

## Principal Assessor Report 2005

**Assessment Panel:**

**History**

**Qualification area**

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

**History Intermediate 2**

## **Statistical information: update**

<b>Number of resulted entries in 2004</b>	2,650
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<b>Number of resulted entries in 2005</b>	2,965
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### **General comments re resulted entry numbers**

There was a welcome increase in entry numbers; this was due largely to the increasing numbers of S4 candidates.

## Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 70	-	-	-	-
A	24.8	24.8	735	49
B	19.8	44.6	587	41
C	24.2	68.8	718	33
D	10.2	79.0	303	29
No award	21.0	100.0	622	-

### 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

The improvement in awards at the upper end reflected the change in the candidature.

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

Just over one third of candidates were from S3-S4.

Most Extended Responses had structure but many were shorter (2-3 pages) and there were fewer upper A passes. Where essays were brief candidates often failed to use the 150 words available for the plan. A small number of candidates were penalised for over long plans.

In some centres with a small number of entries at this level, candidates did not do as well as centres with larger numbers. This may reflect the demands in bi- or tri-level classes where teachers cannot give candidates as much attention. It may also reflect problems where Higher candidates drop down to Intermediate late in the session and have less practice with the types of question in the examination.

Fewer candidates left Outcome 1 (describe) questions un-attempted.

### Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Several markers commented on “high flying” S4 candidates who were very well prepared.

8 mark essays were generally well done, though some were over-long, forcing candidates to rush later parts of the paper. In some cases they were unable to complete the paper.

Better use of recall was made in Outcome 2 (explain) questions.

### Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Some candidates had difficulty with the Extended Response because the issue chosen was not appropriate to their ability (see previous reports and Feedback section).

Some candidates tended to copy whole sentences from Outcome 2 (explain) questions. Others tended to run points together instead of developing them.

Outcome 3 (how useful) questions were often poorly done. Some candidates commented only on content, while others failed to give sufficient information on origin. Few candidates commented effectively on purpose.

Some candidates did not read questions carefully enough e.g. question 2 in ‘Wallace and Bruce’ they wrote about Edward I’s attempts to gain control of Scotland 1290-1 – not “after the defeat of John Balliol”; question 1 in the ‘Road to War’, candidates wrote about events in 1938-9 when the question clearly said “by 1935” and in question 1 in the ‘Cold War’ they wrote about “the reasons for” the building of the Berlin Wall and not “the results of” the building.

Candidates had difficulty with the Punch cartoon in ‘Cradle to Grave’.

The Bismarck context was more poorly done than any other.

## Recommendations

### Feedback to centres

#### Extended Response

- a) Teachers/lecturers should ensure that the issue is part of the Intermediate syllabus (see the Course Arrangements) as candidates can only be credited for material within the syllabus. (N.B. an essay which is totally outwith the Intermediate syllabus will score 0.)
- b) This also applies where candidates have dropped down from Higher. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that borderline Higher candidates choose an issue which is also valid for Intermediate.
- c) The wording of the issue should also be appropriate to the candidate's ability. More able candidates are able to score a high A pass with a "How far... /to what extent...?" type of question which allows them to weigh up a variety of factors and come to a valid conclusion.
- d) Candidates should not tackle double barrelled questions eg "What were the causes of the 1905 revolution in Russia and how did the tsar survive?" "Why did Britain follow a policy of appeasement in the 1930s and did it help cause rather than prevent war in Europe?"
- e) Candidates should take advantage of the 150 words allowed for the plan; this could be used for extra evidence, a brief quote, sub-conclusions etc.
- f) Candidates are given time for research and the evidence in the Response must go beyond the information in the teaching materials.
- g) Where candidates attempt a "Why..." type question their conclusion is often a paraphrase of the factors outlined in the introduction. This is unsatisfactory and candidates should use the evidence from the main part of the essay to come to a judgement.

#### The Examination

- a) Where candidates left the 8 mark essay until the end of the paper, they were able to complete all three contexts and still write a substantial, high scoring essay.
- b) Candidates should put the evidence from the sources (Outcome 2 – explain questions) in their own words. A separate sentence should be used for each point taken from the source.
- c) When commenting on the origin of a source in Outcome 3 (how useful) questions, candidates must identify the source as either "a primary source from the time of ... (eg Irish emigration to Scotland)" or "a secondary source written with the benefit of hindsight."
- d) In Outcome 3 (source comparison) questions, candidates must give a point by point comparison.
- e) Candidates must pay particular attention to the wording of questions eg use of dates, phrases such as "results of" to ensure the answers they write are relevant.
- f) Candidates need more practice in dealing with visual sources such as photographs and cartoons.