



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Managing Environmental Resources
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

Most candidates attempted all questions but there was evidence that some of the candidates should have been presented at Access 3 Level.

Questions based on the Ecosystems Unit had the lowest scores: (Questions, 5 and 6). Question 1 and Question 9 with problem solving had the highest scores.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Most candidates could extract information from diagrams, a passage or table — the responses in Question 1 were good. The pie chart (Question 3 (a) (i)) was carefully completed.

Candidates scored well in the key (Question 9 (a)) and the term 'trend' is well understood (Question 9 (b) (ii)).

Questions in which candidates could have personal input produced a range of excellent responses: ways to increase biodiversity (Question (6) (d)); to increase membership (Question 8 (e)); and to reduce energy use at home (Question 3 (d)).

Question 2 (a) (ii), the disadvantages of experts from abroad, gave answers which indicated an understanding from studies within the local area.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Candidates had difficulty writing explanations. In Question 6 (a), most circled the incorrect result but very few could suggest a cause or explain why five readings were taken.

Few candidates gained full marks by describing an effect of acid rain (Question 3 (c)) or the use of a quadrat (Question 6 (c)).

Many candidates could not name a national organisation (SEPA from contents column of Arrangements) or state what SSSI stood for (Question 8 (d)).

Some calculations were poorly answered (Question 2 (a) (ii) and Question 3 (a) (ii)) and interpretation of the graph (Question 7 (d)) was also found to be difficult.

Low scoring in the food web (Question 5) indicated that some candidates did not understand some of the words in the Ecosystems Unit, eg habitat, decomposer.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Candidates should practise on past paper questions. A wide range of these is now available and this is the best preparation for an external examination. Any examples quoted in the 'notes' column of the Arrangements document can be asked for in an external examination.

From the Environmental Issues Unit, one initiative, one organisation and one piece of legislation should be known at each of the local, national and international levels.

From the Ecosystems Unit, candidates should learn the meaning of, and be able to give an example of, any of the biological terms mentioned in the contents column of the Arrangements document. It is important to study one local land or water use in depth and be able to apply its principles to any other land or water use. A very useful tool is published on the Learning and Teaching Scotland website which covers the learning Outcomes of the entire Intermediate 1 Course. It provides material at an appropriate depth and breadth for all three of the Units in the Course.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	71
Number of resulted entries in 2010	79

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	16.5%	16.5%	13	56
B	24.1%	40.5%	19	48
C	25.3%	65.8%	20	40
D	7.6%	73.4%	6	36
No award	26.6%	100.0%	21	—

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.