



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Geology
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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 candidates showed a high understanding of the course. A few candidates gained exceptional marks and would have coped well with Intermediate 2 or possibly Higher Geology.

Problem-solving questions that involve candidates constructing graphs from given data and completing calculations continues to be strength, reflecting the thoroughness of centres in preparing candidates for the exam. Also, candidates have shown detailed knowledge of the Solar System, rivers and rock characteristics, again a reflection of candidates' preparation and enthusiasm for the subject.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Question 1(a) – (d): Most candidates knew how to demonstrate knowledge of the Solar System.

Question 2(a), (b), (c): Most candidates knew how to demonstrate knowledge of layers of the Earth.

Question 5(a): Most candidates knew how to give the correct order of sequence.

Question 5(b), (c): Most candidates knew how to demonstrate knowledge of faults and how rocks are affected.

Question 6(a): Most candidates knew how to name landscape features.

Question 8(a) – (e): Most candidates knew how to give an explanation of the site for a dam, construct a bar graph, calculate the average percentage, and demonstrate knowledge of solving reservoir problems and changing water levels.

Question 12(a): Most candidates knew how to label a diagram showing features of the lower course of a river.

Question 12(b): Most candidates knew how to explain the processes affecting the inside bend of a meander.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Question 6(b), (c): Explaining how features were formed.

Question 9(a): Labelling of Scarp and Vale features.

Question 9(b): Drawing of landscape features.

Question 10(a), (b): Naming physical and biological resources.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres should ensure candidates can clearly explain the formation of landscape features. Their sketching and labelling should be of a high standard. Centres should also ensure that candidates can show a thorough knowledge of physical and biological resources.

Centres could, as in previous years, have presented some candidates at a more demanding level.

Centres are to be praised for their continued commitment to the teaching of Geology. The continued overall high standard of performance reflects the enthusiasm both pupils and staff have shown in teaching and learning in Geology.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	42
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	31
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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 80				
A	48.4%	48.4%	15	56
B	16.1%	64.5%	5	48
C	19.4%	83.9%	6	40
D	6.5%	90.3%	2	36
No award	9.7%	-	3	-

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.