



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Modern Studies
Level	Intermediate 1

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 number of candidates increased significantly compared with last year to bring the total number of presentations to 937. The format of the exam and style of questions should now be very familiar to centres, with no changes made to the format and structure in this year's exam. Almost the full range of marks were awarded with some candidates scoring very high marks. Only a few candidates were out of their depth and did not manage to make a reasonable attempt to answer the paper. Most candidates appeared to have been presented at the correct level. Fewer candidates than in previous years made rubric violations by answering more than one question from a section, not answering all five parts of the question or failing to complete the paper. There does not appear to be any significant time management problems with this paper.

Overall, the quality of answers from candidates presented in S4 is high. Where larger groups are presented from centres, results are generally good.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Generally candidates do very well in all types of evaluating questions.

Knowledge and Understanding in Section B — Social Issues in the United Kingdom, is better than either of the other sections.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Knowledge and Understanding in Section A — Political Issues in the United Kingdom, is often limited and inaccurate; answers are often undeveloped beyond basic list type answers. In Section C — International Issues, Knowledge and Understanding tends to be the weakest, with knowledge often being very limited and where it exists, it often presents an inaccurate, dated and extremely negative view of the society studied.

Although generally good, a number of the following weaknesses may occur in evaluating questions:

- ◆ failure to read the question carefully
- ◆ when making a recommendation, not linking the evidence in the factfile to points in the option chosen
- ◆ failure to refer to the view in 'support/oppose' questions
- ◆ not giving evidence to explain exaggeration or failing to give the examples of exaggeration
- ◆ insufficient use of statistical evidence to support answers
- ◆ some candidates did not identify differences within sources in Questions 1 (c) and 2 (c) through not reading carefully what was asked in the questions
- ◆ not supporting conclusions reached by giving evidence

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Encourage candidates to make developed points in Knowledge and Understanding questions by giving some additional description or explanation and through the use of recent examples.

When two sources are given in a question, both must be used for full marks.

In support/oppose questions, make sure candidates make reference to the view in their answer.

In exaggeration questions, encourage candidates to quote each example of exaggeration followed by the evidence to prove it is exaggerated.

In the recommendation question in Social Issues, a piece of evidence must be linked from the factfile to one of the points in the option for two marks; two reasons must be given for full marks.

In conclusions questions, make sure that any conclusions made are supported by evidence from the source or sources.

Quote figures from the source when supporting an argument or conclusion.

In differences questions, read the question carefully to see whether the differences are between the sources or within each source.

In order to reduce the number of rubric violations, give a prelim exam which closely replicates the demands of the final paper and allow candidates the opportunity to see past papers. Make sure they know which questions they should tackle in the final exam. Encourage candidates to attempt all three questions in the paper.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	682
Number of resulted entries in 2010	937

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark — 60				
A	29.1%	29.1%	273	42
B	24.4%	53.6%	229	36
C	19.4%	73.0%	182	30
D	6.5%	79.5%	61	27
No award	20.5%	100.0%	192	—

General commentary on grade boundaries

While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Head of Service and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as Arrangements evolve and change.