



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	History
Level(s)	INTERMEDIATE 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

The majority of candidates are entered at the correct level. There was a wide range of marks though there were relatively few candidates who attained very weak scores.

There has been a steady and welcome improvement in the Extended Response over the past few years. Many centres are preparing candidates well for this element. While there are still some issues which are weak, this component has seen considerable improvement.

Once more, S4 candidates performed significantly better than those in S5 or S6.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Extended Response

Most candidates were successful and produced a good quantity of knowledge and understanding. Where they had well considered questions they were able to argue and come to an appropriate conclusion. There was again a greater use of 'isolated factor' issues, and this encouraged an analytical approach to the response.

Examination

Markers commented that the eight-mark essay appeared to be better than in previous years, with most candidates producing introductions and conclusions and many providing good KU. Most candidates produced extremely good responses to the O3 comparison questions. Candidates did well in the O2 'explain' questions, with many integrating source evidence with appropriate recall. A number of candidates answered the no-source 'describe' questions extremely well.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Extended Response

There were still a few candidates who produced an Extended Response on issues outwith the Intermediate 2 Arrangements. It is likely that such essays will gain no marks. Centres must ensure that candidates who drop down to this level late in the course fulfil the requirement to produce an essay within the Intermediate 2 Arrangements.

Too many candidates still have titles which lead to narrative answers with little or no analysis of the issue. Examples of this are:

- ◆ What strategies did Bruce use at Bannockburn?
- ◆ Most 'explain why' questions

The majority of such issues lead to candidates gaining few marks for argument/analysis.

On occasions there are titles that are simply unhelpful to candidates, such as:

- ◆ Robert the Bruce King at last.
- ◆ Robert the Bruce and his struggle to become king.
- ◆ Declining industry
- ◆ Liberal reforms 1906-1914

At the other extreme, there are a number of cases where candidates are attempting issues which are too complicated for them. Sometimes these are isolated factor questions derived from previous Higher questions, which these candidates find too complicated to handle. In these situations a more straightforward 'explain why' question may be more appropriate for the candidate. Although please refer to the reference above (page 2) on this type of question.

In other cases the wording of the question makes it almost impossible for candidates to provide a meaningful answer. An example of this is:

- ◆ How far can it be argued that emotional damage was the worst part of the Middle Passage?

There were several examples of this question which candidates handled poorly. They found it difficult to ascertain what emotional damage was and to compare it with other factors.

Similarly, questions involving an assessment of Martin Luther King as the most important person in the Civil Rights Movement were poorly tackled on the whole. Many of these essays tended to turn into descriptions of the events King was connected with, frequently with no mention of King himself.

A worrying development reported by markers was that there appears to be an increase in conclusions simply mirroring word for word the introduction rather than summarising and answering the question posed.

Examination

- ◆ In the eight-mark essay a number of candidates misread or misconstrued the question, eg:
 - Question 7: many candidates recounted the Labour reforms but did not relate this to creating a welfare state.
 - Question 19: 1905 was often substituted by candidates for February 1917.
 - Question 20: Candidates simply recounted what they knew about the KKK rather than explaining why it was so powerful.
 - Question 21: Candidates recounted rehearsed reasons for appeasement rather than why Hitler wanted to break the Treaty of Versailles.
- In Question 6 a worryingly high number of candidates appear to think that a factor in many Scots emigrating between 1830 and 1900 was the arrival of Irish immigrants in

Scotland. As previously noted, centres should ensure candidates are left in no doubt that this notion is a false one.

In the remainder of the examination there were a number of questions which produced specific problems:

- ◆ In the Free at Last context, Question 1 often turned into a focus on Martin Luther King or the events of the Civil Rights Movement, rather than stating the ways in which the movement improved the lives of black Americans.
- ◆ In Free at Last Question 3, candidates found difficulty interpreting the source as well as bringing little in the way of recall to their answers.
- ◆ In the Wallace and Bruce context, Question 1 saw many candidates mixing up direct points of comparison.
- ◆ In the Immigrants and Exiles context, Question 1, candidates tended to ignore the wording of the question about pull factors and many gave push factors such as the famine.
- ◆ In the Accursed Trade context, Question 1 saw much confusion over slave factories and plantations.
- ◆ In the Road to War context, candidates struggled to provide recall appropriate to the event.
- ◆ Although there is evidence of some improvement in the O3 'how useful' questions, there is still considerable evidence that this is the by far the weakest skill element. Candidates still frequently attempted to justify origin and authorship of the source by simply copying the rubric of the source and so gained no marks for this. Secondary sources, in particular, were not well handled. For purpose, if it was even attempted, they often either repeated the question or provided content from the source.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Extended Response

Centres should use the latest version of the published marking criteria to share with candidates what is required to improve introductions and conclusions and how to develop the quality of analysis in their essays.

As in previous years, centres should:

- ◆ Ensure that the issue chosen lies within the Intermediate 2 Arrangements. This is especially important for candidates who move from Higher to Intermediate 2 levels.

- ◆ Ensure that issues are appropriate for candidates. For many, this will involve phrasing the question as an isolated factor or using 'how important' or 'how successful' rather than 'why'. For others, however, the use of a 'why' question might be preferable.
- ◆ Be pro-active in discussing the issue with candidates to ensure that the issue will not lead to a narrative response.
- ◆ Stress that introductions should provide both context and factors to be discussed, and conclusions should summarise and make a judgement.

Centres should ensure that both the plan sheet and the flyleaf are completed according to the stated regulations, in particular noting that the actual number of words used in the plan should be noted on the flyleaf. Penalties are applied for plans that are over 150 words.

Examination

- ◆ To obtain full marks in the 8 mark essay, candidates must refer to context as well as factors in the introduction and provide a judgement and summary in the conclusion.
- ◆ In the 'how useful' questions, candidates must demonstrate their ability to evaluate the source, eg:
 - a identify the author and why that makes it useful rather than merely copying the rubric of the source
 - b identify the source as primary or secondary and the particular time from when it comes, eg from May 1963 when the March on Birmingham took place or written by a modern historian writing several centuries after the slave trade
 - c use authorship, date and target audience to provide a possible purpose for why the source was written
 - d state limitation by identifying a point not contained in the source which **is relevant to the question asked**.
- ◆ In O2 'explain' questions, candidates must explain the cause or effect by interpreting the source rather than copying whole sentences from the source.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2011	5208
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	5582
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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 70				
A	27.1%	27.1%	1512	48
B	29.9%	57.0%	1668	40
C	24.4%	81.4%	1364	33
D	7.5%	88.9%	417	29
No award	11.1%	100.0%	621	-

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.