



## External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Geology
Level(s)	Higher

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

All centres had clearly prepared candidates very thoroughly. Many candidates attained exceptional marks in all sections of the paper.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Q 1–2 Most candidates found few difficulties with these questions, which tested minerals and stratigraphy.

Q 3a–3b Most candidates were able to access all marks here, but found the remaining parts of this question more challenging.

Q 6 (viscosity of magma) Most candidates were able to pass this question but part (c) was quite challenging for many.

Section B (Essay style questions) Candidates made a varied choice and nearly all essays were of a very high standard.

Section C (Simulated fieldwork, mapwork and three point problems). Candidates had been very well prepared by centres for this and most performed really well.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

There was nothing significant.

Q 4 (Wet and dry magma) was a more challenging question for a number of candidates.

Q 5 (micrastrer evolution) Only the most able candidates were comfortable with this question.

Q 7 was also a challenging question for over half of the candidates, especially part (a).

# Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

## General

Continue to set aside plenty of time to allow candidates to practise three-point problems and geological mapwork and cross-section interpretation.

Continue to give candidates the opportunity to participate in fieldtrip experiences. Allow candidates time to interpret rock exposures for themselves. Encourage candidates to make detailed written and pictorial records after careful visual observations.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	63
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<b>Number of resulted entries in 2012</b>	17
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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 110				
A	52.9%	52.9%	9	77
B	11.8%	64.7%	2	66
C	23.5%	88.2%	4	55
D	5.9%	94.1%	1	49
No award	5.9%	100.0%	1	-

## 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.