



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>Managing Environmental Resources</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 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

Overall, the responses from candidates were good and displayed a positive engagement with the Course.

Candidates were presented at the correct level and there was evidence of bi-level teaching.

Markers commented on the poor standard of English (in handwriting and spelling) displayed by some candidates in the answer to the Extended Writing question in Section 2.

Marks awarded to questions based on Unit 2, Ecosystems, were higher than in previous years.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

The corncrake (Question 6), golf advice (Question 7) and food web (Question 3) questions were well answered. On the whole, arithmetic problem solving was well done.

The key in Question 5 was completed well and the term 'biotic factor' was understood. The majority of candidates could identify features on a map (Question 8).

Able candidates choosing Option B in Section 2, on the nitrogen cycle, scored very highly.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

Less able candidates could not complete the table in Question 1 (a) (i). Pie charts were carelessly drawn in Question 2 (a) (i) and very few made more than one point on the efficiency of the generator in Question 2 part (c) (ii).

Question 3 (a) (v) was misinterpreted as pyramid of biomass and very few gave C as the correct answer.

Candidates scored least well in Question 4. A sampling technique was poorly described. Very few answered that the results had been made reliable by the calculation of an average. 'Repeat' or 'do it again' were unacceptable answers. 'What is meant by a native species?' was also not answered well.

In Question 5 (a) (iv) candidates answered with initiatives and not the required organisations. Only one reason for flooding was given in Question 8 (b) (ii) and part (c) (ii) proved difficult for less able candidates. Option A of Section 2 contained the trigger word 'recycling' which most answers concentrated on. Very few answers referred to the title 'Describe how the use of non-recyclable resources can be reduced'. Most answers in Option C described a land user survey and not a land use one.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

Continue to emphasise that candidates should read the question carefully and answer the question which is being asked. A wide range of past papers is now available and practice with these is good preparation for an external examination. In Section 2, all parts of the chosen option must be answered. If five marks are allocated to part of the question then at least five different points should be made.

Option C on the local area, is where the highest average score was attained.

When completing a pie chart, all sectors meet in the centre. Lines drawn with a pencil and ruler are recommended and the lines should not be gone over with a pen. Marks are deducted for not meeting in the centre, wobbly lines and leaving a perceptible gap between where a line should be and where it is actually drawn.

The number of marks and space allocated to a question are indications of the type of answer which is expected. When asked to describe a technique for two marks with an allocation of three lines, the answer should cover three different points in the description.

From Unit 2, candidates can be asked for an example or a meaning of any of the biological terms mentioned in the contents column of the Arrangements document. When asked for map evidence, the answers must include a grid reference or a specific name from the map extract. To illustrate multi-use of a facility, at least two different user groups and the way in which each uses the facility must be mentioned.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	47
Number of resulted entries in 2010	105

## 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	29.5%	29.5%	31	69
B	31.4%	61.0%	33	59
C	20.0%	81.0%	21	50
D	6.7%	87.6%	7	45
No award	12.4%	100.0%	13	—

### 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.