



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>Geography</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 1 and 2</b>

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

Although performance of candidates at both Intermediate 1 and 2 failed to match those of 2009, nevertheless overall performance was highly creditable at both levels. The pattern was similar in Intermediate 1. The full range of marks was achieved at Intermediate 2, but this was not repeated at Intermediate 1.

Centres appear to be heeding the advice given in previous reports on giving more consideration to the appropriateness of presentation levels. This has resulted in more candidates at Intermediate 1 achieving higher grades at this level, as opposed to performing poorly at the Intermediate 2 level. Hopefully this trend will continue.

Although the percentage passes were slightly lower at the upper and lower A Grades at Intermediate 2, the overall percentage of candidates obtaining Grades A – C showed a slight increase on the 2009 examination. The pattern at Intermediate 1 showed an increase at the upper A and A levels and a very slight increase overall in Grades A – C.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

At Intermediate 2, candidates performed best in the following questions:

- ◆ Question 1 (d) (land use conflicts)
- ◆ Question 2 (a)(ii) (differences in population growth rates between developing and developed countries)
- ◆ Question 2 (e) (international companies in developing countries)
- ◆ Question 3 (a)(i) (changes in forest cover in SE Asia)
- ◆ Question 3 (b) (causes of desertification)
- ◆ Question 6 (b)(i) (describing distribution of people with AIDS)
- ◆ Question 6 (b)(ii) (attempts to control the spread of heart disease)
- ◆ Question 6 (b)(iii) (success of these efforts)
- ◆ Question 7 (c)(i) (impact of an earthquake on people and landscape)
- ◆ Question 7 (c)(ii) (methods to reduce the effects of earthquakes)

At Intermediate 1, candidates performed well in:

- ◆ Question 1 (c)(i) (matching grid references to glacial features)
- ◆ Question 1 (d) (attempts to reduce problems caused by visitors to National Parks)
- ◆ Question 3 (a) (human causes of land degradation)
- ◆ Question 6 (a)(i) (distribution of low literacy rates)
- ◆ Question 6 (b)(i) (major causes of heart disease)
- ◆ Question 7 (b)(i) (impact of tropical storms on people and landscape)
- ◆ Question 7 (b)(ii) (type of aid given to local people)

## Areas which candidates found demanding

At Intermediate 2, candidates found the following questions demanding:

- ◆ Question 1 (a) (identifying selected landscapes in Scotland)
- ◆ Question 1 (b)(ii) (formation of ribbon lakes)
- ◆ Question 2 (a)(i) (world population growth rate – many candidates were confused by the diagram showing growth rates)
- ◆ Question 5 (a)(i) (distribution of severely polluted rivers in Europe)
- ◆ Question 7 (a) (describing the movement of tropical storms)

At Intermediate 1, candidates found the following demanding:

- ◆ Question 1 (b)(i) (map evidence to support the case for a river in its lower course)
- ◆ Question 1 (b)(ii) (problems of walkers on an area of the Cumbria Coastal Way – the vast majority of candidates described the wrong area on the map)
- ◆ Question 2 (b) (redevelopment of inner city areas)
- ◆ Question 2 (d) (solving problems caused by waste in cities – the majority of candidates referred only to recycling)
- ◆ Question 4 (b)(ii) (problems caused by water control project)
- ◆ Question 5 (a)(i) (causes of coastal pollution in Northern Europe)
- ◆ Question 5 (a)(ii) (measures taken to reduce these problems)

Note that very few candidates attempted Questions 4 and 5 at both levels. The overwhelming majority of candidates at both levels attempted Questions 6 and 7.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

With reference to the final sentence above, centres may wish to consider preparing candidates for the environmental interaction question, Question 3, as an alternative to either of Questions 6 or 7. There are only two elements, namely deforestation and/or desertification. Candidates need only to know about the causes, effects, and methods used to reduce the processes, and the relative effectiveness of these methods.

Hopefully centres will continue to follow the advice given previously with regard to level of presentation.

Despite the slight improvement in performance at Intermediate 1, centres should be aware that this examination is benchmarked against SCQF level 4. Therefore candidates should be better skilled in providing extended written answers. The number of marks for an answer should be taken as a guide to the length of answers required.

Answers which rely mainly on using information provided in illustrations without additional comment will not achieve full marks.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2009	782
Number of resulted entries in 2010	768

## 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	26.2%	26.2%	201	38
B	23.7%	49.9%	182	32
C	22.8%	72.7%	175	26
D	9.9%	82.6%	76	23
No award	17.4%	100.0%	134	—

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2009	2684
Number of resulted entries in 2010	3193

## 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	35.4%	35.4%	1131	53
B	22.7%	58.1%	725	44
C	18.6%	76.7%	593	36
D	7.4%	84.1%	236	32
No award	15.9%	100.0%	508	—

### 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, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.