use of second marking as an addition to remarking by original markers. This discussion has not taken place yet.**
- c) Some discussion should take place on the function of compulsory Code of Practice questions and how they are applied to registered trainees and aptitude candidates**
- d) Continuing work needs to be done to evaluate and improve individual OSPE stations and to develop marking schemes within stations that more clearly define the “minimally competent candidate”. Approximately 300 candidates have been through the 12 OSPE stations and there should be sufficient data available to allow the minimally competent standard to be more clearly defined in each station. There is now sufficient data to allow examiners to audit each station and identify recurring errors. Additionally, an external review of the whole OSPE system should prove useful in guiding the direction of the OSPEs.**
- e) Since writing the bulk of this Moderator’s Report, the Council has commissioned the University of Manchester to review the OSPEs according to precise Terms of Reference. The Moderator has provided data to the University and has clarified some details for the review team. The full review, the McLauchlan Review, was received by Council on 9th March and its recommendations will be considered in due course.**

George Kirk Moderator

25th March 2007

INVIGILATOR'S REPORT – Sue Gray, Invigilator
Hearing Aid Council Examinations
Wednesday 27th September 2006

In general this exam went well, apart from the fact that we were 12 minutes late in starting the morning session.

Cloakroom

The large numbers did cause some problems with the cloakroom. It took a long time to check items into the cloakroom, which delayed the start of the morning session. Dismissing candidates row by row in order to collect their items worked well, but this together with the late start meant that it was a real rush to collect in papers and packs and then get the tables ready for the afternoon session.

Packs

These were excellent and there were no problems with missing equipment. In the future it should be easier as the packs will be left from the morning session and just a quick check and replenishment with paper is all that will be needed.

The audiogram papers did have holes punched in them and this was a great help as there was no problem with invigilators having to attach them.

Candidate problems

We had been notified that there would be one candidate who needed extra time and would need to be in a separate room as he was Dyslexic. In the event there were two, which then can lead to problems if one of them needs to go to the toilet how do you resolve the problem of the other candidate. The moderator volunteered to have his mobile phone on silent so that the invigilator could text for help. It is better if these problems can be considered before the day of the examination. The morning examination for these two candidates started at 9 and then the afternoon session started at 2.20pm.

Candidate 086 did not attend, and there was no information about the reason for this. George Kirk checked Ventalin Inhalers and Hearing aids in the morning but not in the afternoon.

There was no photograph of candidate 508. She had her passport and the name on the passport was checked out against the name on the letter of introduction.

There were a few problems on the security sheets and address check list, these were all noted on the security sheets and on the check list and given to John Wenn at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions.

7 candidates needed to go to the toilet in the morning and 10 in the afternoon.

Candidate 091 complained at the start of the afternoon session that there was a lot of distracting noise from the back of the hall in the morning. He asked that I inform the moderator which I did. The invigilator positioned at the back of the hall noticed that the phone did ring a few times in the kitchen, which adjoins the hall, and an occasional noise could be heard from upstairs but she did not think the noise warranted any action on our part.

Candidate 043 had a query about "sound field audiometry" which provoked a debate between George Deepak and John Wenn about how much can you tell them and should all candidates be interrupted to explain the point. This seems to be a grey area and the invigilators need to know how we should answer these queries. There was a similar situation with candidate 078 asking if it was Ménière's disease or syndrome.

Toilets

These were checked before and during the morning and afternoon sessions.

Examination papers

These were delivered to the examination room and opened by me in the morning. It would be safer if the afternoon papers were not delivered until lunchtime. There were no problems with the papers. Spare copies and papers left by candidates were given to ARU.

Examination Scripts

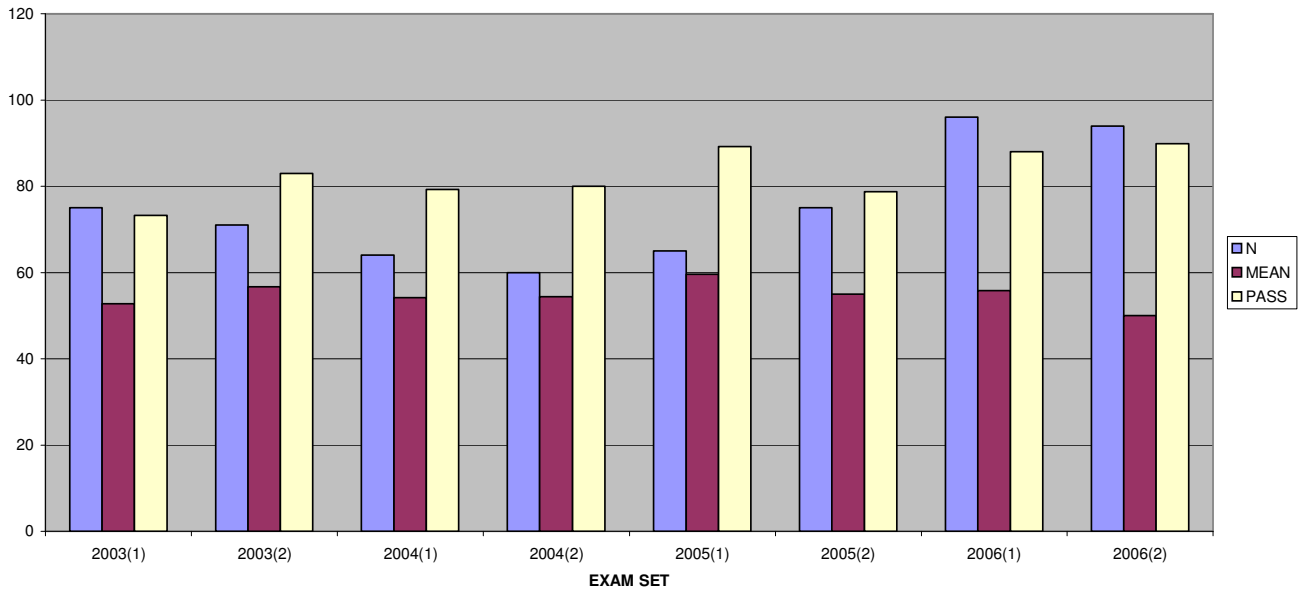
Some candidates do not understand the need to fill in a blank sheet with their number and the question number and not answered written on it.

The morning scripts were checked off against the seating plan of the candidates. The chief examiner read out the numbers and I checked it against the candidate list. The two extra scripts from the other room then had to be added. They were then tied up, signed by me and countersigned by John Wenn. This procedure was repeated in the afternoon, with John Wenn checking the numbers.

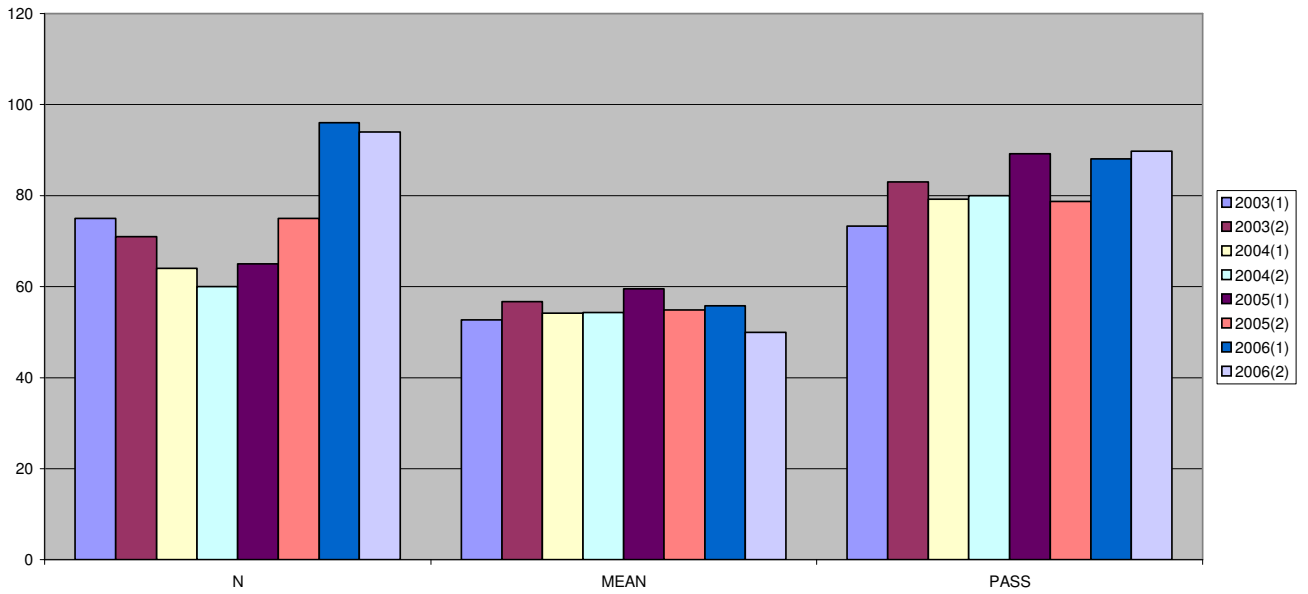
The morning scripts were removed from the building.

ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN EXAM RESULTS 2003(1) to 2006(2)

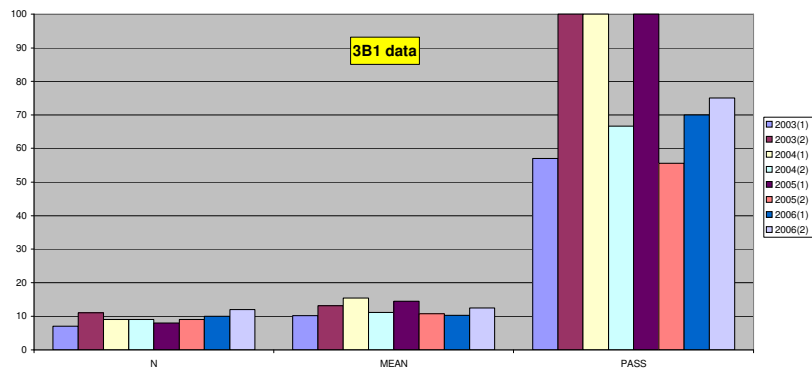
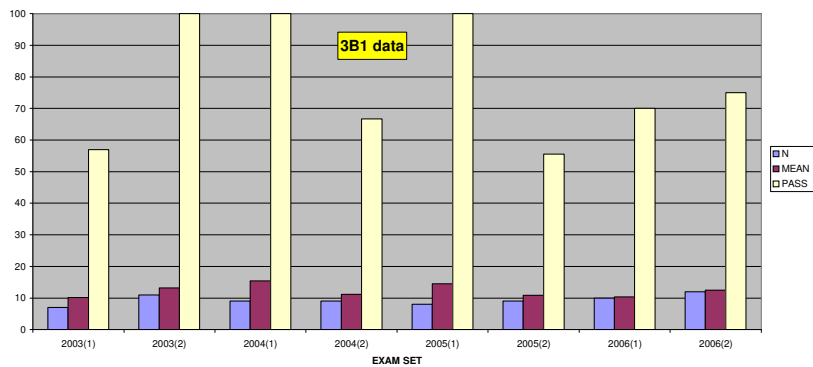
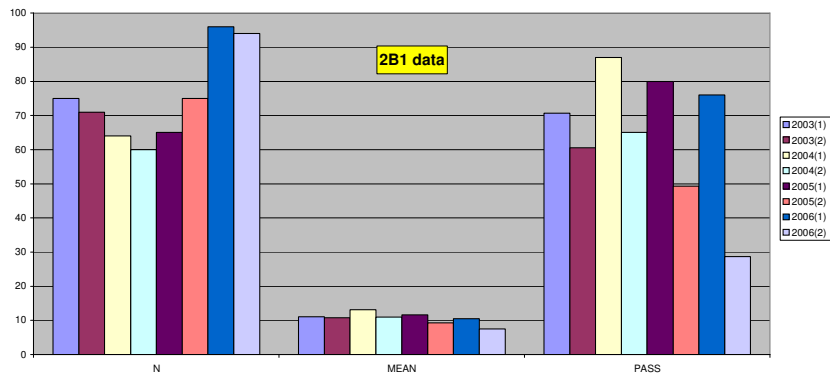
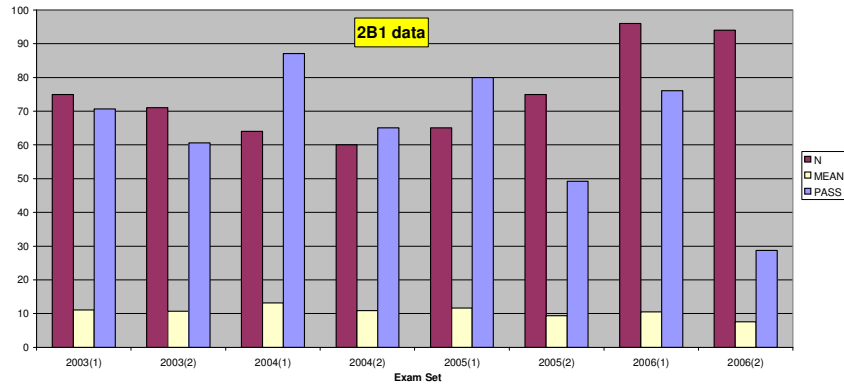
WRITTEN EXAM DATA



WRITTEN EXAM DATA



Analysis of Compulsory Code of Practice Questions 2B1 & 3B1



Invigilators Report – OSPEs - November 2006 – Sue Gray

From an invigilators point of view these exams ran well. Candidates arrived on time with the correct documentation. The cloakroom arrangements worked extremely well and most sessions started either early or on time.

The documentation provided by Anglia Ruskin University was excellent and the pathways worked well. I did alter the last day's pathway plan slightly so that only one set of examiners would be needed at stations 5&6 and 10&11.

The problems caused by candidates who are Dyslexic needs to be thought out. The instruction sheets for stations 13, 14, and 5&6 were given to each candidate before the exam started so that they could read them at their extra rest stations. As there were only a few candidates they were also able to read the instructions for station 9 whilst not being used as an ear, with a full set of candidates this would not have been possible. Which sheets do they need to read in advance? And do they need 10 mins for this? (I realise if they are mixed in with other candidates everything has to work in 10 min slots) Could a complete set of instructions be prepared in advance for the candidates and they either read them before they start the exam or at the 3 extra rest stations planned in their pathways. If all Dyslexic candidates were examined together you could run 13 min sessions at every station.

I am concerned about the sealed answer boxes. I realise that examiners work to a very tight schedule, but if boxes are sealed so that exam papers are securely stored until the end of the exam period then the papers should not be removed sometimes in front of candidates before the end of the exam.

Should music and headphones be provided at rest station 4 as candidates can hear everything that is being asked at 5b&6b?

The Number of candidates who do not wish to be an ear at station 8 has increased dramatically, at one session 7 substitute ears were needed. At the start of the exams should the first ear at station 8 be covered by somebody not doing the exam, as it could be an advantage to a candidate to hear what is expected before they sit the exam themselves?

Do the Stock Sheet lists need to be altered if we are only going to check the stock at the beginning of each session? Some of the list do not seem to be accurate.

Invigilator's Report -OSPE 2006(2) resits - January 2007

Sue Gray

The session on Tuesday afternoon ran very smoothly. As there were 29 candidates it was a great help that Kirsty was able to help with the checking in by giving out and collecting in the security sheets. The cloakroom provision worked well; with one invigilator having to stay in the waiting area to hand back coats etc as candidates finished their exams, to supervise the candidates, and also to change the chart showing the current time period.

The afternoon session could have started earlier as it does not take a full morning to set up the stations. This would have then have helped candidates and examiners who often have long journeys home.

Candidate 035 had a problem with her pathway which should have shown 10a not 10b but the fault was quickly sorted out and she was allowed to work through the gap between sessions.

Candidate 031 at station 14 found that the presentation was not at the start so he waited in the welcome area and did it in the next time period.

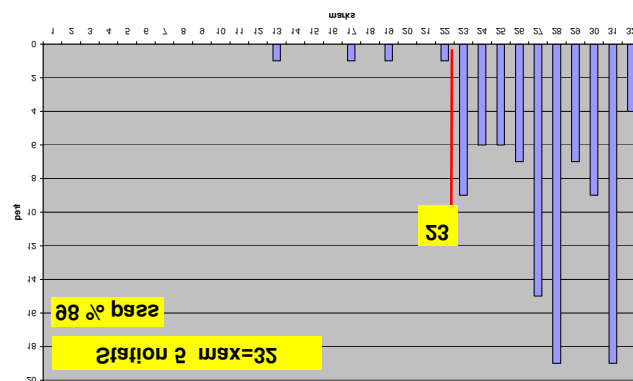
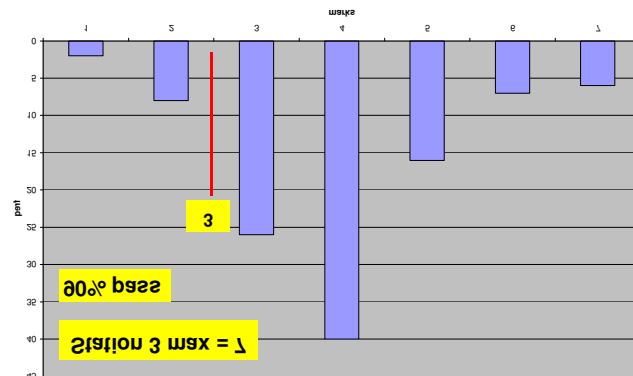
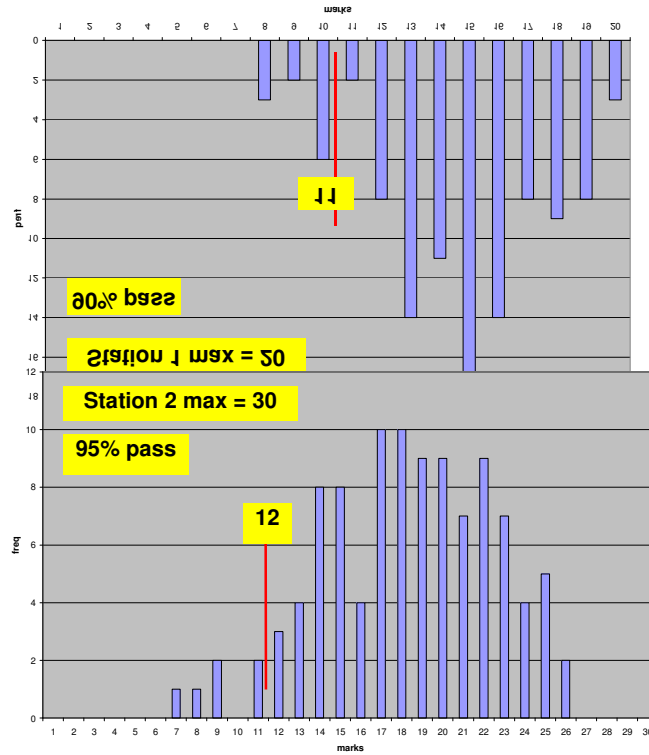
Candidate 044 complained that there was a crack in her ear mould. The session had been running for over 2 mins and she had been working on it.

Wednesday's sessions worked well. There were longer gaps between each time period because when a candidate was only doing station 6 there needed to be time allowed to set up the equipment. Also with the large number of candidates leaving and entering the exam room it all takes extra time.

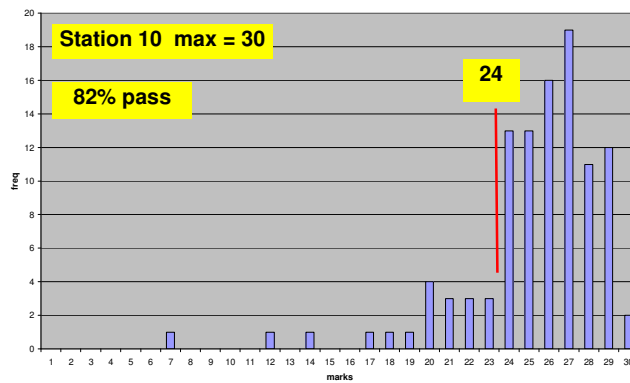
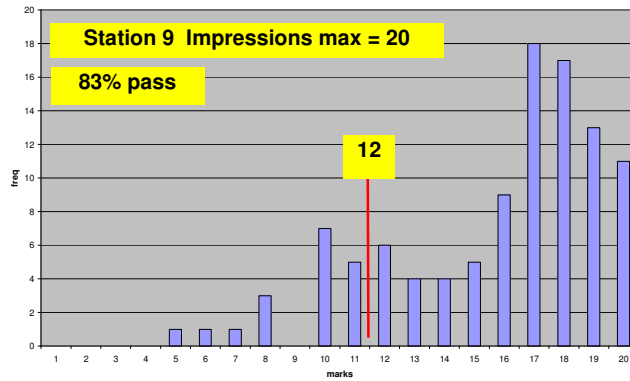
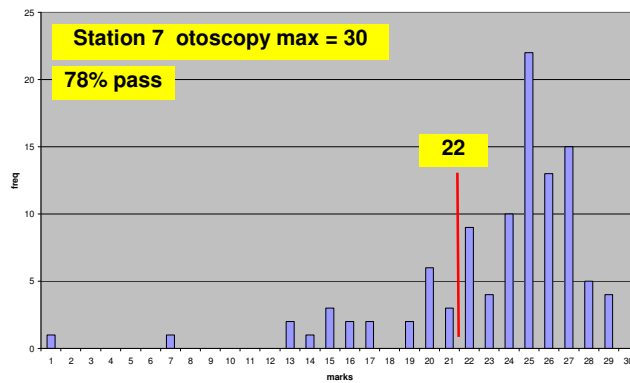
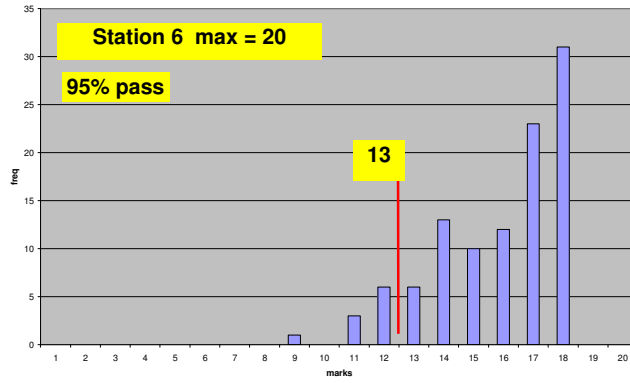
The dyslexic candidate 098 was only sitting 3 stations but he was allowed 2 reading periods. This does seem to be a massive advantage. If the number of candidates who are dyslexic

increases this issue needs to be sorted out.

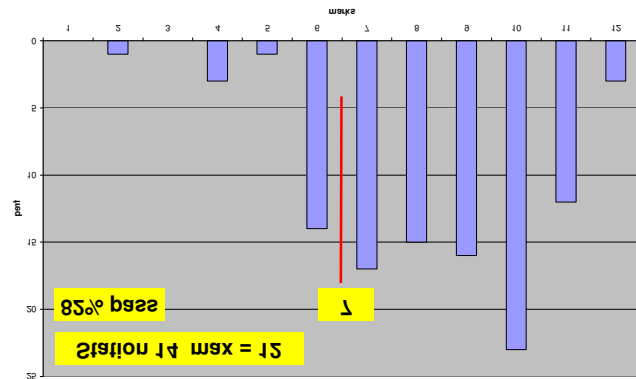
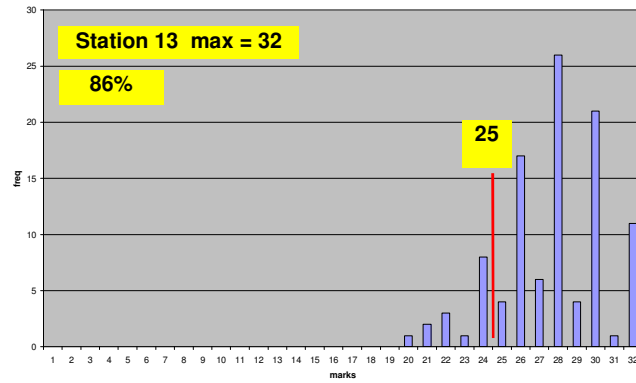
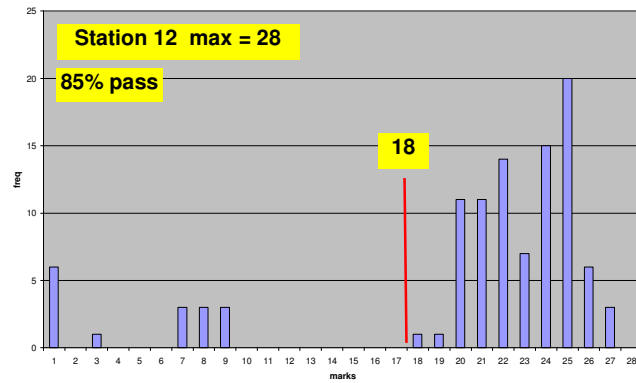
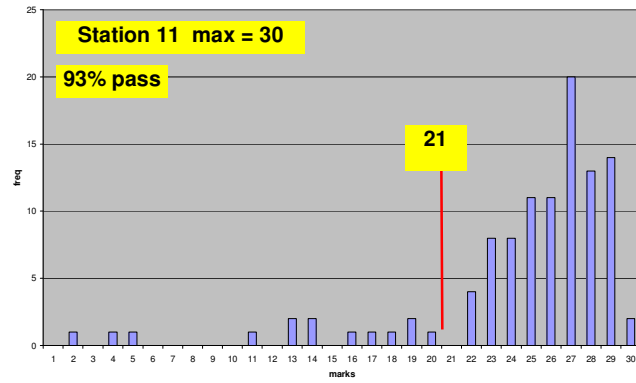
Once again the paper work provided by Anglia Ruskin was excellent, and the staff at the Hockey Stadium are very helpful.



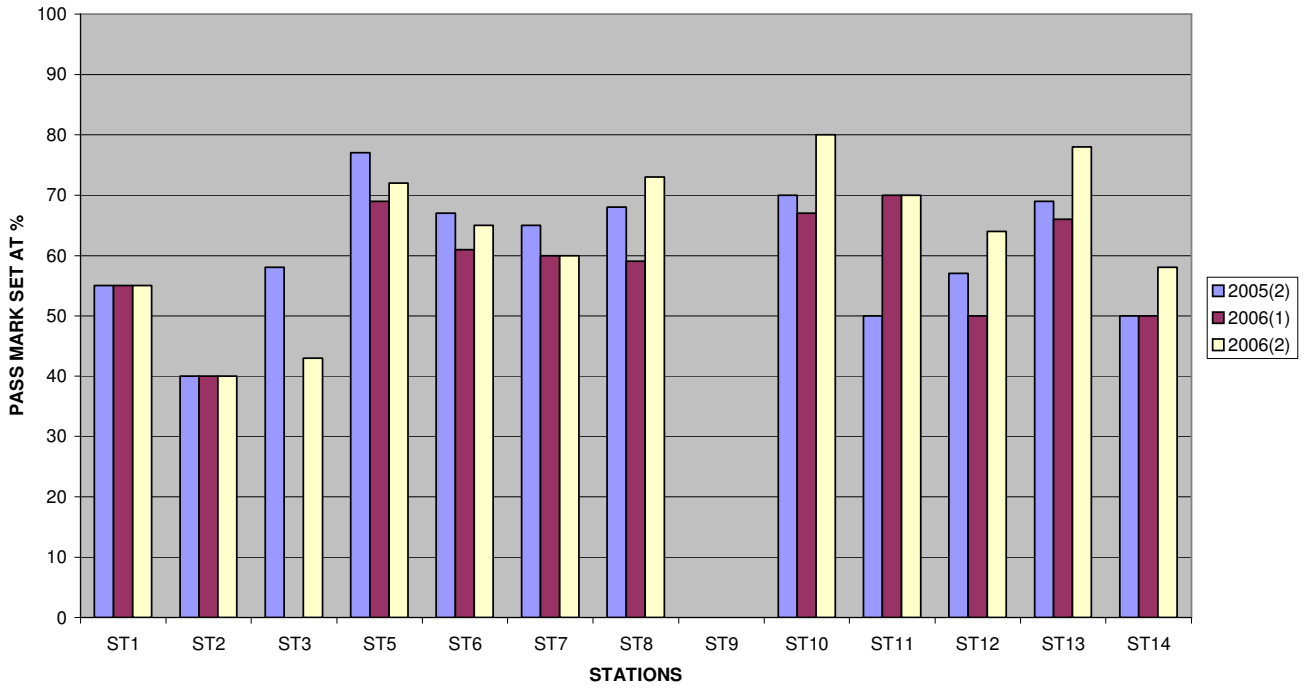
FREQ COUNTS – HAC OSPE 2006(2) NOV 2006 – G R KIRK



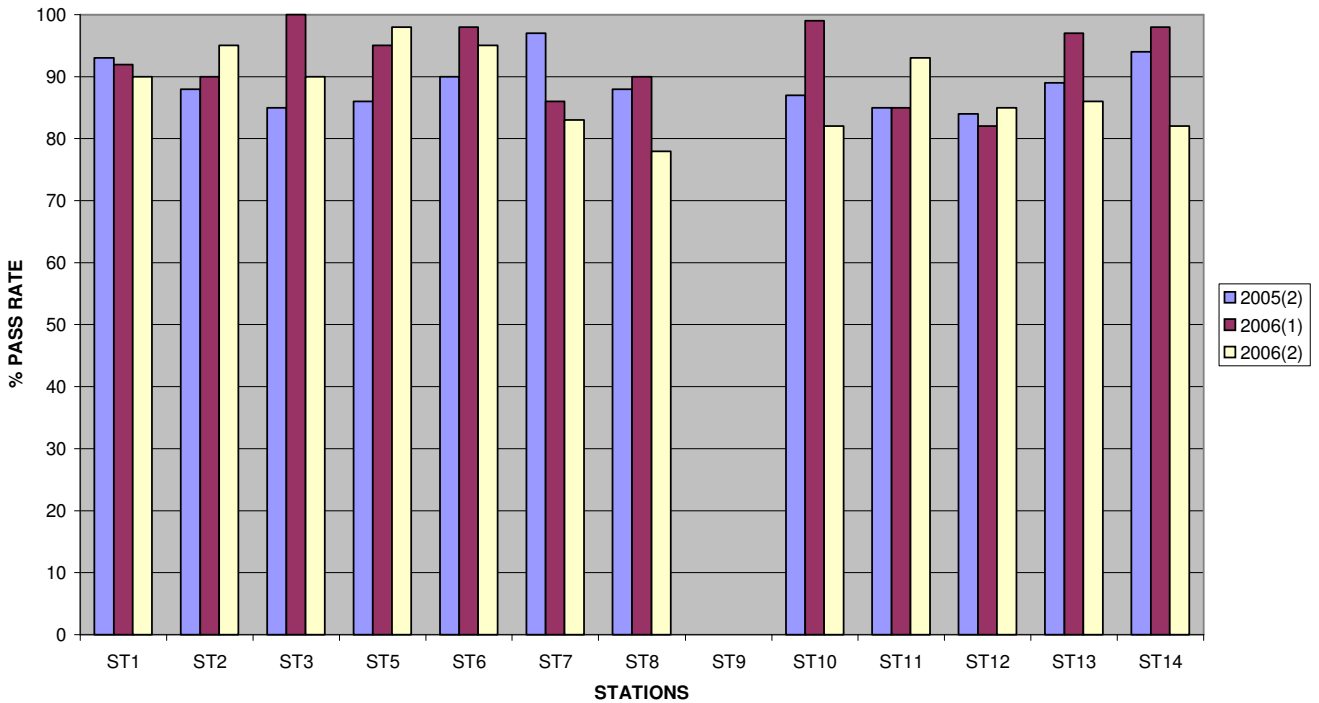
FREQ COUNTS – HAC OSPE 2006(2) NOV 2006 – G R KIRK



COMPARISON OF WHERE PASS MARKS WERE SET PER STATION



COMPARISON OF PASS RATES (%) FOR EACH STATION



OSPE 2006 (1) & (2) Pass Rates by Training Company

