



## External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Geography
Level(s)	Intermediate 1 and 2

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

There was a significant improvement in candidate performance at Intermediate 2, with the overall percentage gaining grades A–C up, and an increase in the number of candidates gaining an A grade. The number of candidates gaining a B grade remained the same. The overall number of candidates increased from 3,243 in 2011 to 3,413 this year. There was a small increase in the number of S3/S4 candidates, and a slight decrease in S5/6 numbers.

At Intermediate 1 there was a slight decrease in the number of candidates gaining an A–C grade. The total number of entries this year rose from 807 to 871.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

At Intermediate 2, candidates in general performed better in question 2 compared to question 1. The following questions were well answered:

- ◆ Question 1(c) (description of river and valley)
- ◆ Question 1(e) (land use conflicts in coastal areas)
- ◆ Question 2(b) (methods of reducing population growth)
- ◆ Question 2(d) (reasons for rural – urban migration)
- ◆ Question 2(e) (changing industrial location)
- ◆ Question 3(a) (reasons for deforestation)
- ◆ Question 4(b)(i)(ii) (benefits and disadvantages of a water control project)
- ◆ Question 5(a)(i)(ii) (graph and description for changing pollution levels)
- ◆ Question 6(b)(i)(ii)(causes of a chosen disease and methods of control for malaria or heart disease)
- ◆ Question 7(a)(i)(ii)(causes and impact of an earthquake)

At Intermediate 1, candidates performed well in the following questions:

- ◆ Question 1(a) (map evidence for limestone scenery)
- ◆ Question 1(c) (matching grid references to land use)
- ◆ Question 2 (c) (problems in shanty towns) (all parts)
- ◆ Question 4(b)(i) (explain why countries need to build dams)
- ◆ Question 4(b)(i) (benefits of a water control project)
- ◆ Question 6(a) (use of development indicators)
- ◆ Question 6(b)(i) (causes of disease)
- ◆ Question 7(a) (label volcanic eruption diagram)
- ◆ Question 7 (b)(i) (impact of a tropical storm)

## Areas which candidates found demanding

At Intermediate 2, candidates found the following questions demanding:

- ◆ Question 1(b) (formation of stalactites and stalagmites). A large percentage of candidates clearly had little or no knowledge of stalactite formation.
- ◆ Question 1(d) (attractions of the physical landscape in the Brecon Beacons). While most candidates did refer to the map extract, many simply listed tourist activities such as 'horse riding'. Many who did mention physical features, eg 'steep hills', failed to read the question properly and did not **explain** why tourists would be attracted to such areas.
- ◆ Question 2(c) (ways to improve inner city areas in developed cities). A large number of candidates confused 'Inner city' with the CBD, and thus did not answer the question properly. Many candidates did not refer to a specific city.
- ◆ Question 3(b) (effects and methods of reducing desertification). Some candidates were confusing 'desertification' with 'deforestation', and were referring to deforestation throughout their entire answer.
- ◆ Question 4(a) (factors affecting water movement and storage). Poorly answered in general.
- ◆ Question 4(c) (environmental problems caused by water control projects).
- ◆ Question 7(b)(i)(ii) (tropical storm prediction and long term aid). A large number of candidates, having described the effects of an earthquake in part (a), then continued to refer to earthquakes in their answer to part (b), ie they didn't read the question. There seemed to be limited knowledge of the importance of long term aid.

At Intermediate 1, candidates found the following questions demanding:

- ◆ Question 2(d) (other ways farmers can earn money apart from crops and animals). This was extremely poorly answered, with a large number of candidates displaying little or no knowledge of farm diversification.
- ◆ Question 3. As in Intermediate 2, there seemed to be confusion between the terms 'desertification' and 'deforestation'
- ◆ Question 4 – generally poorly answered.

Overall, as in previous years, very few candidates attempted question 5. The most popular options are questions 6 and 7, 3 and 6, or 3 and 7.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The response from the markers was that the overall standard of candidates was very good, particularly in Intermediate 2, and there were very few extremely low marks in comparison to previous years. Centres should be commended for presenting their candidates at the appropriate level.

Centres should continue to be aware that any of the topics from the Arrangements documents may be included in the exam. There is evidence that candidates are less comfortable with the formation processes of carboniferous limestone features than they are with eg glaciation.

Many candidates lost marks because they simply did not read the question — confusing geographical terms or failing to **explain** when asked to do so.

Again, there were several cases of illegible writing this year to the extent that some scripts had to be returned unmarked. While every effort is made to mark these scripts properly, some candidates were handicapped by writing that was extremely difficult to read. Centres should ensure that candidates such as these are identified at an early stage and given support where necessary.

In the Intermediate 2 exam, a number of candidates continue to write far too much — for example two A4 pages for a four mark question. While we commend their work-rate and enthusiasm, this is often unnecessary and puts the individual candidate at risk of failing to complete the paper.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2011	797
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	871
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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 60				
A	23.1%	23.1%	201	40
B	25.3%	48.3%	220	33
C	20.8%	69.1%	181	27
D	8.0%	77.2%	70	24
No award	22.8%	100.0%	199	-

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2011	3250
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	3402
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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 80				
A	37.2%	37.2%	1265	54
B	19.6%	56.8%	667	46
C	21.8%	78.6%	743	38
D	7.5%	86.1%	254	34
No award	13.9%	100.0%	473	-

## 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.