

Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel

Social Sciences

Qualification area

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

**Sociology
Intermediate 2**

Statistical Information: update

Number of entries in 2001	
Pre appeal	
Post appeal	120

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	126
Post appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

2002 saw a small increase of 6 candidates sitting the exam and this was a smaller increase than that seen between 2000 and 2001.

General comments

Results show that candidates were performing at a similar standard to last year. Some students who failed demonstrated uneven performance and a lack of knowledge of the range of the syllabus at Intermediate 2.

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

Maximum mark 60

Grade A	–	42
Grade B	–	36
Grade C	–	30

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.

General commentary on grade boundaries

Notional percentage cut-offs for each grade

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Performance of candidates was generally good but there was a tendency for some candidates to answer questions unevenly or to write insufficient to gain top marks.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Generally, candidates did well on questions requiring descriptive answers and on answers learned by rote such as the questions on methods.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Candidates had difficulty with questions that required explanation or that asked for expanded answers such as those on social mobility and links between inequality and forms and systems of stratification. However, these questions were very similar to tasks in unit assessment, therefore candidates should have had, at the very least, a basic competence in answering this type of question.

Candidates did not read questions e.g. when asked for *contrasting* cultures, some candidates used America and the UK without drawing any contrast that may exist between these cultures.

Some candidates were imprecise in their answers. For example, using the term African Tribe to describe roles found in this 'culture' could refer to several cultures. The Masai and the Ju/'hoansi, for example, are very different. So, it was difficult to ascertain the accuracy of a candidate's knowledge and called into question their level of understanding.

It seemed that for some questions, candidates gave the answer to last year's paper. However, the questions sample across outcomes in all units so there is no guarantee, for example, that question 1 will always correspond precisely to a particular outcome as it is necessary to vary the paper from year to year.

Areas of common misunderstanding

This year, question A4 caused difficulty for some candidates. Asked to choose two social situations some candidates chose two agents of socialisation or discussed two types of socialisation (primary and secondary). This question corresponds very specifically to an outcome in the unit on Socialisation and it is also assessed in the internal assessment. It seemed that some candidates did not read this question carefully and it appeared, in some cases, that candidates were answering a question in last year's paper.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

- To gain a good pass, candidates need to write well across both sections of the paper. The paper samples from all three units at Intermediate 2 Sociology and therefore candidates must be prepared to answer from any part of the syllabus.
- Candidates need to write full answers, e.g. full marks cannot be awarded to one-word answers when candidates are asked to describe something. Elaboration and exemplification are always welcome - within the limits of time and space.
- Candidates need to read questions carefully and answer accordingly, e.g. if the question asks for contrasting cultures then the candidates should demonstrate contrast, and so on.
- Candidates should be reminded that questions will be drawn from all three Intermediate 2 units and will sample across outcomes. This means they should know and understand the whole syllabus rather than just concentrating on a particular aspect.
- Candidates cannot assume that questions in the paper will correspond to those asked in the previous year. For example, it cannot be assumed that Question 1 will always correspond to a particular outcome, and so forth. This year it seemed that some candidates answered a particular question based on the previous year's question paper. The paper will always sample from the whole syllabus and questions will vary from year to year.
- Candidates need to practice writing sample answers for questions that demand expanded answers, e.g. questions that ask candidates to explain the role of socialisation in the context of two social situations or questions that ask candidates to explain the links between forms/systems of stratification and inequality and social mobility. These aspects are asked for in internal assessment but candidates need to be coached into writing concise but comprehensive answers under exam conditions.