

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Geology Assessment Panel

Qualification area

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

Geology Intermediate 1

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002	49
Pre appeal	49

Number of entries in 2003	54
Pre appeal	54

General comments re entry numbers

Entry numbers show a slight upward trend on last year (+5)
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Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

Maximum Mark = 80

Grade boundaries expressed as a % of Maximum Mark Shown

Year	Upper A	A	B	C
2003	68 (85%)	56 (70%)	48 (60%)	40 (50%)

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 syllabuses evolve and change

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Boundaries are set at exactly the same level as previous years.

The overall standard of the paper was consistent with previous years and the style of the paper, although slightly altered, was still consistent with previous papers.

Alterations were made to simplify the wording of questions in order to make them more accessible for poorer candidates.

The geological content and demand on candidates' knowledge and evaluating skills was unchanged.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The vast majority of candidates demonstrated a wide-ranging spread of knowledge. This indicates that all presenting centres had taught the course thoroughly.

Most candidates performed very well in questions 1, 2, 10, 12, 16, 19 and 20. This was as expected, as these questions were designed to test the lower ability end of Int 1. It was in these questions that most candidates tended to obtain full marks.

Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 18, 21 and 22 were set at a higher level of difficulty than those mentioned above, and not surprisingly, fewer candidates obtained full marks although most still performed well.

Questions 15 and 17 were the most demanding questions in the exam, and only the more able candidates performed well in these.

Most candidates appear to have been presented at the appropriate level as they coped well with the majority of questions, and very few displayed any misinterpretation of the questions set.

Clearly, the vast majority of candidates are in year 5 or year 6 of secondary school. It is not therefore surprising that most were coping comfortably with the majority of questions set. Some candidates might have coped with Int 2 Geology.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Taking into account the comments above, more candidates performed well in questions 6, 11 and 15 than I had expected.

Question 17 was set as a demanding question, but most candidates managed to obtain more than half marks here.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Question 4 was poorly answered by a majority of candidates. Many candidates described the differences in appearance of the rocks, but failed to explain why the differences occurred.

A number of candidates showed a lack of understanding of contact metamorphism by suggesting that the mineralogical and textural differences between the rocks was due to the length of time the rocks cooled, rather than the varying amount of heat each zone received from the igneous intrusion.

A slightly larger number of candidates than I would have anticipated had difficulty with question 14.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

All centres that presented for Int 1 this year are to be congratulated on the thorough understanding of the course content displayed by the candidates.

All teachers at the centres concerned are to be congratulated on the very high standard displayed by the candidates. It was clear that all centres had taught the course in a most professional and thorough manner. Only two common areas of weakness occurred this year.

- The formation of dalmation coastlines
- The effects on mudstone of contact metamorphism.