

## Principal Assessor Report 2002

**Assessment Panel:**

**Modern Studies**

**Qualification area**

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

**Modern Studies - Standard Grade**

## Statistical information: update

<b>Number of entries in 2001</b>	
<b>Pre appeal</b>	14053
<b>Post appeal</b>	14172

<b>Number of entries in 2002</b>	
<b>Pre appeal</b>	13837
<b>Post appeal</b>	–

### General comments re entry numbers

There was a small drop in the number of entries for Standard Grade Modern Studies. The figures for 2001 were the highest-ever presentation for Standard Grade Modern Studies. The small decline may be due to a few centres presenting candidates for Intermediate 1 or 2 instead of Standard Grade.

### General comments

The quality of candidates was of a similar standard to recent years. At Credit Level there were a number of outstanding candidates gaining up to full marks in both elements. At Foundation Level there were a number of very weak candidates who struggled to score any marks in either element. As noted in previous reports the scrapping of the Individual Study means that over the past four years many candidates have been presented for the external exam who would not have sat it in the past.

There is a trend in a small minority of departments to present candidates for one level only. There may be advantages in presenting the weakest candidates at Foundation level only. Those centres that present candidates for Credit Level only are taking a big risk. There is no pattern of topics that will appear at Credit Level that is 'set in tablets of stone'. In a number of cases candidates who sat Credit only failed to reach the required standard and received a Grade 7.

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

### Knowledge and Understanding

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Marks	23	16	18	14	10	6
Percentage	72%	50%	64%	50%	50%	30%

### Enquiry Skills

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Marks	32	26	24	18	79	10
Percentage	80%	65%	67%	50%	68%	36%

### Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Grade boundaries are worked out using several factors. It is important to maintain a consistent standard from year to year but at the same time to work towards the 'a priori' grade boundaries of 50% and 70%.

At Credit Level Enquiry Skills the grade boundaries have been consistently higher than the 'a priori' figures. Candidates are extremely well-prepared for these familiar question-types and consistently score very highly. They perform less well in Knowledge and Understanding and the grade boundaries are considerably lower.

At General Level, which is attempted by virtually all candidates, the grade boundaries were close to the 'a priori' figures.

At Foundation Level, particularly in Knowledge and Understanding, many candidates score very poorly. The grade boundaries reflect this, although marks scored were considerably higher in 2002 than in 2001.

The aim of the setting team is to set an exam which maintains a similar distribution of grades to previous years and which uses the 'a priori' grade boundaries. Should the quality of candidates show a clear improvement then the proportions of candidates gaining higher grades would alter appropriately.

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

Candidate performance at General and Credit levels maintained the high standards of previous years. This year there was a noticeable improvement in the quality of responses at Foundation Level. The Setting Team had made considerable efforts to make the Foundation paper more accessible without altering the level of difficulty of the tasks set.

The Setting Team are aware that candidates perform exceptionally well in Credit Level Enquiry Skills questions. The marks awarded tend to be 'bunched' at the upper end of the scale which means that the distinction between a Grade 1 and a Grade 2 can become blurred. Exceptionally able candidates who have difficulty with one question can find that they cannot gain a Grade 1 because of the marks lost in that question. Consequently the Setting Team are looking at ways of making Credit Enquiry Skills questions discriminate further between the exceptionally able candidates and those who are of a more marginal Credit standard.

The papers elicited the full range of marks available. In Knowledge and Understanding approximately 180 candidates gained full marks at Credit Level. A small number of candidates scored zero marks in this element. At General Level more than 650 candidates scored full marks, including some who were presented at Foundation and General Levels. Approximately 100 candidates scored zero marks in General Knowledge and Understanding.

### Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

#### Foundation Level

Overall candidate performance in both Knowledge and Understanding and Enquiry Skills demonstrated an improvement compared with 2001. The setting team had attempted to make the questions more accessible without making them intrinsically easier. The team were pleased with the outcome.

Questions which were particularly well done by candidates included 1(c), 2(a), 2(b), 2(c), 3A(b), 3A(c), 3A(d), 3A(e), 3A(g) and 4(c).

The addition of a visual prompt in Question 4(b) clearly helped candidates. Many went beyond the 'hints' provided in the prompt and wrote excellent answers. In previous years, when no visual prompt has been provided, many candidates failed to score in questions on this topic.

The numbers of candidates attempting questions 3B and 3C was small and it is therefore difficult to draw overall conclusions about responses.

#### General Level

On the whole candidates performed better in Enquiry Skills than in Knowledge and Understanding. Enquiry Skills questions that were particularly well done included 1(b), 1(d) and 2(a).

It was pleasing to note that the majority of G/C candidates did well in Question 2(d). F/G candidates found this question more difficult. It proved to be a good discriminator.

In Question 4(b) many candidates went far beyond what was expected and produced excellent answers.

Knowledge and Understanding questions that were particularly well done included 3A(b) and 3A(d). There appeared to be an improvement in Knowledge and Understanding of the USA compared to previous years.

Question 1(c) was well done by the vast majority of G/C candidates but poorly done by the majority of F/G candidates.

In Question 3A (a) answers dealing with Crime and Justice tended to be better than those dealing with Health or Housing. Candidates who answered in the context of Crime and Justice usually made two distinct points whereas those answering on the other options often wrote generalised single points.

A small number of candidates (approximately 4%) attempted questions on China. On the whole these questions were answered very well. Fewer than 0.5% attempted questions on Russia.

#### Credit Level

As at other levels, Enquiry Skills question elicited better responses than Knowledge and Understanding questions.

Question 1(b) was handled very well. Candidates are well-prepared for this 'decision making' type of question. In this case the vast majority followed the instruction to link the information about the candidates to the information about the constituency rather than making direct comparisons between the candidates.

Candidates who read the full instructions for Question (c) before answering the question produced good answers.

Question 3A (a) elicited many excellent answers.

Questions 3A(b) - (f) were very well done by the vast majority of candidates.

Question 4(b) was well done by the majority of candidates. The team felt that candidates' knowledge and understanding of NATO was better than in previous years.

Question 4(c) was attempted well by the majority of candidates who constructed and justified compelling arguments both for and against the Euro. The team were interested to note that the majority of candidates came out against the Euro when answering (d).

### **Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty**

#### Foundation Level

Questions in which candidates did not do well were 1(d) and 3A (a). In 1(d) many candidates mistakenly identified the level of the Council Tax as being a difference between the two councils. In 3A (a) many candidates were unaware of the reasons why a fair trial is important.

### **General Level**

A significant minority of the Foundation / General candidates found the General paper inaccessible.

Questions in which candidates did not do so well were 2(c) and 4(a).

In 4(a) the lack of knowledge about the work of the UN was surprising. The setting team deliberately did not mention specific UN agencies in the question to allow candidates to include points about work with refugees and peace-keeping missions in their answers.

### **Credit Level**

A significant minority of candidates were not aware of the difference between description-type questions and explanation-type questions.

Question 1(a) was poorly answered by the majority of candidates. Few candidates were able to use terminology appropriate to the Scottish Parliament and very few were able to give specific exemplification in a Scottish context.

In Questions 2(a) and 2(b) many candidates provided descriptive answers.

In question 2(c) a significant minority of candidates clearly did not read the full instructions before answering the question. They wrote answers that did little more than repeat information from the sources.

Question 4(a) was poorly done by a significant minority of candidates. Many chose examples of conflicts outwith Europe and some chose examples dating back as far as the 1960s. Many candidates were unclear about the role of the United Nations and confused it with NATO and/or the EU.

### **Areas of common misunderstanding**

#### **Foundation Level**

Question 1(d) confused a minority of candidates. A small minority of candidates missed out Question 4(d), possibly through misinterpreting a correction notice. Markers were instructed to identify all such candidates and bring them to the attention of the Principal Assessor who took action to ensure they were not discriminated against.

#### **General Level**

In Question 3A (c) a minority of candidates confused 'men' in the view of Eva Kaye with 'all American people'. They did not understand the significance of men's voting preferences in the context of this question.

## Credit Level

In question 2(b) a small minority of candidates interpreted the question as being about raising the age at which the pension becomes payable. Where they had produced a good answer to the question they had perceived candidates were given partial credit for interpreting the question in this way.

Question 3A (a) revealed that a minority of candidates are not aware of the distinction between political rights and economic / social rights.

## Recommendations

### Summary of feedback to centres

Some candidates are entered for inappropriate levels.

A small minority of F/G candidates scored virtually full marks in the General paper - they would have been better to have been entered for G/C. Some candidates attempted both Foundation and General papers but were hopelessly short of the standard required for General Level. A small minority of candidates scored zero or close to zero marks in the General paper. A worrying development was a number of candidates entered for Credit Level only. This is a risky strategy on the part of centres as there is no guarantee of which topics will appear at Credit Level in any given year. Centres that assume Politics of Aid and Europe will alternate between General and Credit should be aware that this is not necessarily the case.

Knowledge and Understanding of the Scottish Parliament was very disappointing. Candidates should be able to use terminology appropriate to representation and participation in the context of the Scottish Parliament. Candidates should be aware of specific Scottish examples to include in their answers.

Centres should ensure that candidates are briefed on different types of KU question. In contrast to ES questions where candidates are clearly aware of the different sub-elements, in KU questions many candidates do not discriminate between describe-type questions and explain-type questions. They give descriptive answers to all KU questions.

The setting team were pleased by the responses to Question 2(c). The purpose of the change in format was to avoid candidates copying out vast chunks of information from the sources in the mistaken hope that they were drawing conclusions. The team were pleased to note that many candidates produced shorter but more sharply focussed answers. If this question-format is repeated then the team hope that all candidates will be briefed to read the instructions fully before answering the question.

Candidates should be clear about definitions of 'political', 'social' and 'economic' factors / rights.

Questions in Syllabus Area 4 deal with the security interests of European countries. Question 4(a) in 2002 asked specifically for a conflict within Europe - a significant minority of candidates answered with reference to conflicts outwith Europe. Centres should be aware the questions could focus on security interests of European countries both within and beyond the boundaries of Europe.

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.