



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	ESOL
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

The number of candidates slightly increased from last year. There were 23 new centres and 11 returning centres.

A comparison between component average marks in 2011 and 2010 shows that candidate performance in Component 1 stayed the same and in Component 2 showed a small improvement.

	2011	2010
Component 1 (Speaking)	17.9/25	17.9/25
Component 2 (Listening, Reading and Writing)	48.2/75	47.8/75

There were no substantive changes to Question papers in 2011.

Listening

A suggestion was made that timings should be indicated beside each paragraph in the transcript, so that, if the back-up recording needs to be used, the invigilator knows where to start it. The Invigilators' handbook already provides sufficient guidance on procedure in such instances, and this will ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged.

Writing

Part 1 — Error Correction — showed a slightly higher average score than in 2010 at 2.99/5.

In Part 2, 66% of candidates chose to answer Task 1 — Everyday Communication; 14% chose Task 2 — Work; and 20% chose Task 3 — Study. The average score out of 20 for Task 1 was 12.44, for Task 2 10.99 and for Task 3, 12.61.

This year Central Marking replaced Marking from Image and this caused no problems.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Listening questions 1, 7, 10, 15 and 20 in particular were answered well.

Some markers suggested that the wording in Listening questions 11a and 15c might have helped candidates answer question 14, but the statistics do not bear this out. Likewise with 18a and 19iii ('reintroduced').

The balance between Reading part 4, gapfilling, and the part 5 matching exercise was maintained, the comparative difficulty of part 4 being balanced by part 5.

In the Writing section, as in 2010, Part 2 Everyday Communication proved the most popular choice, chosen by 66% of candidates. The topic, arranging an end-of-term party, seemed to catch the imagination of many candidates, and there were many extremely well-written submissions with a wide range of lexis.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Listening questions 5, 13, 14 and 16iii were demanding.

In the Writing Part 2 — Work option, it is possible that the amount of detail given in the bullet points may have been in excess of need and this will be considered when setting future question papers.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Although most candidates were well-prepared and at the appropriate level, markers identified one or two centres who were entering candidates at an inappropriate level. The Initial Assessment Pack can provide valuable guidance for centres and staff on placement and level.

There are also now a sufficient number of past papers to enable prelims to be constructed and to familiarise teachers and lecturers with the standards required at this level.

Centres should be commended for the very high percentage of candidates achieving grade A. Candidates receiving the highest marks frequently performed much better than Centre estimates. Please note that the statistics that follow are based on pre-appeal data:

Grade	Centre estimate %	Performance %
A	25	42.3
B	32	22.9
C	31.1	23.5
D	5.5	5.6
No award	6.4	5.6

Marking Instructions, as well as past papers, will soon be posted on the SQA website.

Please remind candidates to answer in pen and not pencil.

Reading

A few candidates copied out full sentences, which may or may not include the correct answer. Candidates should be aware that this does not lead to success and should be encouraged to identify only the correct information.

Writing

There are still a few candidates who answered Writing Part 1 — Error Correction, according to the format of the 2007 exam. Centres need to ensure that teaching staff are aware of the format of this question. There are no correct lines, and each one contains an error!

Candidates should be discouraged from simply copying the rubric or bullet points into their answer. They need to re-phrase and also to include support for each point made.

There were many instances of overuse (and incorrect use) of linkers, such as ‘furthermore’, ‘moreover’, ‘in addition’. These were often used simply as indicators of sequencing, when in fact they are not. Centres should avoid over-emphasis on such linkers (unless correctly used).

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2010	736
------------------------------------	-----

Number of resulted entries in 2011	776
------------------------------------	-----

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	37.1%	37.1%	288	70
B	20.6%	57.7%	160	60
C	19.7%	77.4%	153	50
D	4.5%	82.0%	35	45
No award	18.0%	100.0%	140	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, 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.