



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	History
Level	Intermediate 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

There was an encouraging improvement in the quality of candidates this year. The majority of candidates appeared to be entered at the correct level. Only a small percentage of candidates achieved an upper A, which suggests that the best candidates were entered for Intermediate 2. At the other end of the scale, there were relatively few very weak candidates.

While markers continued to comment that copying of the sources remained a problem, there was a welcome reduction in the amount of this.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Most candidates attempted three contexts and answered all four questions in each one. Most candidates handled the 'describe' and 'explain' questions well.

Areas which candidates found demanding

There was a general absence of recall in 'describe' and 'explain' questions.

For the majority of candidates, the Outcome 3 'how useful' question remained the most challenging part of the examination, though markers commented that there appeared to be an improvement, with fewer candidates merely commenting only on source content. In some instances, candidates also insisted on answering the question they wanted to be asked rather than the one which was asked. Some candidates confused Liberal and Labour government acts in the Cradle to the Grave Unit.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

As has been emphasised in previous years, centres should give attention to the following:

1. 'How useful' questions

In 'how useful' questions, candidates do not gain marks for simply copying the rubric or question, they must also show evaluation. The response should:

- ◆ Identify the author and explain why he is good or weak as a source
- ◆ Identify the source as primary from the time, or secondary, 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 that is not included in the source and therefore limits its value.

2. Copying

Centres are reminded that copying of an entire source, complete with distracters, gains no 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’ or ‘the source also says’ have been included, the maximum mark for information from the source is 1 mark.

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.

3. Answering the set questions

Centres should ensure that candidates read the questions set carefully.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2010	1,773
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	1,869
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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	19.8%	19.8%	370	31
B	34.7%	54.5%	648	25
C	25.0%	79.5%	468	20
D	8.9%	88.4%	167	17
No award	11.6%	100.0%	216	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, 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.