



External Assessment Report 2009

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| Subject | Modern 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

General comments

The Setting team was pleased with the quality of response from candidates across the three papers. This was especially true of answers to Knowledge and Understanding questions. The number of totally blank papers especially at General level continues to fall quite markedly which is a testament to the quality of both teaching and learning and the accessibility of the papers. It was pleasing to note that only a handful of candidates attempted all three options in Syllabus Area 3. Those who did tended to do so in the Foundation paper. The number of Centres teaching China was small in number and remained static. The majority of candidates had been entered at the correct levels.

Foundation/General Level

The overall response to the Foundation paper was excellent. This continues the trend begun over the past 6–7 years. The changes in question formats which were implemented in the recent past for both Knowledge and Understanding (K/U) and Enquiry Skills (ES), have allowed candidates the opportunity to demonstrate both their understanding and their ability to successfully evaluate source material. Cut-off scores are also in line with the a priori position of 70/50. The changes implemented in question styles continues to have a marked effect on candidate responses to the element of K/U at General level. Sadly, ES at General level was less well done this year. However, the reasons for this have been analysed and steps taken to address them.

General/Credit Level

The General paper did not present the same level of difficulty to genuine C/G candidates which had been experienced by F/G candidates. The element of K/U was well handled with candidates using the prompts to inform their answers. The element of ES was well handled by most candidates with some achieving full or near full marks. A number of candidates failed to finish the General paper. The main reasons were because candidates had given grossly extended answers to a number of questions where they had achieved full credit long before their answer finished or they had ignored the question on the back page of the question paper. K/U in the Credit paper was well handled by the majority of candidates who, in almost all cases, gave detailed answers. The use of 4 mark questions may have played a part in the success of candidates. Cut-offs for both K/U and ES were set at the same level as 2008 as it was felt that the 2009 paper was of a very similar standard. A number of candidates still failed to achieve their true potential in ES. In a number of cases, this appeared to be down to poor preparation on the part of candidates and to the guidance given to them on how to answer particular ES question types. The setting team have taken note of the on-going problem with answers to the selective use of facts type question and have made adjustments in the wording of such a question and in the marking of the question.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Foundation level

The overall response of candidates to the Foundation paper was excellent. Most K/U questions were done well by the vast majority of candidates. ES questions were also tackled well by candidates. The vast majority of candidates responded well when interpreting either statistics or graphs. Q2(b) and Q3(c) were handled well. The investigative-type questions presented few problems to candidates. The use of pictures in 1(b) proved helpful to candidates whilst Q2(a) and Q4(a) were exceptionally well done. This question format has proved to be very popular with candidates. Question formats in both elements are working well and no changes are envisaged.

General level

- Q1(c) Well answered.
Q2(a) Well done with candidates using the drawing to exemplify their answers.
Q2(b) The vast majority of candidates found the correct pieces of evidence to allow them to achieve full credit.
Q2(c) Very well done although there was a little confusion amongst some candidates who got 'healthier' mixed up with 'wealthier'.
Q2(d) The vast majority of candidates found the correct statements.
Q3A/B(a) Well answered with candidates using the drawings to exemplify their answers.
Q3A/B(e) Well done by most candidates.

Credit level

- Q1(c) Well done. A straightforward introduction to the paper.
Q1(b) Well handled by candidates. The new question format was a major success.
Q2(b) A well handled 4 mark question.
Q2(c) Well done by the vast majority of candidates. The fact that this style of question had been set previously in 2006 appeared to have helped candidates cope. A small minority of candidates changed bulletpoint 1 by writing about the relationship between education and employment as opposed to unemployment which they were asked to do.
Q3A/B(a) Well-handled by many candidates with good exemplification.
Q3A(b) Well-handled by many candidates. Although there was a lot of reading in the question, this did not appear to put candidates off as they found most of the evidence needed for either candidate for Governorship. Those who chose Peter Head did not use the map as they should have and were penalised by 1 mark.
Q4(a) Well done by the majority of candidates with the focus being on the threat of terrorism. Markers did, though, comment on the fairly high preponderance of answers pertaining to World War 2, the Cold War, the Soviet Union and Bosnia. Some of this was unfortunate bearing in mind that many centres have moved on with their content and are giving more recent events a greater focus.
Q4(e) This was extremely well done.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Foundation level

- Q3A/B(d) Many candidates wrongly stated 'A' in evidence to support the view.

General level

- Q1(b) Poorly done. Few candidates secured marks for supporting the view, 'Edinburgh and Glasgow have the highest percentage of spoilt ballot papers'. Source 1 appeared to make it difficult to articulate precisely the reason why this was the case.
Q1(d) Fairly well done but the evidence supplied by candidates to back up their conclusions was poorly worded.
Q4(a) This was fairly well done although candidates tended to concentrate on the effects these problems had on people as opposed to countries.
Q4(b) Not as well done as expected. This style of question normally tends to be well done. Most candidates got 2 marks but the other 2 marks were more difficult to achieve. This had been the thinking behind the question. However, all candidates found it challenging.
Q4(c) Poorly done by candidates at all levels. It is recognised by the team that this is, for some reason, seen as a difficult part of the course. The question was mainstream and the way in which marks were allocated should have made the question accessible.

Q4(d) A large number of candidates were let down by their lack of technique in answering this style of question by not explicitly linking either Project A or B to the information about TONU.

Credit level

Q1(c) Poorly done by many candidates. Too many candidates did not read the statements carefully and went looking for evidence which was not applicable. Far too many candidates still associate 'selective use of facts' with being 'wrong' which is a pity as they immediately put themselves at a disadvantage when answering this type of question..

Q2(a) Disappointing responses to a mainstream topic. There were plenty of choices and the lack of real knowledge about programmes such as 'Child Benefit', 'EMA' or 'New Deal' was concerning.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The Foundation paper is working well and will continue in its present form as it has proved to be very accessible to F/G candidates. The most recent question formats will continue for the foreseeable future.

The use of graphics where appropriate in K/U questions at General level will continue and develop.

The question format used for Q1(b) at Credit level may well be repeated in the future.

The use of high quality exemplification, especially in Syllabus Area 3, should again be a priority for centres.

The setting team hope to continue including evaluating skills in the investigative-type questions. This is not always possible and an element of knowledge is required.

As has been stated in previous External Assessment Reports (EAR), emphasis will be placed on the security interests of European countries in the 21st century and that focus should be on events both within and outwith Europe. This is essential if candidates are to be given the best possible chance of answering questions in Syllabus Area 4. It is also worth mentioning again that both parts of Syllabus Area 4, 'Alliances and Security' and 'The Politics of Aid' will be integrated into all three papers.

The 'extent a person is being selective in their use of facts' style of question once again continues to present problems. Credit candidates should comment on those statements that are correct and those that are not, then offer an overall comment on the extent of selectivity.

There is no hard and fast rule as to where the 10 mark ES question will be placed in the Credit paper. It need not be the last question.

At both General and Credit levels, candidates should again be made aware that to receive full credit in certain ES questions, an explicit linking of evidence to a specific point of view must be included. It was evident this year that a lack of technique on the part of candidates was hampering their ability to get marks which were well within their capabilities.

Centres should carefully study the Marking Instructions for each of the papers. As they detail the ways in which marks are awarded for candidates' answers, this is as important as the knowledge or evidence required to answer a question. Centres should then see that, with a greater emphasis on technique, answers can be improved.

