



Principal Assessor Report 2007

Assessment Panel:

Geography

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
Included in this report**

Intermediate Geography 1 and 2

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

There was a significant increase in the number of candidates at both levels. Overall performance of candidates at Intermediate 2 was highly satisfactory. Marks obtained covered the full range and a number of candidates scored very high marks. However there were a significant number of candidates at the lower end of the marks range who may have benefited by being presented at another level. Performance at Intermediate 1 was less satisfactory. Fewer candidates achieved marks at the upper end of the range.

There may be a tendency to believe that Intermediate 1 Geography more closely mirrors Foundation level rather than General level. This is not the case. Candidates at this level are expected to provide extended written answers to most questions as in General level papers. A lack of communication skills may prove a barrier to many candidates presented for Intermediate 1 achieving high marks and grades.

In section 2 of the examination at both levels the vast majority of candidates attempted questions 6 (Development and Health) and 7 (Environmental Hazards).

The number of candidates presented in S4 seemed to have increased significantly from last year. This could offer some explanation as to the quality of performance of Intermediate 2 candidates. A large number would appear to be very able candidates as opposed to those seeking to improve on their S4 Standard Grade performance.

Areas in which candidates performed well

At Intermediate 2 candidates performed well in the following questions. Question 1d (Benefits and problems of Tourism); Question 2ai (Population trends); Question 2e (Industrial location); Question 6ci and ii (Methods used to control disease and their effectiveness); Question 7bi ii iii (Effects of an earthquake, role of aid agencies and their effectiveness).

At Intermediate 1 candidates performed well in the following questions: Questions 1a and 1b (Glacial features and their formation); 1e (Coastal features); Question 2ai (Population growth model); Question 2c (Industrial location); Question 2d (Completion of bar chart); Question 6 – all sections (Development and Health); Question 7a (Causes of a volcanic eruption).

Areas which candidates found demanding

At Intermediate 2 candidates found the following questions demanding:

Question 1d (Conflict between land uses and aims of national park). Candidates may have found the amount of data difficult to assess in the resource provided. Also many candidates misread the questions and gave an answer on conflicts between selected land uses given in the resource.

Question 2c (Changes in city centre shopping areas). Many candidates referred to transport changes eg bus lanes, restrictions on car access in Paris etc.. Many displayed a distinct lack of knowledge of this topic.

Question 2d (European Agricultural Policies). Many candidates did not understand the terms given in the resource apart from 'Animal health inspections'.

Questions 3, 4 and 5. Answers often lacked detailed knowledge of the topics within these questions.

Question 7a (Explanation of the distribution of tropical storms). Many candidates relied on information provided in the diagram for their answers.

At Intermediate 1 candidates found the following questions demanding:

Question 1c (water storage areas on the map). Many candidates misunderstood the question.
Question 1d (Slate Quarry). Candidates misread the question.
Question 2aii (effects of population increase). Candidates lacked knowledge of the topic .
Similarly Question 2b (Inner city changes). Many candidates mistook the inner city for other areas of a city.
Question 2d (Rice yields). Most candidates failed to realise that this question referred to the Green Revolution
The impact of this was considered when grade boundaries were set.
As in Intermediate 2 the few candidates who attempted Questions 3, 4 and 5 produced weak answers.
Question 7b and 7c (Methods of predicting tropical storms and their effectiveness). Lack of knowledge of the topic was the main problem.

At Intermediate 1 where extended responses were required answers were often very weak. Lack of knowledge and poor writing skills were major barriers to high achievement at this level.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres should give serious consideration to the appropriateness of the level of presentation of a number of Intermediate 2 candidates. There is the possibility that a number of candidates who failed to secure a pass at this level may well have achieved quite a high grade at the lower level.

It is worth remembering that Intermediate 1 is closely benchmarked against Standard Grade General level and not Foundation level. Questions are set and answers are marked on this basis.

Straight lifting of data from given resources will limit the number marks which can be obtained.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2006	513
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Number of resulted entries in 2007	659
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Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2006	1,894
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Number of resulted entries in 2007	2,590
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Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Intermediate 1

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 60	-	-	-	-
A	8.2	8.2	54	41
B	18.8	27.0	124	34
C	26.7	53.7	176	27
D	17.6	71.3	116	23
No award	28.7	100.0	189	-

Intermediate 2

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 80	-	-	-	-
A	27.2	27.2	705	52
B	22.6	49.8	586	43
C	21.4	71.2	554	35
D	8.7	80.0	226	31
No award	20.0	100.0	519	-

General commentary on passmarks and grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create mark schemes which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum 50% of the available marks (notional passmark) and a very well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70%, it is almost impossible to get the standard absolutely on target every year, in every subject and level
- Each year we therefore hold a passmark meeting for each subject at each level where we bring together all the information available (statistical and judgmental). 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 senior management team at SQA
- We adjust the passmark downwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly more demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- We adjust the passmark upwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly less demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- Where the standard appears to be very similar to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries
- 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 are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. And just because SQA has altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry 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
- Our main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.