



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	English
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Entries were down by approximately 4,000 this year, but candidates performed very well again at English Intermediate 2, with some candidates achieving very high marks. Component marks were broadly similar to last year, although candidates found the Close Reading paper a little more challenging (despite its immediately relevant subject matter of the teenage bedroom).

Candidates had little difficulty selecting an appropriate Critical Essay question from the broad range available. Poetry was, again, chosen by a large number of candidates. Scottish poets featured strongly: Duffy ('The War Photographer,' 'Shooting Stars,' 'Havisham,' 'In Mrs Tilscher's class,'); MacCaig ('Assisi,' 'Aunt Julia,' 'Hotel Room 12th Floor,' 'Visiting Hour,' 'Brooklyn Cop,'); and Morgan ('Hyena,' 'Glasgow 5th March 1971,' 'In The Snack Bar,' 'Glasgow Sonnet,'). Other poets included Heaney ('Digging,' 'Mid Term Break,'), Owen ('Dulce Et Decorum Est,' 'Anthem For Doomed Youth,') and Keats ('La Belle Dame Sans Merci,' 'Bright Star.'). Popular choices in Drama were Miller ('The Crucible,' 'All My Sons,' 'A View From The Bridge,') and Shakespeare ('Macbeth,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'The Merchant of Venice.'). Novels selected included 'Lord of the Flies,' 'To Kill A Mockingbird,' 'Of Mice and Men,' and 'Cal.' Short Stories included 'Father and Son,' by MacLavery, 'The Test,' by Shirley Jackson, and 'The Pedestrian,' by Ray Bradbury. For Non-Fiction, 'Letter to Daniel,' and 'A Hanging' were popular. Media responses tended to be on film, with most answering on 'Saving Private Ryan,' 'Schindler's List,' 'The Shawshank Redemption,' 'The Truman Show,' 'Psycho,' and 'The King's Speech.'

The Folio gave the candidates an opportunity to demonstrate additional skills in the external assessment.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Close Reading

- ◆ Candidates engaged well with the passage, and found it to be relevant to their lives.
- ◆ Candidates answered with commitment and there were few incomplete papers. Many candidates gave very full answers throughout their paper.
- ◆ Question 4: Most candidates understood the implications of the writer's use of the word 'actually' in this context.
- ◆ Question 7: Candidates coped well with the identification of three points of understanding. Even if they did not manage all three, most achieved 2 marks for this question.
- ◆ Question 10: This straightforward evaluation question was well done.
- ◆ Question 12: Most candidates understood the implications of the 'rope' metaphor here, but some did not give a full explanation of the metaphor.
- ◆ Question 15: Most candidates were able to identify a language feature and comment on its effect. The 'Hurricane Katrina' image was the most popular choice, and it was well handled.

- ◆ Question 17: Most candidates were again able to identify a feature of language and comment on its effect.

Critical Essay

- ◆ Many candidates demonstrated clear engagement with the texts they had studied.
- ◆ Most candidates had no difficulty with finding two questions from different sections of the paper which suited the texts they had studied.
- ◆ Question 9: This question offered very many candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of poetry.
- ◆ There were very few issues with the 'sufficiently accurate' requirement for Critical Essay.
- ◆ Many candidates successfully related their responses to the demands of the question.
- ◆ Most candidates were able to employ either direct quotation or relevant references in their responses.
- ◆ Poetry was generally handled well by candidates.

Folio

- ◆ Candidates wrote sensitively and effectively about their own lives and experiences.
- ◆ Many candidates showed clear engagement with current prominent issues. This was apparent in their pieces of discursive writing.
- ◆ The techniques of persuasive writing were handled well by many candidates.
- ◆ Some candidates made effective use of rhetorical techniques.
- ◆ Many candidates had clearly made use of the drafting process.
- ◆ A few candidates wrote successfully in Scots.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Close Reading

- ◆ Question 2: Many candidates found difficulty when attempting to define the word 'detritus;' however, most managed to achieve 1 mark for this question.
- ◆ Question 3: Explanation of irony proved difficult for many candidates, but again, 1 mark was generally achieved.
- ◆ Question 8: Although there were signs of good teaching in this area (structural linkage), many candidates struggled to put their knowledge into practice.
- ◆ Question 13: Candidates tended to adopt a formulaic, generalised approach to their answers here. There was often insufficient precision.
- ◆ Question 16: Many candidates did not achieve full marks for this question because they had difficulty in explaining the expression 'not to lose perspective.'

Critical Essay

- ◆ Some candidates had difficulty in maintaining relevance to the question throughout their responses.
- ◆ Some candidates did not address all aspects of the question selected.
- ◆ A few candidates did not make selections from the appropriate genre section of the paper.
- ◆ Although engagement was strong in many candidates' responses, some candidates had difficulty in expressing evaluative comments.
- ◆ Question 4: Some candidates found difficulty in maintaining relevance to 'an incident involving tension.'

- ◆ Question 8: Candidates adopted a broad interpretation of 'nature or the natural world.' For assessment purposes, markers accepted a broad interpretation.

Folio

- ◆ When attempting short fiction, some candidates found it difficult to sustain a credible narrative.
- ◆ Some candidates did not make sufficient acknowledgement of sources consulted.
- ◆ In personal writing, a few candidates did not attempt to reflect on their experiences, offering only an account of the events.
- ◆ A few candidates did not take advantage of the drafting process, and their writing contained errors with 'comma splice' and the use of inconsistent verb tenses.
- ◆ A few candidates did not write within the stated word limits.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Close Reading

- ◆ Candidates should be careful to make an attempt to use their own words when instructed to do so. Reminders are always given in the wording of the questions.
- ◆ Candidates should try to answer as fully as possible questions which ask for analysis of a writer's use of language techniques. Remember, the general approach is: 1 mark for a relevant reference, 1 mark for a suitable comment.
- ◆ Candidates should be prepared to answer on the writer's use of structure (eg linkage, conclusion).
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to read as widely as possible in order to deal with the complex vocabulary/ideas contained in the passage.

Critical Essay

- ◆ Candidates should aim to develop a line of thought in their responses that is relevant to the question selected.
- ◆ Candidates should attempt to deal with all aspects of the question.
- ◆ Candidates should be reminded of the genre requirements of the question paper.
- ◆ Care should be taken to meet the requirement for 'sufficiently accurate' in Critical Essay writing. Please note: allowances are made for writing under exam circumstances.

Folio

- ◆ Best results seem to be produced when candidates are closely involved in the selection of subject matter for pieces of writing for the Folio.
- ◆ Teachers should monitor the drafting process carefully to ensure authenticity.
- ◆ Care should be taken over the use of internet research. Candidates should select and organise their material before taking care over the use of their own words and proper acknowledgement of sources consulted.
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to keep a record of sources used in order to add it to Folio pieces.

- ◆ Candidates should be reminded to adhere to stated word limits.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	23455
Number of resulted entries in 2014	19453

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	19.7%	19.7%	3827	68
B	30.1%	49.8%	5864	58
C	31.5%	81.3%	6132	48
D	8.8%	90.1%	1704	43
No award	9.9%	-	1926	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). 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 management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ 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, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this 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.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.