



## External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	History
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

The majority of candidates appeared to have been entered at the correct level. There were relatively few very able candidates. There were also few very weak candidates.

Markers noted that the standard of candidates was similar to previous years. They also commented that copying of sources was much reduced compared to previous years, and it is good to see centres taking note of this.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates did well in selecting information from sources. Most candidates now introduce their answers well by using the question as a stem. They are also becoming more adept at recognising — and avoiding — distracters.

There was evidence of improvement in the ‘How useful is the source’ questions, with candidates often gaining marks for origin and content as well as some providing information regarding authorship. Few still, however, attempt purpose or content omission.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

In the ‘How useful’ question, few candidates attempt to comment on purpose or content omission. Secondary sources are often evaluated poorly, with candidates assuming a secondary source is not useful. There was some improvement in dealing with these sources this year.

Candidates rely heavily on the sources provided, and there is a marked absence of recalled evidence used in answers.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

While there has been improvement in these areas, the following information remains useful to centres as in recent years. Centres should continue to give attention to the following:

### ‘How useful’ questions

In ‘How useful’ questions, candidates do not gain marks for simply copying the rubric or question. They must also show evaluation:

- ◆ identify author and explain why she is good or weak as a source
- ◆ identify as primary from the time or secondary source written much later
- ◆ for content, they only need to identify one major point, they do not have to rehearse the entire source
- ◆ comment on the possible purpose of the source

- ◆ identify a relevant piece of information which is not included in the source and therefore limits its value

## **Copying**

Copying an entire source, complete with distracters, gains zero marks.

Where the source is copied even without the distracters (even if the order of sentences is transposed — ‘shuffled copying’), or additional phrases such as ‘the source says’, ‘the source also says’ have been included, the maximum mark for information from the source is one.

While it is preferable that candidates show understanding by putting the points in their own words, it is recognised that many candidates find this difficult. It is therefore acceptable that candidates quote direct phrases from the source — but not entire sentences.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	1923
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	670
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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 45				
A	11.0%	11.0%	74	31
B	36.0%	47.0%	241	25
C	28.5%	75.5%	191	20
D	10.3%	85.8%	69	17
No award	14.2%	-	95	-

## 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.