

Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:

Steering Group for CSS

Qualification area

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

Contemporary Social Studies Standard Grade

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	
Pre appeal	307
Post appeal (candidates who actually sat)	254

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	290
Pre appeal (candidates who actually sat)	267

General comments re entry numbers

Entries have stabilised.

Grade boundaries

The a priori figures are in brackets.

Knowledge and Understanding

Foundation /40			General /40			Credit /28		
Grade 5	24 – 40	(28)	Grade 3	27 – 40	(28)	Grade 1	20 – 28	(20)
Grade 6	16 – 23	(20)	Grade 4	19 – 26	(20)	Grade 2	14 – 19	(14)

Cut-off scores in Knowledge and Understanding were set partly with the element difficulty factor in mind and, in Foundation, to take account of Question 9.

Evaluating

Foundation /40			General /40			Credit /28		
Grade 5	28 – 40	(28)	Grade 3	26 – 40	(28)	Grade 1	20 – 28	(20)
Grade 6	20 – 27	(20)	Grade 4	19 – 25	(20)	Grade 2	14 – 19	(14)

Cut-off scores in Evaluating, where the difficulty factor is fairly neutral, are very much in line with the *a priori* figures.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

As last year, markers felt that the presentation group was more obviously composed of Foundation Level pupils rather than marginal General or mainstream General candidates. Most made an honest attempt at the General Paper, which is worth commenting on because, in several previous years, many candidates were prone to leaving a lot of the answer paper blank. It was clear, however, that many were out of their depth. A minority showed that they were comfortable with the demands of the General Level Paper and answered well.

Detailed comments on candidate performance

Over the last few years, the examining team have tried their utmost to make the examination as accessible as possible, within the constraints of the Course Arrangements. This year's Knowledge and Understanding questions seemed to be answered slightly better than in some previous years and, with the increased use of multiple choice and cloze passages, it is hoped that the relative level of difficulty of this element will begin to fall.

The basic response patterns remain unchanged from previous years, with significantly poorer performance in the Knowledge and Understanding element than at Evaluating. Likewise, the areas of content strength and weakness tend to have shifted little, with candidates more secure in the area of the Environment than in the other two sections. It is noticeable that the same areas of weakness are mentioned year after year, viz., the functions and workings of the Public Enquiry ('F', Question 3); the role of Trade Unions ('G', Question 6); the concept of 'culture' ('G', Question 8 and 9). Many candidates were also unsure about the responsibilities of the different levels of government, post devolution and post the amendment to the Conditions and Arrangements ('G', Question 10).

Not everyone was unaware about the role of the Reporter at a Public Enquiry and we gladly cite the following, admirably concise response, (one of a bare handful of adequate answers):

*"The reporter goes to the Scottish Executive with a recommendation.
He then looks at both sides and makes the final decision".*

The identify of 'he' might be a bit vague, but the essential understanding shown was greatly welcomed.

There were signs of some candidates having been well drilled in the technique of summarising the main points of a graph, but many candidates did little more than transcribe the graph into words without any attempt to process or synthesise the information, or identified *only* the main item of expenditure, viz. education ('F', Question 10). Even at Foundation level, a straight transcription from a graph would gain no more than half marks. Candidates should be encouraged to comment on "the most", "the least", or to rank the activities, providing figures as a backup. Likewise, in 'describing' a graph, a statement such as "*It has gone down*" may earn a mark.

"It has gone down a lot" may earn two marks.

"It has gone down a lot, (to half of what it was) between 1960 and 2000.

It rose a little between 1970 and 1980"

would gain the full four marks usually accorded this type of question.

This type of question is guaranteed to recur annually and it would be a good investment in time to give pupils plenty of practice in dealing with it. Similarly, questions which ask the candidate to "describe changes" are a recurrent format. Candidates have to be coached into using both sources and making the changes *explicit* in their answer, rather than merely listing what can be seen on just the one source. Again, this latter form of answer would gain only a maximum of half marks, eg form 'F' Question 5(a), "*There is an SECC*" – on its own, does not answer the question, whereas "*There is an SECC where the docks used to be*" does.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

In continuing the three question format of the Credit paper, the setters were mindful of the amount of reading necessary before the candidates can begin to answer the questions. Accordingly all attempts were made to keep the sources to a minimum, commensurate with the need to increase the source complexity. The paper was well answered by the small number of candidates who tackled this level.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Many candidates still lose marks by ignoring the standard instructions, “From the source...” and “From your own knowledge...”. Candidates have to be trained during their exam practice that they *must* use the source for the former but *must not* for the latter.

Areas of common misunderstanding

Overall in the 2002 examination, there were few technical problems with the formulation of the questions, but it is accepted that Question 9 in the Foundation paper was too difficult. This was taken into account in the marking instructions and was a factor in setting the cut-off score. The Knowledge and Understanding element still retains a high difficulty factor, primarily because the stereotypical candidate does not ‘learn up’ the course content.

In Question 3(c) at General, a surprisingly large number of candidates did not seem to appreciate what was meant by ‘intensive farming’.