

Principal Assessor Report 2005

Assessment Panel:

Geography

Qualification area

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

Geography Intermediate 1 and 2 New

Statistical information: update

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2004	-
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	203
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Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2004	-
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	855
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General comments re resulted entry numbers

Entry numbers for the new syllabus examinations were very encouraging for the first year of the new exams. Presumably these numbers will increase significantly in the 2006 diet when this examination replaces the old syllabus examination.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Intermediate 1

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 60	-	-	-	-
A	15.8	15.8	32	43
B	20.2	36.0	41	36
C	26.6	62.6	54	29
D	12.8	75.4	26	25
No award	24.6	100.0	50	-

Intermediate 2

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 80	-	-	-	-
A	21.2	21.2	181	52
B	20.5	41.6	175	44
C	27.7	69.4	237	36
D	11.5	80.8	98	32
No award	19.2	100.0	164	-

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.

Comments on any significant changes in distribution of awards/grade boundaries

Every effort was made by the setting team to maintain the same level of difficulty of questions throughout both levels to ensure consistency between the old and new examinations. This was noted at the vetting procedures. To maintain the overall level of demand, and to take account of the increase in the number of marks available from 60 to 80, the grade boundaries for Intermediate 2 were eased slightly from the a priori percentages to reflect this difference. Nevertheless given the considerable changes to the structure and content of the syllabus it is difficult to make direct comparisons in terms of grade boundaries between the old and new examinations.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Generally candidates performed well at both levels. Performance however was significantly better in Question 2 (Human Environment) and section 2 (Environmental Interactions) than in Question 1 (Physical Environment). Many candidates also had difficulty in naming places/ landscapes on given maps and accordingly forfeited several marks.

Candidates who had been prepared to answer Interaction questions 6 and 7 (Health and Development and Environmental Hazards) fared much better than those answering other questions in this section .

This was probably due to centres being more familiar with these topics from the old syllabus.

It also appeared that the majority of candidates were presented at the appropriate level given the distribution of marks at both Intermediate 1 and 2.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

At Intermediate 2 candidates performed well in Q1biv (land use conflict around Southampton-O.S. map) ; Q2a (oil refinery location) ; Q2b (bar chart for population data) ; Q2f (problems of traffic congestion) ; Q6c (consequences of disease) ; Q6cii (methods of controlling named diseases)

At Intermediate 1 candidates performed well in Q1b (formation of limestone feature) ; Q2c (problems in shanty towns) ; Q6b (measures to control disease) ; Q7a (causes of earthquakes) ; Q7c (impact of tropical storms)

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

At Intermediate 2 areas where candidates found difficulty included QQ1a (naming specific areas) ; QQ1bii (physical features of River Beaulieu) ; Q1c (many candidates simply lifted information from diagram rather than provide detailed knowledge) ; Q3a (candidates lacked knowledge of causes of degradation) ; Q4bi ii (candidates lacked knowledge of multi purpose water projects) ; Q4c (candidates lacked understanding of political problems of Ataturk Dam) ; Q5b (candidates were unable discuss problems of environmental quality in two different landscapes) ; Q7cii (candidates had little knowledge of the effectiveness of warnings of tropical storms)

At Intermediate 1 candidates had problems with Q1ci (discussing physical features of the river) ; Q1ci (candidates could not discuss in detail the aims of the national park) ; Q2e (candidates had little knowledge of diversification in farming) ; Q3a (inability to discuss impact of physical factors on population density) ; Q4c (Unable to discuss river basin management) ; Q5a (coastal areas under pressure – lack of knowledge of the topic) ; Q5aai (unable to relate patterns of population and economic activity) : Q7b (a lack of knowledge of the formation of tropical storms)

The quality of responses to other questions varied at both levels. Lack of familiarity with Interactions topics other than those in questions 6 and 7 possibly affected performance of those candidates who attempted these questions.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Many candidates forfeited a significant number of marks by being unable to name specific places /landscapes on given maps throughout both papers.
The poor response to question 1 at both levels was disappointing due a significant lack of knowledge of the topics covered.