



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Geology
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

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

Overall, candidates continued to show a high level of understanding of the course. Some candidates gained exceptionally high marks and would have coped well with a higher level of course in either Intermediate 2 or possibly Higher Geology. Constructing graphs was a strength, as was calculating. Centres clearly prepared candidates for problem solving, sequencing and the formation of Scree.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Question 1 (a – c): Most candidates knew how to demonstrate knowledge of the Solar System and how to demonstrate problem solving using data on the Solar System.

Question 6 (a – c): Most candidates knew how to calculate the total amount of energy generated by wind turbines and how to use that data in predicting future energy amounts.

Question 6 (d): Most candidates knew how to construct a pie chart.

Question 7 (b): Most candidates knew how to demonstrate knowledge of exhausted coal seam problems and to describe environmental problems and their solutions.

Question 8 (a): Most candidates knew how to give the correct order of sequence.

Question 9 (a) and (b): Most candidates knew how to demonstrate knowledge of Scree formation.

Question 10 (a) and (b): Most candidates knew how to give explanations for proposed new bridge sites and to explain why certain rock types would be unsuitable for construction.

Question 11 (a): Most candidates knew how to construct a bar graph.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Question 3 (a): Matching rock sequences.

Question 5 (b): Explaining how a raised beach was formed.

Question 11 (b): Drawing and labelling a diagram showing underground limestone features.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres should ensure that candidates can explain the formation of a raised beach and that labelled diagrams should be of a high standard. Centres should also ensure that candidates have a clear understanding of matching rock sequences.

Some candidates could have been presented at a higher level. However, with curriculum change, it is recognised that this has proved extremely difficult to implement.

Centres are to be praised for the high standard of performance of candidates and for their ongoing enthusiasm for Geology. Although the subject will not have a final exam in future, Geology course units will still be available along with National Assessment Bank material. This will allow centres to continue with the delivery of a Geology Course, possibly within a wider achievement area.

It is hoped that current development work will allow an award in Geology to be available in future years from SQA. Some centres are continuing to deliver Geology and presenting candidates at GCSE Level via the Welsh Exam Board. Thanks go all Geology staff and pupils over the years, with many candidates having secured employment in mining worldwide and in the Oil and Gas sector in Scotland.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	31
Number of resulted entries in 2015	24

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 80				
A	54.2%	54.2%	13	56
B	29.2%	83.3%	7	48
C	8.3%	91.7%	2	40
D	4.2%	95.8%	1	36
No award	4.2%	-	1	-

All assessments on standard, therefore no adjustments were made to the grade boundaries.

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.