



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	English
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

The introduction of the Folio allowed candidates to bring a wider set of skills to their overall external award. Candidates had shown commitment to the task of the Folio piece, which gave them more chance to demonstrate the skills they had developed throughout the course.

There was a slight improvement in performance in the Critical Essay paper, but candidates were less successful, this year, in Close Reading: some candidates did not attempt all questions, and the instruction to 'use own words' was often not adhered to.

In terms of question selection for the Critical Essay paper, the most popular sections were Poetry and Prose. In Poetry, most candidates wrote on MacCaig, Morgan, Heaney, Duffy, or Owen/Sassoon. For Prose, most answers were on short stories, such as *Lamb to the Slaughter*, *On the Sidewalk Bleeding*, *The Pedestrian*, *The Test*, etc. Some candidates answered on novels: *Stone Cold*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Face*, etc. For Drama, the most popular text was probably *Educating Rita*, but some candidates answered on Miller or Shakespeare. Popular Media texts included *Saving Private Ryan*, *Jaws*, *Psycho*. Very few candidates answered on TV Drama.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Close Reading

Markers noted that candidates found the passage relevant and accessible.

Question 1: Candidates were able to make some attempt to answer in their own words.

Question 4: This type of question, relating to structure, is usually one which candidates find challenging; however, it was well done this year. Candidates were required to identify one side of the link (the link back).

Question 6: Almost all candidates understood the thrust of the metaphor. Not all were successful in explaining the effectiveness.

Question 7 (b): This question on word-choice was well handled.

Question 15: Most candidates answered well by quoting percentages.

Critical Essay

Candidates again found the Critical Essay paper accessible. All questions on the paper were tackled, and candidates found no difficulty in finding a question. However, it should be noted that candidates tended to choose the first question in each section.

Most completed essays were of a reasonable length, showed clear engagement, and demonstrated a good understanding of the texts studied throughout the course.

There were some successful essays on challenging texts (eg Shakespeare). There was an increase in the number of responses on Media texts.

Technical accuracy was again acceptable overall: candidates communicated a basic line of thought in their essays which was clear on first reading.

Folio

Most candidates chose to write on discursive topics, or to write about an aspect of personal experience. Again the writing communicated meaning clearly on first reading, and technical accuracy was acceptable.

Candidates engaged well with 'local' topics in discursive writing. A number of candidates submitted a report.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Close Reading

As is usually the case, candidates found difficulty in using their own words, where required. It should be noted that, at this level, only some attempt to gloss is necessary. Many candidates did not demonstrate understanding of the appropriate use of common punctuation marks.

Question 2: Many candidates could not provide a gloss of 'qualified'.

Question 7(a): Most candidates were unable to comment on the use of inverted commas.

Question 9: The use of own words was an issue here, with many candidates lifting words from the passage for their answer.

Question 10: This question presented candidates with the most difficulty as it called for understanding of challenging vocabulary in the word 'detachment'.

Question 16: Providing direct evidence from the text to support answers was challenging for many candidates.

Critical Essay

A significant number of candidates at this level employ a very narrative approach in critical essays. This often means that analysis is thin and evaluation is often a basic paraphrase of the words of the question.

Candidates did not always deal fully with all aspects of the question selected.

There were very few responses on non-fiction texts.

Folio

Some candidates were unable to adhere to the specified upper word-limit.

Some candidates did not sufficiently re-cast sourced material into their own words.

Many candidates did not make proper acknowledgement of sources consulted.

Some candidates appeared to be restricted in their scope/expression by the employment of whole-class tasks.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

Close Reading

Candidates should read the questions carefully and attempt to address the key demands (often in bold). The number of points or the fullness of the answer required is usually indicated by the number of marks available.

Candidates should use their own words when instructed to do so. A 'full gloss' is not always necessary; credit is given for some attempt at a gloss.

Candidates should be prepared to comment on how common punctuation marks are used in different situations.

Critical Essay

Candidates should read all questions from each section so that the most appropriate question can be selected.

Candidates should be reminded to indicate the number of the question attempted.

Candidates should take care to address all demands of the question.

Folio

Candidates should take note of sources consulted during preparation for the writing of discursive essays so that these sources can be properly acknowledged in their final submissions.

Candidates should be careful to re-cast sourced material into their own words.

Candidates could, perhaps, be encouraged to tackle 'local' subjects in their discursive writing. It would seem that increased personal relevance helps to generate a more authentic response.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2010	6,917
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	7,797
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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	14.4%	14.4%	1,125	67
B	29.9%	44.4%	2,335	56
C	33.6%	78.0%	2,619	45
D	9.8%	87.8%	766	39
No award	12.2%	100.0%	952	-

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.