



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	History
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

General comments

Markers commented that candidates performed well overall and that they were entered at the appropriate level. There was a wide spread of performance. Overall, there was a slight improvement in performance in the Extended Response where Markers commented that candidates were performing consistently well with many scoring full marks for KU.

S4 candidates continue to perform better than those in S5 and S6.

Markers highlighted that the method of marking the Extended Response by using the agreed criteria worked well.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Extended Response

Most candidates were well prepared and produced a very good quantity of evidence to develop their chosen issue. Where they had well considered questions they were able to argue and come to an appropriate conclusion. There were more 'isolated factor' issues than in previous years and this encouraged an analytical approach to the response, eg how important was Trotsky's role in the Russian Civil War?

There was a noticeable drop in class/group essays from centres. Centres had taken on board the advice given.

Examination

Most candidates produced extremely good answers to the comparison questions. Most candidates did well in the 'explain' questions, integrating source evidence with appropriate recall.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Extended Response

There were still a few candidates who produced an Extended Response on issues outwith the Intermediate 2 Arrangements. Commonly these tend to be on either the reasons Hitler came to power or on the Nazi state. It is inevitable that such essays will gain no marks.

Too many candidates still have titles which lead to narrative answers with little or no analysis of the issue. Examples of this are:

- ◆ Describe the challenges to the Tsar before 1914
- ◆ What difficulties did immigrants to the USA face in the early twentieth century?

The majority of such issues lead to candidates gaining few marks for argument/analysis.

At the other extreme, there are a number of cases where candidates are attempting issues which are too complicated for them. Sometimes these are double questions or isolated-factor questions which these candidates find too complicated to handle. In these situations a more straightforward 'explain why' question may be more appropriate for the candidate. The intention of this stem is that candidates evaluate the reasons and come to conclusions on the more/most important factors behind a historical development.

Candidates tended to produce introductions which focused on either suggesting factors to be discussed or on the context of the question. Few developed any line of argument. In conclusions many candidates did not go beyond a brief summary.

Examination

In the 8 mark essay question a number of candidates misread or misconstrued the question.

Some candidates misinterpreted the 'describe' question especially in the contexts on Immigrants and Exiles, Cradle to Grave, Free at Last, and Road to War — eg In what ways did Scots help to improve the lands to which they emigrated?' was often interpreted as simply referring to farming.

There was a noticeable increase in candidates simply copying the source in the 'explain' question rather than using the source to provide an explanation in their own words.

Although there is evidence of some improvement in the 'how useful' questions, there is still considerable evidence that this is the skill element which is weakest. Candidates frequently attempted to justify origin and authorship of the source by simply copying the rubric of the source and thus gained no marks for this. For 'purpose' they often either repeated the question or provided content from the source.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Extended Response

Centres should use the published marking criteria to share with candidates what is required to improve introductions and conclusions and how to develop the quality of analysis in their essays.

As in previous years, centres should:

- ◆ Ensure that the issue chosen lies within the Intermediate 2 Arrangements. This is especially important for candidates who move from Higher to Intermediate 2 levels
- ◆ Ensure that issues are appropriate for candidates. For many, this will involve phrasing the question as an isolated factor or using 'how important' or how successful rather than why
- ◆ For others, however, the use of a 'why' question might be preferable
- ◆ Centres should be pro-active in discussing the issue with candidates

- ◆ Introductions should provide both context and factors to be discussed and conclusions should summarise and make a judgement

Examination

- ◆ To obtain full marks in the 8 mark essay, candidates must refer to context as well as factors in the introduction and provide a judgement and summary in the conclusion.
- ◆ In the 'how useful' questions candidates must demonstrate their ability to evaluate the source. A good response should:
 - (a) identify the author and explain why that makes it useful, rather than merely copying the rubric of the source
 - (b) identify the source as primary or secondary and the particular time from when it comes
 - (c) use authorship, date and target audience to provide a possible purpose for why the source was written
 - (d) state limitation by identifying a point not contained in the source which is relevant to the question asked
- ◆ In 'explain' questions, candidates must explain the cause or effect by interpreting the source rather than copying whole sentences from the source.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	4618
Number of resulted entries in 2010	5243

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark — 70				
A	24.1%	24.1%	1266	47
B	24.8%	48.9%	1298	39
C	27.9%	76.8%	1465	31
D	9.3%	86.1%	487	27
No award	13.9%	100.0%	727	—

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.