



## External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Russian
Level(s)	Higher

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

A wide range of abilities was represented in this year's candidate presentation, which gave a wide spread of marks. There was evidence of some candidates being presented without adequate instruction about paper content and how to answer questions. There was much evidence of poor English language skills from many candidates.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

The Reading Comprehension was generally successfully tackled, with Questions 1, 2(a), 2(d), 2(e), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 4(a), 4(b), 4(c) and 4(e) showing candidates' best performances. The Listening Comprehension was generally well done, and both Short Essay and Directed Writing allowed some candidates to excel.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

The Translation section of the Reading Comprehension proved extremely challenging for some candidates, particularly in relation to the use of good English expression, and even coherent handwriting proving beyond the capabilities of some.

Similarly, in answering the Comprehension questions in both Reading and Listening, some candidates failed, by their poor command of English, to prove they had sufficiently understood much of the passage to be awarded the relevant marks. Mistranslation and failure to give sufficient detail were also common features in candidates' answers.

In the Listening Comprehension, too many candidates offered answers to questions in the wrong place, and though they had understood the passage, denied themselves marks.

Some candidates in the Directed Writing did not address themselves successfully to the stimulus content, and wrote on the wrong topic areas of the Bullet Points, thus losing marks.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres must be aware of the need to prepare their candidates as completely as possible for the wide variety of tasks that Higher demands of them.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	32
Number of resulted entries in 2013	36

## 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	75.0%	75.0%	27	70
B	5.6%	80.6%	2	60
C	8.3%	88.9%	3	50
D	2.8%	91.7%	1	45
No award	8.3%	100.0%	3	-

## 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.