



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	History
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

There was again a very significant drop in the number of candidates. A limited number of contexts were attempted by candidates.

The majority of candidates were entered at the correct level. There was a wide range of marks, though there were relatively few candidates who attained very weak scores and very few who attained high scores.

There was a slight decline in the mean score for the extended response. Many centres are preparing candidates well for this element, and there were fewer problems with the choice of an issue. However, there were still a few issues which did not fit with Intermediate 2 arrangements.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Extended response

Most candidates were successful and produced a good quantity of knowledge and understanding. Where candidates had well-considered questions they were able to argue and come to an appropriate conclusion. There was again a use of 'isolated factor' issues and this encouraged an analytical approach to the response.

Examination

Markers again commented that the eight-mark essay saw most candidates producing introductions and conclusions, and many providing good KU. Most candidates produced extremely good responses to the O3 (comparison) questions. Candidates did well in the O2 (explain) questions, with many integrating source evidence with appropriate recall.

Many candidates also produced good answers to the describe question, drawing effectively from recall.

There were fewer answers this year which gained no marks for this type of question.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Extended response

There are a number of cases where candidates attempted issues that were too complicated for them. Sometimes these are isolated factor questions derived from previous Higher level questions, which these candidates find too complicated to handle. In these situations a more straightforward 'explain why' question may have been more appropriate for the candidate.

Examination

While there is evidence of some improvement in the O3 (how useful) questions, there is still evidence that this is by far the weakest skill element. Candidates still frequently attempted to justify origin and authorship of the source by simply copying the rubric of the source, and thus gained no marks for this. Secondary sources in particular were again not well handled. For purpose candidates often either repeated the question or provided content from the source.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	3509
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	343
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 70				
A	29.4%	29.4%	101	49
B	22.7%	52.2%	78	41
C	21.3%	73.5%	73	34
D	9.3%	82.8%	32	30
No award	17.2%	-	59	-

The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

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.