



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>Geology</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 1</b>

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

Candidates produced a very high standard of performance, with an increase in the number of outstanding responses. Again, centres are to be commended for the professional manner in which they prepare candidates for the exam. Entries show a small decrease, but with two new centres and one returning centre increasing their number of candidates. Most candidates are in S5 with a small percentage from S3/S4.

The marks distribution shows S6 candidates producing outstanding responses and an increase in the average score attained by candidates. A higher standard has been attained by candidates than in the previous year. Some candidates, particularly at S6, appear to be capable of attempting the subject at a more demanding level, either at Intermediate 2 or even Higher. A few candidates could have been presented at Access 3.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Questions 1 (a) and (b): testing knowledge of the Solar System.

Question 4 (c): testing processes by which scree is formed.

Question 8: sequencing of events.

Question 9: testing knowledge of construction material and renewable resources.

Question 10: testing sequencing of events.

Question 13 (b): construction of line graph showing sea level change.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

Question 1 (c): calculation of difference in planet size.

Question 5: pairing of ore mineral and metal.

Question 11 (b): Construction of a pie chart showing world oil production.

There was variation between centres in the standard of diagrams, varying from excellent to poorly presented.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

Centres should ensure candidates have a detailed knowledge of ore, minerals and metals. Candidates should be skilled in the presentation of high-quality diagrams. It should be noted that alternative presentation may be more appropriate for some candidates, eg Intermediate 2 or Access 3.

Finally, centres are to be congratulated again on the thoroughness with which they have prepared candidates who continue to enjoy their study of Geology, some of whom have produced outstanding responses. Congratulations to all Geology staff whose enthusiasm has clearly been reflected in candidate performance.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	59
------------------------------------	----

Number of resulted entries in 2011	52
------------------------------------	----

## 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	53.8%	53.8%	28	56
B	19.2%	73.1%	10	48
C	17.3%	90.4%	9	40
D	1.9%	92.3%	1	36
No award	7.7%	100.0%	4	-

## 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, 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.