



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	English
Level(s)	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, performance was similar to last year. Average results for Critical Essay and Folio remained constant; however, candidates did find the Close Reading paper a little more demanding, and this was reflected in the marks and the final Grade Boundary set. The Folio again gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate a wider set of skills in the final assessment. Centres continued to offer candidates effective preparation for this element of the course assessment.

In extended writing (both Folio and Critical Essay), standards of accuracy in candidates' use of language was again acceptable.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Close Reading

- ◆ Question 1: Candidates dealt well with the inference required here.
- ◆ Question 2(b): Candidates were generally successful with the basic analysis required here.
- ◆ Question 7(a): Candidates had some success with the 'in your own words' demand of this question. However, they tended to gain 1 mark rather than 2.
- ◆ Question 10: Candidates were able to find an example of the writer's use of word choice, but found it difficult to make a supporting comment.

Critical Essay

- ◆ Candidates found the paper accessible. They found no difficulty with locating a suitable question. Most questions on the paper were tackled, although very few candidates selected a question from the Language section.
- ◆ Personal engagement with the material discussed was strong this year.
- ◆ Candidates did not seem, on the whole, to be relying on prepared essays.
- ◆ On the whole, candidates were able to use paragraphs to assist with the development of a structure in their essays.
- ◆ Poetry was again the most popular choice. There were fewer responses on Drama texts this year.
- ◆ Candidates were largely able to employ a basic line of thought to communicate meaning.

Folio

- ◆ Most candidates chose to write about an aspect of personal experience, but a sizeable number selected a discursive topic.
- ◆ There was a good level of research evident in discursive essays. (The most popular topics were Scottish independence, and goal-line technology and other football-related topics.)
- ◆ An encouraging number of candidates were able to handle source material effectively.
- ◆ Writing communicated meaning clearly on first reading, and technical accuracy was acceptable.

- ◆ A few pieces were handwritten, but most were word-processed.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Close Reading

- ◆ Question 8: Candidates found this question, on the structure of the writer's argument, very demanding.
- ◆ Question 9: Both sides of the metaphor were not dealt with confidently. Candidates often attempted to answer on one side of the metaphor only.
- ◆ Question 12(a): Candidates were often not able to comment on the writer's use of punctuation.
- ◆ Question 12(b): Often little analysis was attempted here.
- ◆ Question 13(a): Candidates found it challenging to isolate an element from the concluding paragraph, and then to compare it with an element from elsewhere in the passage. There was frequent general reference to 'summing up.'

Critical Essay

- ◆ Some candidates employed a very narrative approach in Critical Essay writing. The consequence of this was that analysis was too thin, and evaluation consisted of a repeat of the words from the stem of the question.
- ◆ Candidates did not always deal with all aspects of the question.
- ◆ In Prose, there were few responses on non-fiction texts.

Folio

- ◆ While technical accuracy was, on the whole, acceptable, some candidates had difficulty with effective sentence construction.
- ◆ When writing about personal experiences, some candidates did not offer enough appropriate reflection.
- ◆ Some candidates did not make sufficient acknowledgement of sources consulted.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

Close Reading

- ◆ Candidates should use their own words when asked to do so. Please note: a 'full gloss' is not usually required; marks are awarded for some attempt to paraphrase.
- ◆ Questions on the ending of a passage usually require candidates to make one reference to an aspect of the ending and another reference to a linked idea/technique elsewhere in the passage.
- ◆ Candidates should revise writers' use of metaphorical/figurative language.
- ◆ Candidates should consider writers' use of punctuation.

Critical Essay

- ◆ Candidates should read all questions from each section so that the most appropriate question can be selected.
- ◆ Candidates should try to avoid over-reliance on a narrative approach when discussing texts.
- ◆ Analysis and evaluation should be strongly present in critical essays.
- ◆ Candidates should work on the use of topic sentences as an aid to the formation of a suitable structure in their essays.
- ◆ Candidates should be reminded to make a clear indication of which question has been selected.

Folio

- ◆ Successful discursive writing should contain opinion and argument. It should not just gather and convey information.
- ◆ A report should be clearly set out as such. There should be a stated remit and appropriate structure. At least two sources should be acknowledged.
- ◆ Personal writing should contain reflective thoughts/ideas. This reflective thinking should be present ideally throughout the piece of writing and not simply tagged on at the end.
- ◆ Sources consulted should be clearly acknowledged.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2012	7783
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	7346
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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	12.7%	12.7%	935	67
B	32.1%	44.8%	2358	55
C	32.8%	77.7%	2412	44
D	10.5%	88.2%	775	38
No award	11.8%	100.0%	866	-

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, SQA therefore 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 Business Manager 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.