



External Assessment Report 2009

Subject	Contemporary Social Studies
Level	Standard Grade

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the Examination.

Comments on candidate performance

At Foundation level, the general response from candidates was good, with the vast majority having attempted the full paper. The continuing move to recognition rather than recall at this level, (multiple choice questions and close passages when a summary is called for) has clearly made the paper more accessible to candidates. This applied particularly to the Knowledge and Understanding element to the extent that the usual disparity between Knowledge and Understanding and the Evaluating element was markedly narrowed, with significant numbers of candidates even performing better in the former than in the latter. Most candidates performed well enough to gain the upper level of Foundation award and only a small number failed to register at least a Grade Six.

The General level responses were significantly poorer, reflecting the nature of the presentation group. As was the case with the Foundation paper, however, most candidates made an attempt to finish the paper. Fewer attained the upper level of award at this level than last year. A record number, for recent years, sat the Credit paper. Those who did sit the Credit paper were appropriately presented and nearly all responded competently.

Areas in which candidates performed well

In the Foundation paper, the multiple-choice questions such as 1(b), 2(b), 3(a), 5 and 8 were answered well.

There was some confusion in 4(b), whereby some candidates entered two ticks in *each* column. The marking instructions were amended so that these candidates were able to gain full marks where appropriate.

Candidates tend to cope well with questions which ask them to draw and support conclusions (another fundamental Evaluating skill) e.g. Foundation Q10, General Q7 (a) and 10(a). In 7(a), a small number of candidates were clearly giving reasons which did not match their choice of 'Agree/Disagree'. This may have been occasioned by the negative in the given statement and in this case also, marking instructions were amended to allow these candidates partial credit for their answer.

Urban/Rural contrasts (General 8) was dealt with well. The issue of 'Cultural heritage' was handled better than usual (General 9).

Improved performance was reflected throughout the Foundation paper.

Areas which candidates found demanding

The skills of extracting and summarising information are fundamental in CSS (see extended grade criteria - Evaluating). Candidates should be able to look upon questions that ask them to describe the main trends on a graph, or changes on a map as being 'easy marks'. It was therefore disappointing that some candidates simply skipped over this kind of question (General 6(a) and 9(a)). In questions which ask for changes to be described or contrasts to be made, candidates should be aware of the need to give the 'before' *and* the 'after' in order to gain full marks.

General 1 (a) revealed some confusion as to the meaning of 'economic'.

The area of 'Public Enquiry' (General Q4) continued to show an even split between those who think that it is a chance for everybody come together to vote on the issue and others who had clearly been well-tutored.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- Presenting centres should make sure that they have incorporated practice in the skills of extracting and summarising information into the course.
- It is a standard feature of many questions that candidates should be able to discriminate between the ‘economic’, the ‘environmental’ and the ‘social’. As part of their exam practice, presenting centres should ensure that candidates are familiar with the meaning of these terms.
- Candidates should be encouraged to make sure that they look at **all** the sources before starting their answer. It is clear that there is a tendency with many candidates to try to take all of their answer from the first source given and to ignore the other sources below, especially if they take the form of a map or graph. This is particularly true if the question indicates ‘Using **all** the sources’. In this case, full marks *cannot* be gained if reference has not been made to all the sources.
- For questions which ask candidates to describe from a graph, candidates should be drilled in the techniques of identifying the main *trends* and backing up their statements by quoting figures from the graph, as advised this year in General Q6(a) (this, as distinct from re-writing everything that is shown in graphic form – arguably a ‘full description’, but not one that will gain many marks).
- Candidates should be aware of the significance of “From the source” and “From your own knowledge” instructions. The latter will be accorded no marks if the candidate uses information already provided in the source.
- Candidates should be coached to pay attention to the emboldened words in questions. This is done for the guidance of candidates and is designed to draw candidates’ attention to a key part of the question, e.g. General Q 2(a) highlights ‘**to the environment**’. This should prompt candidates to identify advantages which accrue to the environment, rather than any general advantages to society, the economy, workers or people living locally.
- Candidates should be advised that they can lose marks by failing to reformulate the wording used in the sources. This is unlikely to happen at Foundation level. At General level where a candidate simply lifts a whole chunk from the given text, it is difficult to assess if he/she has hit on the correct answer by luck or by good judgement. To avoid any dubiety and to demonstrate the understanding that is being looked for by the marker, candidates should always try to answer in their own words.
- Schools which operate a rotation of responsibility for CSS amongst the Social Subjects should ensure that all those involved are aware of amendments to the Conditions and Arrangements and that all involved are privy to the various papers of advice and best practice that the SQA issues from time to time. Anyone coming new to the subject would be well advised to consult these and previous reports from the Principal Assessor. In recent years, for example, departments should have received, via their SQA Coordinator, updated guidance on the Investigating element which might have encouraged higher grades in this element.
- Presenting centres should try to complete the course with time left for revision and ensure that candidates have plenty of practice at exam-format questions.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	79
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	56
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Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	0.0%
Grade 2	7.1%
Grade 3	7.1%
Grade 4	30.4%
Grade 5	42.9%
Grade 6	5.4%
Grade 7	0.0%
No award	7.1%

Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
KU	30	21	14	40	24	17	40	23	17
EV	30	21	15	40	24	16	40	27	20