

Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:

Psychology

Qualification area

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

**Psychology
Intermediate 1 and 2**

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	
Pre appeal	
Post appeal	Int. 1:6; Int. 2: 243

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	Int. 1: 20; Int. 2: 393
Post appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

There has been a vast increase in the numbers of candidates who were presented for both Intermediate 1 and 2 examinations. Overall, this year, entries are almost double that of last year. Candidates presented for Intermediate 1 have tripled, while candidates presented for Intermediate 2 have almost doubled.

The cohort of candidates has begun to shift from FE towards schools; a trend which is expected to continue, as increasing numbers of secondary schools are willing to integrate Intermediate Psychology into their social studies curriculum (particularly with S3 and S4 groups as a precursor to the Higher Examination).

It is of interest to note that more centres are presenting candidates for Intermediate 1. This, in itself, is very encouraging, as Intermediate 1 is more suitably pitched for candidates in S3/S4.

General comments

Question papers – were of a similar content and style to both the previous papers (NQ Psychology is currently in its fourth year).

Candidates – were of a similar cohort to the previous year, although there has been a slight shift towards schools.

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

Intermediate One : maximum mark – 60 :

- Grade A (upper) : 51 (85%);
- Grade A (lower) : 42 (70 – 84%);
- Grade B : 36 (60 – 69%);
- Grade C : 30 (50 – 59%).

Intermediate Two : maximum mark – 60 :

- Grade A (upper) : 51 (85%);
- Grade A (lower) : 42 (70 – 84%);
- Grade B : 36 (60 – 69%);
- Grade C : 30 (50 – 59%).

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.

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Grade boundaries remained at the level set on previous years. This decision was justified due to the standard of paper unchanged and standard of candidates unchanged.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Intermediate One : Overview :

Most candidates performed very well – 55% of candidates achieved Grade A. The results were positively skewed, with few candidates achieving Grade C.

Poor performance was observed by approximately 30% of the cohort; it was quite apparent that those candidates did not follow the instructions, or were confused by them somehow. Section A was attempted reasonably well, however the options depressed the overall mark. Candidates should have answered from *two* concepts per option, however some attempted to answer *all* concepts from a particular section, and consequently ran out of time, or performed poorly on all concept questions.

Intermediate Two: Overview :

The results were, once again, very good. A massive 37.2% of candidates achieved a Grade A; however, unlike Intermediate 1, more candidates failed to achieve. This is of concern, as candidates are possibly misconstruing instructions regarding the number of questions to be answered during the options. Perhaps some of those candidates should have attempted Intermediate 1.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

- Section A – An Introduction to Psychology.
- Description of concepts.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

- Research methods questions were tackled less well.
- Answering the correct number of concept questions within each of the two options.
- Time. Both papers are demanding in length.
- Application questions. Candidates are unsure exactly what they should be doing there. An *explanation* of the situation, in *light of the concept*, is a requirement that many failed to achieve. Many candidates simply *described* the situation/scenario. This is a *common sense description/explanation*, which should be avoided in psychology.
- Appropriate use of language and spelling, particularly with Intermediate One candidates. Inappropriate language use included: deterministic; dogmatic; sexist; and politically incorrect styles.

Areas of common misunderstanding

- Instructions regarding the number of concept questions to be answered.
- How to answer application questions.
- Time allocation for each of the sections.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

- Clearer instruction regarding which questions, and how many questions, to be answered.
- All centres should be aware of and use the most recent addition of the arrangement documents.
- Ambiguity regarding the inter-changeable nature of the classification of research examples. Prescriptive studies are not recommended.
- Centres should familiarise candidates with the geography of the paper – it is essential to know the layout of the paper before attempting the examination.