

Nominal wording

(Applicable to both multiple choice and written examinations)

Why do exams differ slightly in difficulty?

Each exam question paper covers a different range of areas within the main topics of the syllabus content. Applied content may be examined in a case study or specific context and there may be very slight differences in the complexity of the content. As a result, there can be slight differences in the level of difficulty between one paper and another.

How does the CII ensure a consistent pass standard is applied when there can be differences in difficulty from paper to paper?

The nominal/typical mark is where the pass mark is most likely to be placed. This is a good indication of the level expected of candidates in the exam. However, candidates must not be disadvantaged or advantaged by the inclusion of a range of syllabus content and application contexts that are slightly more difficult or easy in the specific exam paper that they sit.

To protect the pass standard of the qualification and the interests of our candidates we adjust the pass mark to take this into account. Subject Experts (Senior Examiners who are also expert practitioners in the field) support us in selecting the appropriate pass mark for each paper, alongside exam data about how difficult our candidates have found each question.

How does the CII share marks and pass mark information with candidates to prevent confusion between multiple pass marks for different papers they have taken?

To prevent confusion about where a candidate's mark is in relation to a changing pass mark, we use 'moderated marks'. It is common practice for awarding organisations to convert raw (actual) marks into adjusted/moderated marks for reporting purposes. The candidate's mark is adjusted for reporting purposes only, to allow comparisons to be made over time across similar units or of multiple attempts on the same unit.

We convert the raw pass mark for each session to the nominal/typical pass mark and then the candidate's mark is converted and reported relative to the nominal/typical pass mark. In practice this means that the marks shared with the candidate indicate how far they were from the pass mark without detailing the individual pass mark for that particular paper.

If you are 1 mark above or below the raw pass mark, we would report the score as 1 mark above or below the nominal/typical pass mark. This ensures that the way we report your mark is simple to present and understand rather than reporting multiple fields of information that change each session.

Example (not specific to your unit or session)

If the nominal/typical pass mark for your unit is 55 and the actual raw pass mark for your specific paper/sitting is set at 52 (because of greater difficulty in the range of content in this specific sitting) and you scored 51, we would report your mark as 54 against a nominal/typical pass mark of 55 (i.e. you scored 1 mark below the actual raw pass mark, and we have converted that to 1 mark below the nominal/typical pass mark for reporting).

This gives you a clearer indication that you were very close to meeting the pass standard. In contrast, if we reported your mark to you as 51, it would be easy to interpret that as being much further from the pass standard if you did not see the pass mark had changed amongst the information in a more complicated reporting dashboard.

Example Examination Sitting	Reported Result
<i>Raw pass mark: 52</i>	<i>Nominal/typical pass mark: 55</i>
<i>Raw score: 51</i>	<i>Adjusted score:54</i>