

Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:

Modern Studies

Qualification area

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

Modern Studies, Intermediate 1 and 2

Statistical information: update

Intermediate 1

Number of entries in 2001	
Pre appeal	191
Post appeal	192

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	187
Post appeal	–

General comments re entry numbers

The number of candidates showed a very slight decline compared to 2001. The overall number remains small. Some candidates who are entered for Intermediate 2 would be more appropriately presented at Intermediate 1.

General comments

The overall level of performance was satisfactory and in line with 2000 and 2001.

Intermediate 2

Number of entries in 2001	
Pre appeal	1128
Post appeal	1151

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	1220
Post appeal	–

General comments re entry numbers

There was a small increase in entry numbers compared to 2001. The increase may be accounted for by candidates switching from Higher to Intermediate 2. There is very little evidence of centres entering candidates for Intermediate in preference to Standard Grade.

Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

Intermediate 1

Marks (Out of 60)	42	35	29
Percentage	70	58	48

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

The team were pleased to note that the grade boundaries are close to the a priori scores. They reflect an established pattern in that the paper was reckoned to be of a standard similar to previous years.

General commentary on grade boundaries

Notional percentage cut-offs for each grade

Question papers and their associated marking schemes are designed to be of the required standard and to meet the assessment specification for the subject/level concerned.

For National courses the examination paper(s) are set in order that a score of approximately 50% of the total marks for all components merits a grade C (based on the grade descriptions for that grade), and similarly a score of 70 % for a grade A. The lowest mark for a grade B is set by the computer software as half way between the C and A grade boundaries.

Intermediate 2

Marks (Out of 70)	49	42	35
Percentage	70	60	50

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

The team were pleased to note that the grade boundaries are identical to the a priori scores, and identical to last year's figures.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Intermediate 1

A small number of candidates were clearly unsuitable for presentation at Intermediate 1, scoring fewer than 10 marks in the paper. At the other end of the scale only 5 candidates scored more than 50 marks suggesting that centres had presented appropriately across the Intermediate 1 / 2 boundary.

It was noticeable that candidates scored better in questions relating to Learning Outcome 2 (Evaluating) than in Learning Outcome 1 (Knowledge and Understanding).

Intermediate 2

Candidates were awarded virtually the whole range of marks - scores ranged from 68 marks down to 4 marks. The vast majority of candidates were appropriately placed. 30 candidates gained 60 marks or more; only 9 candidates scored 10 marks or less.

Again it was noticeable that candidates scored better in Learning Outcome 2 questions than in Learning Outcome 1 questions.

All 9 Study Themes were attempted by significant numbers of candidates.

In Section A - Study Theme 2 (Power and Influence in Decision Making) was more popular than Study Theme 1 (Local Government in Scotland). In Section B the uptake for all 3 Study Theme 3 was lower than for Study Themes 4 and 5. In Section C Study Themes 8 (China) and 9 (South Africa) were the most popular. Study Theme 6 (Europe) was the least popular.

A small number of candidates violated the rubric of the paper.

Performance in Section C was better than in 2001. This was probably because the balance of marks in Section C was in favour of Outcome 2 questions.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Intermediate 1

Throughout the paper candidates performed well in Outcome 2 questions. They had been well-trained to tackle sourced-based questions and produced structured answers.

Question 2 (a) was relatively well done, perhaps due to overlap with Standard Grade.

Questions 3(e), 4 (e) and 5(e) were particularly well done.

Questions 4(a) - (c) were done better than the equivalent questions in Study Themes 3 and 5.

Intermediate 2

Questions 1(c) and 2 (c) - elicited excellent responses from many candidates.

Question 3(c) - straightforward choice of options and clear sources allowed candidates to do well.

Question 5 (c) was well done by the majority of candidates.

Question 4 (a) was very well done by the majority of candidates.

Question 4 (b) was also well done. The opportunity to write about advantages and disadvantages allowed candidates to give a better structure to their answers and helped them score well.

Knowledge of Brazil was particularly impressive.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Intermediate 1

In answers to questions 1(a)-(c) candidates demonstrated virtually no knowledge of the work of councils and councillors.

Question 2 (b) revealed that the majority of candidates were unaware of the term 'First Minister'.

Knowledge and Understanding in Section C was very weak. Answers on Brazil were better than the 3 other Study Themes.

Intermediate 2

Question 1(b) - few candidates gave good answers about the arguments for having full-time councillors.

In Study Theme 3 answers dealing with gender were better than those dealing with race.

In answers to 'conclusions' type questions many candidates did not reach the sort of higher-order conclusions that the examining team were looking for. Too many candidates simply copied from the sources reaching, at best, low-level conclusions.

Areas of common misunderstanding

Intermediate 1

Many candidates could not identify another European country (Question 6 (a)).

Many candidates confused Tibet with Hong Kong (Question 8(a)).

Intermediate 2

Question 4(c) caused problems for candidates and markers. The distinction between the two options was not clear enough. Markers were informed about this in advance and particular attention was paid to this question at the marker check stage.

Question 6(a) - a minority of candidates were unable to accurately identify economic issues.

In questions 6(c), 7(c), 8(c) and 9(c) many candidates did not make use of the prompts provided.

In answers about South Africa too many candidates gave answers that were out-of-date. Reference to the Apartheid era is no longer appropriate.

Recommendations

Summary of feedback to centres

General

Candidates need to be made aware of the difference between 'Describe' and 'Explain' type Outcome 1 questions. Too many candidates give descriptive answers to questions that ask for explanation. In 'Describe' questions there was a tendency for candidates to provide list-type answers rather than developing points.

Candidates who have not studied Standard Grade should be made fully aware of the 3 different types of source-based questions.

When asked to identify selective use of facts / bias / exaggeration, candidates must make specific reference to the view given. They must explicitly link the view to the source material.

Examples and contexts taught should be up-to-date. There was some evidence of out-dated information, particularly in Section C. Answers about South Africa frequently referred to the Apartheid period.

Candidates should be briefed about time management. There was some evidence of candidates running out of time in Section C although the problem was not as marked as in 2000 and 2001.

Centres should be aware that a number of candidates are entered for Intermediate 2 who are more suited to Intermediate 1.

Intermediate 2

Outcome 1 questions ask for 'detail'. Many candidates are unable to give the depth and range of detail and exemplification required for high marks.

In the Decision Making Activity Questions for Section B some centres encourage candidates to use the same structure as they would in a Higher DME. The use of a style appropriate to a report is to be commended but centres should be aware that the typical structure of headings used at Higher does not necessarily apply to Intermediate 2. Candidates should devise their headings after reading the question.

Candidates should be clear about the difference between 'economic', 'social' and 'political' issues.

Questions 6(c), 7(c), 8(c) and 9(c) provided candidates with a series of prompts. Candidates should be familiarised with this style of question and encouraged to plan their answers around the prompts provided.