



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Geology
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 candidates showed a very high understanding of the course. There were some exceptional candidates, particularly those in S6, with some S4 candidates also showing a high level of performance. These candidates would have coped well with Intermediate 2 and in some cases Higher Geology. No candidates gained a D or No Award, which may be linked to an increase in Access 3 presentations allowing most candidates to be presented at the appropriate level.

Candidates again performed well in problem-solving questions, reflecting the thoroughness of centres in preparing candidates for the exam.

Areas in which candidates performed well

- ◆ Question 1: Most candidates knew how to demonstrate an excellent knowledge of the Solar System.
- ◆ Question 3: Most candidates knew how to name rock type accurately.
- ◆ Question 5: Most candidates knew how to name rock and rock structures.
- ◆ Question 7a): Most candidates knew how to calculate a percentage.
- ◆ Question 7b): Most candidates knew how to construct a bar graph.
- ◆ Question 8b): Most candidates knew how to give correct order of sequence.
- ◆ Question 10: Most candidates knew how to calculate the amount of oil used.
- ◆ Question 13a): Most candidates knew how to name environmental problems.

Areas which candidates found demanding

- ◆ Question 4d): Describing conditions of rock formation.
- ◆ Question 9a) and b): Labelling of diagrams to explain formation of sand dunes.
- ◆ Question 11a): Naming metal extracted from ore minerals.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres should ensure that candidates can give clear explanations of geological processes. Centres should also ensure that candidates have an understanding of ore minerals and know which metals are extracted from the ore minerals listed in the Arrangement Documents.

Again, centres could have presented some candidates at a more demanding level. However, curriculum change and timetabling difficulties continue to have an effect.

Centres are to be commended for the enthusiasm of both pupils and staff, which is reflected in the overall high standard of performance.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1 Geology

Number of resulted entries in 2012	81
------------------------------------	----

Number of resulted entries in 2013	42
------------------------------------	----

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	57.1%	57.1%	24	56
B	28.6%	85.7%	12	48
C	14.3%	100.0%	6	40
D	0.0%	100.0%	0	36
No award	0.0%	100.0%	0	-

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.