



External Assessment Report 2013

| | |
|------------|----------------------|
| Subject(s) | Geography |
| Level(s) | Intermediate 1 and 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

Comments on the Intermediate 2 examination were generally very positive — it was perceived as a fair test with a broad coverage of the syllabus. Candidate performance was very much in line with last year. The average mark was slightly up, resulting in an increased number of candidates gaining an 'A' award. There was an increase in the overall number of candidates, though there was a continued decrease in the number of S5/6 candidates. This was balanced by a small increase in the number of S1–3 candidates.

For Intermediate 1, no major issues were raised by markers or centres and the exam was generally well received. The overall number of candidates was up slightly from last year and the average mark also increased. The number of candidates gaining an 'A' grade increased, reflecting a significant increase in S3/4 candidates and a corresponding decrease in S5/6 candidates.

Areas in which candidates performed well

At Intermediate 2, candidates in general continue to perform better in question 2 compared to question 1. The following questions were well answered:

- ◆ Question 1b)i) (description of river and valley)
- ◆ Question 1b)ii) (explanation of U-shaped valley formation)
- ◆ Question 1c) (the impact of commercial forestry in an area))
- ◆ Question 2a)ii) (reasons for urban–rural migration)
- ◆ Question 2b) (reasons decreasing birth rate in developing countries))
- ◆ Question 2c) (measures to improve shanty towns)
- ◆ Question 3b)i)ii) (describe changes in global forest cover and explain effects of deforestation)
- ◆ Question 4b) (reasons for water demand in Nigeria)
- ◆ Question 4c) (benefits of a water control project)
- ◆ Question 5b)i) (differences in water quality between two rivers)
- ◆ Question 6b) (effects on development by rapid population growth)
- ◆ Question 6c)i)ii) (causes of a chosen disease and methods of control for malaria or AIDS)
- ◆ Question 7b) (impact of a volcanic eruption)
- ◆ Question 7c) (importance of long and short term aid)

At Intermediate 1, candidates performed well in the following questions:

- ◆ Question 1b)i) (matching grid references to glacial features)
- ◆ Question 1b)ii) (formation of a glacial feature)
- ◆ Question 1c) (map evidence for tourism)
- ◆ Question 1d) (description of river/valley)
- ◆ Question 2 a) (completion of line graph)
- ◆ Question 4b)i) (explain water use in a river basin)

- ◆ Question 6c) (methods to control a chosen disease)
- ◆ Question 7a) (causes of earthquakes)
- ◆ Question 7 b) (impact of earthquakes or volcanoes)
- ◆ Question 7c) (short-term aid after a tropical storm)

Areas which candidates found demanding

At Intermediate 2, candidates found the following questions demanding:

- ◆ Question 2d) (reasons companies locate in Eastern Asia). Answers tended to be very vague, and related more to general industrial location factors for factories in the UK.
- ◆ Question 6a) (development indicators). Many candidates found it difficult **explain** the link between individual indicators and the level of a country's development. Answers were very descriptive.
- ◆ Question 7a) (causes of tropical storms). Explaining the sequence of physical conditions which initiate a tropical storm continues to cause difficulty for many.

At Intermediate 1, candidates found the following questions demanding:

- ◆ Question 1a) (identifying scenic areas on UK map). Candidates are still resorting to guesswork.
- ◆ Question 2b) (changes in the inner city). There is a general lack of case study knowledge, and confusion between the inner city and the CBD.
- ◆ Question 3b). There is continued confusion between the terms 'desertification' and 'deforestation' and a lack of knowledge of anti-desertification measures.
- ◆ Question 6a) (reasons for differences in development). Generally poorly answered.
- ◆ Question 6b) (world distribution of cholera).

Overall, as in previous years, very few candidates attempted question 5.

The most popular options are questions 6 and 7, 3 and 6, or 3 and 7.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The response from the markers was that the overall standard of candidates was very good in both Intermediate 1 and 2, with a significant number gaining full or almost full marks in Intermediate 2. Unlike last year, there were very few issues with illegible writing.

The number of candidates answering **all** of the optional questions seems to be decreasing, although there is still evidence of candidates choosing the wrong options.

A small percentage of candidates gain very few marks and care should be taken to make sure that such candidates are presented at the appropriate level. This should not present problems in Geography as the course structure for Intermediate 1 and 2 is identical.

Centres should continue to be aware that any of the topics from the arrangements documents may be included in the exam. In Intermediate 2, for example, in Physical Landscapes there are seven different land uses, any of which may be referred to in the

examination. In the coastal topic the emphasis is on the impact and management of **different land uses**, and this does not include detailed engineering solutions to reduce coastal erosion. Similarly in the Development and Health topic, there are seven different diseases, any of which may be referred to in relation to their distribution and causes.

Many questions ask the candidates to refer to a specific case study, eg coastal area, city, water management project, earthquake, volcanic eruption etc. Some candidates this year were opening their answer by referring to a specific study (eg volcanic eruption) then writing an answer containing no correct factual information — 'millions died'... etc. Accurate knowledge of a specific case study is required to ensure that the candidate gains maximum marks.

Some candidates are still *describing* when asked to *explain*, and at Intermediate 1 in particular, there is evidence of a lack of knowledge of geographical terminology.

In the Intermediate 2 exam a number of candidates continue to write far too much for answers worth up to 6 marks. Care must be taken to ensure all questions are completed.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2012 | 871 |
|------------------------------------|-----|

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2013 | 909 |
|------------------------------------|-----|

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

| Distribution of Course awards | % | Cum. % | Number of candidates | Lowest mark |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|----------------------|-------------|
| Maximum Mark 60 | | | | |
| A | 25.6% | 25.6% | 233 | 42 |
| B | 21.5% | 47.1% | 195 | 36 |
| C | 21.9% | 69.0% | 199 | 30 |
| D | 8.8% | 77.8% | 80 | 27 |
| No award | 22.2% | 100.0% | 202 | - |

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

| | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Number of resulted entries in 2012 | 3402 |
|------------------------------------|------|

| | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Number of resulted entries in 2013 | 3561 |
|------------------------------------|------|

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 | 36.1% | 36.1% | 1286 | 56 |
| B | 21.8% | 57.9% | 776 | 47 |
| C | 18.6% | 76.5% | 661 | 39 |
| D | 7.5% | 84.0% | 267 | 35 |
| No award | 16.0% | 100.0% | 571 | - |

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.