



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Managing Environmental Resources
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

The paper was thought to be topical and to cover the work outlined in the National Course Specification document. It included environmental issues associated with a caravan park, vehicle fuel and global warming, ecological studies set in a pond ecosystem and moorland food web, and land use issues of a working forest, croft and smokehouse.

All of the questions were of a similar standard to previous years and the overall marks for the paper ranged from 13 to 78 out of 80. The majority of candidates coped well with the paper and the quality of answers throughout the paper was high. Discriminating questions functioned properly and very few candidates did not complete the paper.

The increase in the number of presenting centres and the number of candidates was most pleasing. There was evidence of some excellent candidates being presented in S3/S4. There was also evidence, however, that some candidates from new centres were being presented at too high a level.

Questions which require specific factual information from the National Course Specification content are still proving to be the most difficult.

Candidates showed, in certain topical issues, a very positive attitude to and understanding of environmental issues. Data handling questions are still the most accessible to candidates.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates can extract information from a variety of sources and understand the different types of environment. There has been continued improvement in the use of a biological key.

Question 1: candidates performed well in all parts of Question 1. This was a successful settling-in question with both Knowledge and Understanding and Problem Solving.

Questions 3 (a)(ii), (b)(i), (c)(ii) and (c)(iii) (disadvantage): the Problem Solving aspects of making a choice and backing it with a reason, offering practical suggestions and giving a disadvantage of a working method, were well answered by the vast majority of candidates.

Questions 4 (a)(i) and (c)(i) : candidates understood the meaning of the term 'renewable resource' and could back up their choice with a suitable reason.

Question 5 (b): most of Question 5 was well answered, in particular the products from domesticated animals.

Question 6 (c)(ii): most candidates understood the concept of promoting consumerism.

Questions 7 (b)(i) and (b)(ii): candidates could extract information from the table.

Questions 7 (d)(i) and (d)(ii) : most scored high marks in the bumble bee key.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Candidates found it difficult to give named examples in some questions on the knowledge-based parts of the Course. Some also had difficulty with extended writing to describe how to use a piece of equipment.

Question 2 (b)(ii): giving an example of an endangered plant proved very demanding.

Questions 3 (b)(iii) and (c)(i): candidates had difficulty naming a piece of national legislation and giving an example of an organisation at local level.

Questions 4 (a)(ii), (c)(ii), (d)(ii) and (iii): giving the link to acid rain, calculating the cost of a journey, naming an international initiative and the type of radiation all proved difficult for candidates. Question 4 proved to be the most demanding question overall.

Questions 6 (a)(ii) and (b): candidates do not understand the term 'physical requirement' and only a few could name SEPA.

Question 7 (c): this part of the question proved the most demanding, as candidates were not able to name an incentive scheme. An incentive scheme could not be named.

Question 8 (d): candidates had difficulty describing how to use a piece of collecting equipment.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

The most recent SQA Arrangements document for Managing Environmental Resources specifies areas of knowledge and names examples which the candidate should know for the external exam. However, the nature of the subject allows for many correct alternative examples.

Candidates should know one example of an organisation at local, national and international levels.

Candidates should know one example of an initiative at local, national and international levels.

Candidates should know one example of a piece of legislation at local, national and international levels.

A table with three columns for the different levels and three rows for the three types — organisation, initiative and legislation — which gives nine boxes to be completed is perhaps a helpful way to summarise this information for candidates to learn.

If there is a named example in any part of the contents section, then it can be asked about in the external examination. For example, this year, candidates had difficulty with the Countryside Premium Scheme, which is named in Unit 3, *Land Use*.

It is obvious that most centres prepare their candidates very well in graph or chart completion. Please remember that graphs or charts should be completed in pencil.

Lines in a pie chart must meet in the centre and should be drawn with a ruler.

Bars in a bar chart must be of the same width, daylight must not be seen between where the candidate has drawn the line and where it should be drawn, and all the appropriate information in the headings of the table should be presented on the axes.

Bars need not be shaded in, as long as the key can be interpreted correctly. Candidates are strongly advised not to hurriedly shade in bars at the end of their answer as this can result in the loss of a mark when the shading goes above the appropriate line.

Past paper practice is an excellent method of boosting a candidate's grade. There are past papers with marking schemes available on SQA's website. These are extremely useful in that they provide correct definitions and exemplification.

The space given after a question indicates what type of answer is expected. A short line indicates a one-word answer, whereas a longer line indicates that a longer answer is required.

Candidates should be advised to read the question carefully. If the question states 'from the diagram...', then the answer is expected to come from that diagram in the Question Paper and not from the candidate's Course work.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	79
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	135
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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	22.2%	22.2%	30	56
B	23.0%	45.2%	31	48
C	28.1%	73.3%	38	40
D	4.4%	77.8%	6	36
No award	22.2%	100.0%	30	-

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, 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.