



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Geology
Level(s)	Intermediate 1 (version 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

Overall the quality of candidate responses was high, showing a sound understanding of the course. Once again centres are to be commended for the professional manner in which they prepare candidates for the exam.

Entries show a significant increase, including one returning centre, but with fewer centres presenting overall. There was an increase in S4 candidates, reflecting the interest in Geology in the early stages. However there were fewer S6 candidates. There is evidence that centres are presenting candidates at a more appropriate level eg Access 3 or Intermediate 2. Overall S4 candidates performed as well as S5/6 candidates, with only a few S4 candidates experiencing difficulty.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Q 1 (a) and (b): Testing knowledge of the Earth in Space.

Q 5 (a) (b) (c) and (d): Recognition of Fossils and knowledge of Rocks and Structure.

Q 9 (b): Testing reasons for sites for a reservoir.

Q 10 (a): Construction of a bar graph showing percentages of oil consumption.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Q 3 (c): Naming processes which form landscapes.

Q 7 (a) and (b) (i) (ii) (iii): Calculation of percentage, amount of metal extracted and value.

Q 11 (d): Explanation of why features remain as high ground.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

Centres should ensure that candidates have the opportunity to practise problem solving and are able to give more detailed explanation on the formation of geological features. Centres are encouraged to use a wide variety of photographic images of landforms.

Finally congratulations to all Geology staff in Scotland, whose enthusiasm has been reflected in the high level of candidate performance. This level of candidate performance also reflects the enjoyment of candidates in their study of Geology.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2011	52
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	81
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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	63.0%	63.0%	51	56
B	18.5%	81.5%	15	48
C	9.9%	91.4%	8	40
D	2.5%	93.8%	2	36
No award	6.2%	100.0%	5	-

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.