Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:	**Social Sciences**

Qualification area

Subject(s) and Level(s) included in this report	**Politics – Higher and Intermediate 2**

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	
Pre appeal	Higher – 8; Int 2 – 0
Post appeal	As above

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	Higher – 27; Int 2 – 1
Post appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

Numbers still very small compared with other subjects but there are signs of significant growth. Only one candidate for Intermediate 2 compared with none in 2001 is a change but it is still extremely disappointing. The Higher growth from 8 to 27 is significant but more than that there was an increase in the number of centres presenting from one to five and these included one High School and four Colleges. The fact that one school is now presenting is encouraging and clearly the number of Colleges is growing.

General comments

The results were very good. The single candidate from Intermediate 2 passed with an A grade and the spread of results for the Higher was good across the range. There is still a tendency for younger candidates to do less well than mature candidates – which in some respects is not unusual given the nature of the subject and the fact that more mature candidates have the benefit of experience in their own lifetime of matters relevant to Politics.

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

Intermediate 2 – Maximum Marks 60
A - 42 marks
B - 36 marks
C - 30 marks

Higher – Maximum Marks 90
A - 63 marks
B - 54 marks
C - 45 marks

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

A priori grade boundaries for each of the last three years.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Intermediate 2
Only one candidate. Generally coped well with the paper although did less well in Section C compared with sections A and B. This looks to have been a case of running out of time rather than section C being more difficult. The tendency to write less than is needed for answers to skills based questions is obvious for any candidate in Politics and this was the case here also.

Higher
Overall candidates did well. The tendency to perform less well in skills based questions continues (see comments for centres). Generally the responses were good. See more specific comments below.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Intermediate 2
Knowledge based questions better answered than skills based questions. Candidate was clearly prepared to answer questions and use more than one political system/context to illustrate their knowledge.

Higher
Paper 1 – Generally candidates did very well in questions 1 and 2. Answers to question 1 on UK voter apathy were particularly well done.

Paper 2 – Answers to question A1 on Power were usually of a very high standard. Candidates did an excellent job of blending theory, relevant theorists and practical examples in more than one political context.

A number of excellent answers were given to question B5 on political assemblies with several candidates illustrating their answers by giving more than one political context.

Several very good answers were given to question C8 on political socialisation which showed a good understanding of theory and practice in different political contexts.

Answers to question B6 on the judiciary were generally very good.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Higher and Intermediate 2 – problem with skills based answers is ongoing. Candidates do not seem to relate the number of marks awarded to each question with a number of points to be made. They frequently make a point and leave it at that when they should be trying to back that point up with figures/statements from the sources and if 4 marks are allocated try to make another point and back it up and so on (basis of 2 marks for a relevant point with illustration and/or example from sources).

Higher
Paper 1 – candidates do bring in background knowledge which cannot be credited and this tends to give them a feeling of writing more when in fact some if it is irrelevant (or cannot be credited). This leads to fewer relevant points being made overall The candidates also have a tendency generally not to link their comments back to the question; following on from that several offer no conclusion, particularly in the 15 mark question 3.

Paper 2 – not referring back to the question and offering a linked conclusion to an answer are general problems that, if solved, would make a big difference to performance. There were no particular questions that gave candidates a problem.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Overall some excellent answers to questions. Despite questions from centres about having to answer using more than one political context, candidates usually do this very well. The main contexts tend to be the UK and USA – although for a comparison candidates use China, African states and refer to historical examples using the USSR.

There is a very good and relevant range of theorists being covered, particularly for Section A, but it would be good to see candidates make more references to theorists in Sections B and C.

Candidates still need to be reminded about referring back to questions during their answers and drawing good conclusions at the end.

Candidates also need reminded about the relationship between making a point, illustrating it and the kind of marks allocated to what they have done. Making one major point with illustration is unlikely to be awarded more than two marks. In a 4 mark question they need to be giving two main points and back-up. For question 3 in Paper 1 of the Higher several of the candidates wrote as much for the 6 mark question as they did for the 15 mark question. This may be partly due to time, given that Paper 1 is only 1 hour and it is very tight, but there is a tendency not to equate points offered with marks allocated.