

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

Geography

Qualification area

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

Standard Grade – Credit : General : Foundation

Statistical information: update

Resulted entries in 2003 (final)	21,319
(Pass mark stage)	20,996

Resulted entries in 2004 (pre appeal)	19,822
(Pass mark stage)	19,557

General comments re entry numbers

In 2002 a total of 21,575 were entered for this level but the 2004 figure is higher than that for 2001. A small number of centres presented candidates at Intermediate 1 and 2 instead of Standard Grade.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Standard Grade			
Assessable Element –	Knowledge and Understanding		
Grade	Maximum Mark	Minimum Mark for Grade	% Mark
1	32	24	75
2		16	50
3	28	16	57
4		12	43
5	24	14	58
6		11	46
Standard Grade			
Assessable Element –	Enquiry Skills		
Grade	Maximum Mark	Minimum Mark for Grade	% Mark
1	48	33	69
2		23	48
3	42	22	52
4		17	40
5	36	23	64
6		15	42

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

In Knowledge and Understanding (KU) at Credit level the grade boundaries were lower than in 2003 and 2002 and were the same as teacher estimates. Although the boundary at General level 3 was the same as the estimates, at grade 4 it was one lower. They were lower than for 2003 but consistent with 2002. At Foundation level the grade boundary for a 5 was also one mark lower but for grade 6 it was the same. These boundaries were lower than 2003 and 2002.

In ES the Credit level grade boundaries were 69% and 48%. These are close to the a priori boundaries (70% and 50%). These were consistent with the two previous years. At General level the grade boundary was lowered to compensate for a specific difficulty in one of the questions which was identified by the marking and examining team. The grade boundaries for Foundation level were lower than in previous years.

Overall, the setting and vetting teams go to strenuous efforts to ensure the papers are consistent from year to year in terms of their appropriateness of content, accessibility to candidates and level of difficulty.

Comments on candidate performance

Statistics (pre appeal)

Overall			
Grade	No. of Candidates	Percentage of Candidates	Cumulative percentage
1	4114	20.8	20.8
2	5275	26.6	47.4
3	4046	20.4	67.8
4	2559	12.9	80.7
5	1843	9.3	90.0
6	1517	7.7	97.7
7	456	2.3	100.0

General comments

N.B. When interpreting comparison with 2003 it should be borne in mind that the data used in 2003 was selected from an earlier stage in procedures and is not, therefore, directly comparable.

Candidates generally performed well in both elements and at all levels. There was an increase in the percentage of candidates achieving Credit grades in both elements from 2003, and performance at this level was satisfactory. There was a high correlation of performance between Credit and General level and no evidence of candidates performing better at the higher level. This was also true of General and Foundation performance. In effect this indicates that the examinations were set at the appropriate levels of difficulty and that candidates had been presented at the appropriate levels by their centres.

According to markers' reports candidates maintained the high level of performance of previous years in their responses to the Ordnance Survey questions at all three levels. The improvement in performance in both Gathering and Processing questions at all levels was also noted. However many candidates still have difficulty with providing appropriate answers to the justification of the use of Processing techniques. Many candidates repeated the same justifications for different techniques for which they received no additional credit.

The standard of written English at Credit / General level continues to improve. Unfortunately this is not the case with General / Foundation candidates. Many candidates at this level struggle to provide extended written answers at General level and are far more comfortable with answering short-answer/ multiple choice types of questions which featured in the Foundation paper. Poor grammar, spelling, punctuation and quality of writing are still quite evident among a significant number of candidates.

Candidates continue to make good use of resource material provided in questions reflecting good preparation in exam technique by centres. The practice of 'lifting' material from sources without further elaboration was less evident this year especially in General/ Credit candidates.

Unfortunately there was evidence that a large number of candidates failed to properly read questions and gave answers based largely on description when the question asked for explanation. This is a perennial problem and is probably due more to the stress of the examination rather than the preparation process.

The setting team continued the practice of trying to set mainstream topics in the papers whilst maintaining the balance of including topical questions such as the question in the Credit paper on the new additions to the European Union. This question was very similar to questions set in previous papers on the advantages/disadvantages of membership of the EU, albeit it was set within the context of the changes to membership as from May 2004.

The efforts of the examination team to maintain the consistency of the papers, the balance between the elements and the EGRCs etc. was recognised and appreciated by senior staff at SQA during the pass mark meeting.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

In Knowledge and Understanding the areas in which candidates performed best were as follows :

At Credit level, candidates performed well in :

Question 1a (identifying the CBD) ; Question 2a (explaining the formation of glacial features) Question 6 (location of industry) ; Question 7b (advantages and disadvantages of migrants to Britain)

Question 9 (type of suitable aid – especially if short term aid had been selected). Many candidates achieved almost full marks for these questions.

Responses to Questions 1b; 1d ; 3 ; 4 ; 5a ; 7 ; 8 and 9 were all above average but not quite as good as those noted above. A large number of candidates were able to achieve at least half marks in these questions.

At General level, questions which had the best response included :

Questions 1a and 1b (matching physical features to grid references and the cross-section)

; Question 1d (if tourist resort was selected) ; Question 2 (waterfall) : Question 4a and 4b (ERF climate and deforestation) ; Question 5 (influence of relief and climate on farming) ; Question 6b (dockland improvements)

; Question 9 (sugar production EU/ Mozambique).

Questions which had a good response included :

Questions 1c ; 1f ; 3 ; 7a ; 8a with a significant number of candidates able to achieve at least half marks.

At Foundation level, the best responses were to the following :

Questions 1a ; 1b ; 1c ; 1d ; 1e (OS questions) ; Question 2a and 2b (Corrie) ; Question 4 b (climate)

Question 6a and 6b (Settlement and gathering techniques) ; Question 7a and 7b (economic developments in Spain).

Questions which met with a reasonable response included :

Questions 1h ; 3a and b ; 5a and b ; 9a and 9c.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

At Credit level, candidates had most difficulty with :

Question 1f (effect of physical landscape features on land use) ; Question 5b (candidates found difficulty in giving reasons for the choice of Processing techniques) ;

A number of candidates misread certain questions such as Question 3 and gave detailed descriptions of the weather rather than explain the changes and subsequently lost marks. Similarly in Question 4 many candidates referred to ‘stopping’ – testing, leaks, fish farms etc. which was basically the same measure and therefore would not be credited more than once.

At General level the questions which caused most difficulty included :

Question 1e (candidates had difficulty understanding the question and could not relate ‘conflict’ to the aims of national parks. This included a significant number of Credit candidates.) ; Question 6a (candidates could identify techniques but not provide suitable justifications) ; Question 7 (same situation as with 6a) ; Question 8b (candidates were unsure as to the problems which they should have discussed e.g. large numbers of children to be cared for/ need for pensions, retirement homes etc. Answers tended to discuss overpopulation and under population.)

At Foundation level problem questions included :

Question 1g and 1i (candidates had difficulty in writing extended answers) ; Question 4a (many candidates missed this question) ; Question 8 (lack of knowledge of types of farming) ; Question 9c (there was evidence

that the wording of the question in asking about 'decrease' confused many candidates).

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

As in previous years, a significant number of candidates lost marks by failing to read the instructions in the stem of questions properly. Ignoring the instruction to 'explain' rather than 'describe' cost some candidates marks. In Question 3 at Credit Level for example candidates could lose up to 4 marks by misreading the instruction.

Similarly by repeating answers already given in responses e.g. at Credit level Question 4 and in the answers to Gathering and Processing questions when explaining 'choice of techniques' candidates also lose marks for repetition.

Centres should note that providing a grid reference in Ordnance Survey questions will normally achieve a maximum of one mark. However, this should not deter candidates from giving more than one grid reference since some of those provided may not be appropriate or accurate.

General candidates often run out of time by writing answers which are too long. This is especially true of good Credit level candidates who tend to write Credit level answers to General questions. Exam practice in this area would benefit a large number of candidates.