



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Managing Environmental Resources
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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 paper performed as expected with all questions being accessible by at least one candidate and the more challenging questions proven to be so. The majority of candidates found the biological questions based on the ecosystems unit the most difficult, along with those requiring some legal knowledge.

There was evidence of bi-level teaching, where Intermediate 2 candidates were at a disadvantage because there was not a study of the local area equivalent at Higher level. Mature candidates scored highly in the extended writing question

Areas in which candidates performed well

- ◆ The first question proved a good settling-in question with school candidates suggesting that there was security to prevent break-ins, whereas college candidates thought that security prevented employees from stealing. The calculation was well answered.
- ◆ In question 2, as always, the reduction of personal energy use was well answered.
- ◆ In question 3, most candidates gained 2 marks from drawing a pyramid of numbers and knew the definition of habitat and parasite in question 4.
- ◆ Problem solving was well done in questions 5 and 6 with grid references understood in Question 7.
- ◆ In section 2, more able candidates chose option B and scored highly. Mature college candidates chose option C, the local area and scored highly in this question.

Areas which candidates found demanding

- ◆ In question 1, less able candidates included the word caramel in the photosynthesis word equation.
- ◆ In question 2, part (b) some candidates answered with reference to wind farms on land, forgetting that the question referred to marine current turbines.
- ◆ Less able candidates found it difficult to describe a method (b), give reasons a (ii), (v) and give a clear difference in d(ii) of question 3.
- ◆ Obtaining the second mark in the explanation of part (e), question 4 was difficult and naming one conservation plan proved to be really difficult for the majority of candidates.
- ◆ As always, the practical investigation question 6 proved difficult in the areas of justification, a (ii), and reliability, a (iii). The meaning of geology, b (ii) and topography d (ii) seemed to evade some candidates and as a result they did not score in these questions.
- ◆ Most candidates chose option A in Section 2. However, very few could describe any energy efficient schemes.

Most centres had trained their candidates well and should be congratulated on their success.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	57
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	30
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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 - 100				
A	10.0%	10.0%	3	70
B	20.0%	30.0%	6	60
C	50.0%	80.0%	15	50
D	0.0%	80.0%	0	45
No award	20.0%	-	6	-

All assessments on standard, therefore no adjustments were made to the grade boundaries.

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.