



## External Assessment Report 2009

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Subject	English for Speakers of Other Languages
Level	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

A comparison between component average marks in 2008 and 2009 shows that candidate performance in Component 1 remained little changed, and Component 2 showed a rise of 2.4%.

	2009	2008
Component 1 (Speaking)	17.2/25	17.4/25
Component 2 ( Listening, Reading and Writing)	46.9/25	44.5/75

There was no change to the format of the papers from 2008.

### Writing

Part 1 – Error Correction - showed a similar spread of marks to 2008 with the average score being 2.52.

In Part 2 70% of candidates chose to answer Task 1 – Everyday Communication, with 22% choosing Task 2 – Work, and 8% choosing Task 3 – Study. The average score for Task 1 was 12.62 (out of 20), for Task 2 13.01 and for Task 3, 12.74.

### Areas in which candidates performed well

In the Writing section Part 2 Everyday Communication proved the most popular choice, very probably because it required the production of a letter of complaint on a familiar topic. Both the Work and Study options involved the interpretation of statistics, and in the case of the Study choice, only 8% chose this option. However, the average scores for these tasks would seem to indicate that only those candidates who felt confident in dealing with statistics chose these options.

In Writing the use of appropriate style and layout was much improved on 2008.

### Areas which candidates found demanding

Both the Listening and Reading sections contained good discriminating questions ,for example, Listening Questions 5, 6 and 14; Reading Questions 3, 6 , 9 and 12.

In Listening candidates continue to perform less well in the ‘not more than three words’ questions.

In the Reading paper candidates do not perform well in Text 2, Part 3, the ‘fill in the blanks’ (cloze) passage. The average mark is 2.17/5. However this is balanced by above average performance in part 4 - the matching exercise. We will continue to monitor this. The format remains the same for 2010.

In Writing Part 1 – Error Correction - again few candidates achieved full marks (5) for this question and the average score was 2.52.

As mentioned last year other changes have been implemented for 2011, such as a wider range of question types in the Reading section, and multiple choice questions with 3 rather than 4 choices in Listening. Centres will be informed of any changes.

### Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Most candidates were well-prepared and at the appropriate level. In fact Centre estimates slightly under-estimated the numbers achieving grade A, and over-estimated those achieving Grades B and C.

We will continue to work on question formats in all sections, and Centres will be informed of any changes in good time. The only change for 2010 is the inclusion of a matching task in Reading text 1.

There were still a few candidates who answered Writing Part 1 – Error Correction - according to the format of the Specimen Paper and 2007 exam. Centres need to ensure that teaching staff are aware of the format of this question - there are now no correct lines!

As suggested in last year’s report in Writing candidates should be discouraged from simply copying the rubric or bullet points into their answer; they need to re-phrase and also to include support for each point made. Likewise, when dealing with tabular information and statistics (Work, Study options) the answers which achieved the highest scores were those where the candidates did not simply repeat the statistics but were able to process and combine them so as to achieve the task.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	467
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	475
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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	29.3%	29.3%	139	70
B	24.6%	53.9%	117	60
C	18.5%	72.4%	88	50
D	5.3%	77.7%	25	45
No award	22.3%	100.0%	106	-

## 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.