



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	English
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

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

Overall, performance was stronger this year. Candidates did significantly better at Close Reading; the marks for the Folio component were up; Critical Essay marks were very similar to those from last year. The Folio again gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate a wider set of skills in the external assessment. There were signs that centres are now in a better position to offer candidates more effective preparation for this element of the course assessment.

In extended writing (both Folio and Critical Essay), there was no change to standards of technical accuracy in candidates' use of language.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Close Reading

Candidates found the passage interesting, relevant and accessible.

Question 2: Many candidates were able to make some comment on the structural function of the word 'however.'

Question 4: Candidates were able to deal with the requirement to use their own words.

Questions 14 and 15: Candidates were often able to locate a relevant expression, and then explain its significance.

Critical Essay

Candidates again found the Critical Essay paper accessible. Most questions on the paper were tackled, and candidates found no difficulty in locating a suitable question. However, it should be noted that candidates did tend to choose the first question from each section.

Poetry was the most popular choice. Very few candidates chose from the Language Section.

Most completed essays were of reasonable length, showed engagement, and demonstrated a clear understanding of the texts studied. Technical accuracy was acceptable: candidates communicated a basic line of thought in their essays.

Folio

Most candidates chose to write about an aspect of personal experience; however, this year many selected a discursive topic. A number of candidates submitted a report. Again, the writing communicated meaning clearly on first reading, and technical accuracy was acceptable.

The presentation of candidates' work was of a good standard. Most pieces submitted were word processed.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Close Reading

Question 6: Candidates lost marks due to a failure to paraphrase.

Question 7: As above. Candidates found difficulty glossing the word 'challenge'.

Question 10: The requirement for 'own words' was again problematic for many candidates.

Question 11: Candidates found it difficult to identify the structural function of the sentence.

Question 16: Candidates were able to make an acceptable analytical comment, but were often unable to isolate significant words or phrases from the given expression. On many occasions the whole expression was quoted back as part of the answer.

Question 18: Many candidates were not able to relate a feature from the passage to an aspect of the title.

Critical Essay

It was again the case that a significant number of candidates employed a very narrative approach in Critical Essays. The consequence of this was that analysis was too thin, and evaluation consisted merely in a basic paraphrase of the words from the stem of the essay question.

Candidates did not always deal fully with all aspects of the question.

Once again, there were very few responses on non-fiction texts. Responses to the questions from the language section were rare.

Folio

Some candidates did not sufficiently re-cast sourced material into their own words. Some did not make proper acknowledgement of sources consulted.

Some candidates found difficulty in avoiding comma splice when constructing sentences.

Pieces of short fiction often had weak endings.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Close Reading

Candidates should read the questions carefully and attempt to address the key demands (often in bold). The number of points or the fullness of the answer required is usually indicated by the number of marks available.

Candidates should use their own words when instructed to do so. A 'full gloss' is not usually necessary; however, credit is given for some attempt to paraphrase.

Candidates should have a basic awareness of the writer's purpose, and be able to make some comment on a writer's use of simple structures in the construction of an argument.

Critical Essay

Candidates should read all questions from each section in order that the most appropriate question can be selected. Ellipsis in question stems (eg Question 1), indicates that the list of examples given is not exhaustive.

Candidates should be careful to address all aspects of the question.

Evaluative and analytical comments could be strengthened.

Candidates should be reminded to show clearly the number of the question attempted.

Folio

Candidates should be careful to re-cast sourced material into their own words. Sources consulted during the preparation of discursive essays should be carefully noted in order that these sources can be properly acknowledged in final submissions.

In imaginative writing candidates should be encouraged to develop an effective structure.

Candidates should be involved in the selection of suitable topics for discursive writing. Again, 'local' subjects often generate a more authentic response.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2011	7797
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	7783
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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 100				
A	18.0%	18.0%	1404	69
B	33.0%	51.0%	2568	57
C	28.1%	79.1%	2185	46
D	8.5%	87.6%	662	40
No award	12.4%	100.0%	964	-

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.