



## External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	History
Level(s)	Intermediate 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

The majority of candidates were entered at the correct level. There was a wide range of marks although there were relatively few candidates who attained very weak scores.

There was a slight decline in the mean score for the Extended Response. While many centres are preparing candidates well for this element, there are still some issues which are weak. It was noticeable that there was an increase this year in the number of essays with higher level titles. In many cases it was clear that these issues were too complicated for candidates at Intermediate 2 to handle and analysis marks were often restricted as a result of this.

Once more, S4 candidates performed significantly better than those in S5 or S6.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Extended response

Most candidates were successful and produced a good quantity of knowledge and understanding. Markers indicated that analysis had improved over recent years. Where candidates had well-considered questions, they were able to argue and come to an appropriate conclusion. There was again a use of 'isolated factor' issues and this encouraged an analytical approach to the response.

### Examination

Markers commented that the eight-mark essay saw most candidates producing introductions and conclusions, and many providing good KU. Most candidates produced extremely good responses to the O3 (comparison) questions. Candidates did well in the O2 (explain) questions, with many integrating source evidence with appropriate recall. A number of candidates answered the no-source 'describe' questions extremely well.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

### Extended response

There are a number of cases where candidates are attempting issues that are too complicated for them. Sometimes these are isolated factor questions derived from previous Higher questions which these candidates find too complicated to handle. In these situations a more straightforward 'explain why' question may be more appropriate for the candidate.

It is still possible to find inappropriate essay titles such as 'Lack of success in the women's suffrage movement to gain their aim by 1914'. Those preparing candidates are reminded that they should be pro-actively discussing essay issues with candidates.

Questions involving an assessment of Martin Luther King as the most important person in the civil rights movement were poorly tackled on the whole. Many of these essays tended to turn into descriptions of the events King was connected with, frequently with no mention of King himself.

Markers once again noted that there appears to be an increase in conclusions simply mirroring the introduction word-for-word rather than summarising and answering the question posed.

## **Examination**

In the eight-mark essay a number of candidates misread or misconstrued the question, eg:

- ◆ Question 6 'Explain why many Scots who emigrated became successful in their new homelands' was often taken by candidates to mean 'why did Scots emigrate?'
- ◆ Question 7 'Explain why the Second World War changed attitudes towards government involvement in the welfare of its people' was taken as an invitation to write about the Labour reforms post-1945. Candidates also tended to write conclusions that were exactly the same as their introductions.

Although there is evidence of some improvement in the O3 (how useful) questions, there is still considerable evidence that this is by far the weakest skill element. Candidates still frequently attempted to justify origin and authorship of the source by simply copying the rubric of the source and thus gained no marks for this. Secondary sources in particular were not well handled. For purpose, if it was even attempted, they often either repeated the question or provided content from the source.

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

For the assistance of centres, advice provided in previous years is again provided below.

### **Extended Response**

Centres should use the latest version of the published marking criteria to share with candidates what is required to improve introductions and conclusions and how to develop the quality of analysis in their essays.

As in previous years, centres should:

- ◆ Ensure that the issue chosen lies within the Intermediate 2 Arrangements. This is especially important for candidates who move from Higher to Intermediate 2 levels.
- ◆ Ensure that issues are appropriate for candidates. For many, this will involve phrasing the question as an isolated factor, or using 'how important' or 'how successful' rather than 'why'. For others, however, the use of a 'why' question might be preferable.
- ◆ Centres must be pro-active in discussing the issue with candidates to ensure that the issue will not lead to a narrative response.
- ◆ Introductions should provide both context and factors to be discussed and conclusions should summarise and make a judgement.

Centres should ensure that both the plan sheet and the flyleaf are completed according to the regulations, and in particular that the actual number of words used in the plan should be noted on the flyleaf. Penalties are applied for plans that are over 150 words.

### **Examination**

To obtain full marks in the eight-mark essay, candidates must refer to context as well as factors in the introduction and provide a judgement and summary in the conclusion.

In the 'how useful' questions candidates must demonstrate their ability to evaluate the source, eg

- a) Identify the author and why that makes it useful, rather than merely copying the rubric of the source.
- b) Identify the source as primary or secondary and the particular time it comes from, eg 'from May 1963 when the March on Birmingham took place', or 'written by a modern historian writing several centuries after the slave trade'.
- c) Use authorship, date and target audience to provide a possible purpose for why the source was written.
- d) State limitation by identifying a point not contained in the source that is relevant to the question asked.

In O2 'explain' questions, candidates must explain the cause or effect by interpreting the source rather than copying whole sentences from the sources.

**Statistical information: update on Courses  
Intermediate 2**

<b>Number of resulted entries in 2012</b>	5582
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<b>Number of resulted entries in 2013</b>	5601
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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 70				
A	34.1%	34.1%	1911	49
B	27.9%	62.0%	1564	41
C	19.4%	81.4%	1087	34
D	7.7%	89.2%	433	30
No award	10.8%	100.0%	606	-

## 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.