

Principal Assessor Report 2005

Assessment Panel:

Geography

Qualification area

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

Geography Intermediate Levels 1 and 2 Old

Statistical information: update

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2004	384
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	291
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Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2004	1,775
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	923
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General comments re resulted entry numbers

The total number of candidates presented Intermediate 1 and 2, old syllabus, decreased by 852 (Intermediate 2) and 93 (Intermediate 1).

This decrease could be due to the introduction of the new syllabus and the numbers presented for the new Intermediate examinations in 2005. The combined figures indicate a slight increase on 2004 numbers.

The percentages of S4 candidates presented in 2005 shows a significant increase over the percentages presented in 2004.

The shift has to be seen within the context of a decrease in the overall numbers presented for Standard Grade examinations.

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	11.7	11.7	34	42
B	24.1	35.7	70	35
C	19.6	55.3	57	29
D	14.4	69.8	42	26
No award	30.2	100.0	88	-

Intermediate 2

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 60	-	-	-	-
A	32.7	32.7	302	42
B	24.7	57.4	228	35
C	19.1	76.5	176	29
D	8.1	84.6	75	26
No award	15.4	100.0	142	-

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

There were no changes between the grade boundaries selected for Intermediate 1 and 2 and those of previous years.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

There was more evidence than in previous years of centres presenting candidates at the appropriate level. Overall performance at both levels appears to have been better than in previous examinations. In both papers candidates performed better in Units 2 and 3 than in Unit 1. Significantly candidates were weakest when asked for answers on specific named features or locations on given maps. Ordnance survey questions were reasonably well answered at both levels. There appears to have been an improvement in quality of standard of written English at both levels on previous years.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

At Intermediate 2 candidates performed well in Q2bii (coastal protection) ; Q3aii (the effect of avalanches) ; Q4ai (world population) ; Q4ci ii (new towns) ; Q5ci (world population distribution) ; Q5d I ii (smoking and health) ; Q6 e I ii (effects of flooding)

At Intermediate 1 candidates performed well in Q1c (limestone features) ; Q1diii (conflicts) ; Q1e (formation of a U shaped valley) ; Q2d (bar graph) ; Q3a (land use in Alpine village) ; Q3ei (environmental pressures) ; Q5aa hurricane diagram) Q6b I ii (floods/short term aid) ; Q6d (San Francisco earthquake)

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

At Intermediate 2 candidates found difficulty with Q1b (inability to name limestone areas) ; Q1bii (explanation of formation of limestone gorge) ; Q2a (identifying named volcanic areas) ; Q3c (environmental pressures on River Rhine-lack of knowledge of topic) ; Q4b (population problems) ; Q5dii (lack of knowledge of GNP) ; Q5cii (unable to explain differences in EMDC and ELDC population problems) ; Q6c (lifting information from diagram without elaboration)

At Intermediate 1 candidates had difficulty with Q1b (unable to identify given areas of uplands in UK) ; Q2a (unable to identify upland glaciation areas in UK) ; Q2e (lack of knowledge of coastal protection measures) ; Q4a ii (unable to explain in detail birth and death rate changes) ; Q5e (describing symptoms and measures to reduce Malaria rather than causes) ; Q6cii (lack of knowledge of methods of predicting earthquakes/volcanoes).

Marks obtained for other questions varied considerably but many candidates at both levels managed to achieve a basic pass in most questions.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Candidates at both levels appeared to be better prepared for Units 2 and 3 rather than Unit 1.
There was a significant lack of knowledge of physical processes and features.
There was also a significant inability at both levels to identify places and landscapes on maps.
Candidates also made good use of data and information on diagrams in their answers.
Centres should continue to give careful consideration to the level at which candidates are presented.