



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	History
Level	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

There was an encouraging improvement in both the Extended Response and the examination this year. Markers commented that candidates performed well overall and that they were entered at the correct level. There was a slight improvement in performance in the Extended Response, where markers commented that candidates were performing consistently well with many scoring full marks for KU.

S4 candidates continue to perform better than those in S5 and S6.

Markers highlighted that the method of marking the Extended Response by using the agreed criteria worked well.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Extended Response

Most candidates were successful and produced a good quantity of knowledge and understanding. Where they had considered questions well they were able to argue and come to an appropriate conclusion. Many markers commented on greater use of 'isolated factor' issues than in previous years, and this encouraged an analytical approach to the response.

Examination

Most candidates produced extremely good responses to the O3 comparison questions. Most candidates did well in the O2 'explain' questions, 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 still a few candidates who produce an Extended Response on issues outwith the Intermediate 2 Arrangements, including one on the causes of the First World War. It is inevitable that such essays will gain no marks.

Too many candidates still have titles that lead to narrative answers with little or no analysis of the issue. Examples of this are:

- ◆ Describe British foreign policy in the 1930s.
- ◆ Was the Middle Passage bad for slaves?

The majority of such issues lead to candidates gaining few marks for argument/analysis.

On occasions there are titles that are simply unhelpful to candidates, such as:

- ◆ How did Wallace's life affect his death?
- ◆ Explain middle passage, Britain's leading role, scale of operation, brutality on an unbelievable scale.
- ◆ The History of Scottish Football.

At the other extreme, there are a number of cases where candidates are attempting issues that are too complicated for them. Sometimes these are double questions or isolated factor 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. Centres should be pro-active in discussing issues with candidates.

Candidates tended to produce introductions which focus on either suggesting factors to be discussed or on the context of the question. Few developed any line of argument. In conclusions, many candidates did not go beyond a brief summary.

Markers commented that there was an increased use of quotations by candidates but that there were many instances where these were inappropriate or not well used to support and comment on the stated evidence. It is not essential for candidates to quote from historical sources to gain full marks.

Examination

In the 8-mark essay, a number of candidates misread or misconstrued the question, eg explaining why life was difficult for many Irish immigrants to Scotland being interpreted as why life was difficult for people in Ireland.

Some candidates misinterpreted the 'describe' question, especially in the contexts on Wallace and Bruce (candidates frequently wanted to tell the whole story of the Wars of Independence), Immigrants and Exiles (the question was often interpreted as why the Scots contributed to their new country), and Cradle to Grave (candidates struggled with the meaning of limitations).

While there was a reduction in candidates simply copying the source in the O2 'explain' question rather than using the source to provide an explanation in their own words, there was still evidence of this occurring. Centres are reminded that copying will be penalised.

Although there is evidence of some improvement in the O3 'how useful' questions, there is still considerable evidence that this is the weakest skill element. Candidates 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. For purpose, they often either repeated the question or provided content from the source.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Extended Response

Centres should use 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.** Centres should also ensure that they follow Intermediate 2 regulations for plans and time for the write-up session when candidates have moved from Higher.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Be pro-active in discussing the issue with candidates to ensure that it will not lead to a narrative response.
- ◆ Stress to candidates that introductions should provide both context and factors to be discussed, and that conclusions should summarise and make a judgement.
- ◆ Ensure that both the plan sheet and the flyleaf are completed according to the regulations.

Examination

To obtain full marks in the 8 mark essay, candidates must refer to context as well as factors in the introduction, and must provide a judgement and summary in the conclusion.

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

- ◆ Identify the author and why that makes it useful, rather than merely copying the rubric of the source.
- ◆ Identify the source as primary or secondary and the particular time it comes from.
- ◆ Use authorship, date and target audience to provide a possible purpose for why the source was written.
- ◆ 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 source.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2010	5,243
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	5,208
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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	26.3%	26.3%	1,368	49
B	28.5%	54.8%	1,484	41
C	22.7%	77.5%	1,183	34
D	8.6%	86.1%	447	30
No award	13.9%	100.0%	726	-

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.