



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Geology
Level	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 again continued to produce a high standard of answers with some candidates producing outstanding responses. Centres are to be commended for the professional manner in which they prepared candidates for the exam.

Although there was a decrease in the number of presentations, due to candidates leaving school and presentation at Access 3, there was an increase in the number of centres and an increase in both S5 and S6 candidates. Candidates were also presented in S3 which is possible evidence of a future trend.

Marks showed a wider distribution than in the previous year. Some candidates should have perhaps been presented at a more appropriate level, at either Intermediate 2 or Access 3.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates performed well in the drawing of graphs. Centres are to be congratulated for the thoroughness in which they prepare candidates for this task.

Candidates also performed well in:

- ◆ Question 1 Testing knowledge of the Solar System.
- ◆ Question 5 Testing knowledge and recognition of fossils.
- ◆ Question 7 (d) Calculation of sand and gravel required for gold medal production.
- ◆ Question 8 Testing knowledge and explanation of formation of mushroom rocks.
- ◆ Question 12 (b) Completion of tables showing total water use.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Candidates found the following questions demanding.

- ◆ Question 10 Describing the processes which have formed features of a limestone landscape.
- ◆ Question 11 (a) and (b) Naming and explaining the formation of submerged coastlines.
- ◆ Question 12 (a) Naming of physical resources.
- ◆ Question 12 (e) Suggesting reasons for increase in volume of water in a reservoir.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres should ensure candidates can recognise geological features and explain the processes of their formation.

Candidates should have a detailed knowledge of types of coastline and their formation.

It should also be noted that some centres are preparing candidates in S3 for presentation and that Access 3 may be more appropriate for some candidates.

Finally, centres are to be congratulated on the detailed knowledge shown by candidates who have clearly enjoyed their study of Geology.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	71
Number of resulted entries in 2010	59

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	57.6%	57.6%	34	56
B	13.6%	71.2%	8	48
C	16.9%	88.1%	10	40
D	0.0%	88.1%	0	36
No award	11.9%	100.0%	7	—

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.