



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>Modern Studies</b>
Level	<b>Standard Grade</b>

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 were very pleased with the quality of responses from candidates across the three papers. 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 few candidates attempted both options in Syllabus Area 3, and when this occurred, it was in the Foundation paper. The number of centres teaching China remained static. The vast majority of candidates had been entered at the correct levels.

## Foundation/General level

The overall response to the Foundation paper was very good. This has been an ongoing trend over the past seven/eight years. The changes implemented in question formats 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 previous position of 70/50.

The changes in question styles continue to have an effect on candidate responses to the element of K/U at General level. Although still much improved, K/U questions this year proved to be a little more challenging than in the previous three years. This was reflected in a small change to the cut-offs applied. Cut-offs for ES at General level were back to where they had been in 2007 and 2008. This was very pleasing as they were again much closer to the prior position.

## General/Credit level

The General paper presented few problems to genuine Credit/General candidates which suggests that the level of the exam was correctly pitched. The element of K/U was well handled with candidates using the prompts to inform their answers. The element of ES was well handled with many candidates achieving full or near full marks. Few candidates failed to finish either paper. K/U in the Credit paper was well handled by the majority of candidates who, in almost all cases, gave detailed answers. Cut-offs for K/U were unchanged for the third year in a row. The big test for the Setting team was to try once more to get both an accessible paper and ES cut-offs closer to the previous position. In both cases this was achieved. The change to the wording of the 'Selective in the Use of Facts' (SUOF) question along with increased candidate familiarity with other ES question styles, enabled candidates to achieve their true potential.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Foundation level

The overall response of candidates to the Foundation paper was very good. Most K/U questions were well done by the vast majority of candidates. ES questions were also well tackled by candidates. The vast majority of candidates responded well when interpreting either statistics or graphs. Question 1(b/d) and Question 3(b) were well handled. The

investigative-type questions presented few problems to candidates. Question formats in both elements are working well.

### **General level**

- ◆ Question 1 (b) — well answered.
- ◆ Question 1 (d) — well answered.
- ◆ Question 2 (a) — well done with almost all candidates using the prompt to fashion an answer.
- ◆ Question 2 (b) — well done.

Investigative questions were well answered.

- ◆ Question 3A/B (c) — the vast majority of candidates used good exemplification in their answers.
- ◆ Question 4 (b) — well done by most candidates. The change to the wording of this style of question helped candidates, especially Foundation/General candidates.
- ◆ Question 4 (d) — well answered. The bullet points helped candidates enormously.

### **Credit level**

- ◆ Question 1 (b) — well answered.
- ◆ Question 1 (c–f) — investigative-type questions were well handled by candidates. A fairly large number of candidates did, however, mis-read the question prompt in (e) believing the classroom to be in Australia as opposed to Austria. Many of them then wrote about large time differentials between the two countries. They were not penalised.
- ◆ Question 2 (a) — a mainstream topic which was well done by candidates. All four options were well represented.
- ◆ Question 2 (c) — this question was, in many ways, the big success story of the Credit paper. It was well handled by many candidates with many receiving full or near full marks. This was in stark contrast to the quality of answers given for this style of question in previous years.
- ◆ Question 2 (d) — well done.
- ◆ Question 3A/B (b) — well handled by many candidates. As with the General paper, the bullet points have made a huge difference to the quality of the responses. No longer do we have the scatter-gun, hit or miss approach to this style of question. As a consequence, the marks have improved significantly.
- ◆ Question 4 (b) — this was well done with lots of marks from 6–10. It is worth noting that the vast majority of candidates related information from the factfile to the candidate countries which they were asked to do.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Foundation level**

- ◆ Question 3A/B (d) — poorly answered. The wording of the 'View' which included both the USA and China together with having to evaluate six bars made it too complex for Foundation/General candidates. Fortunately, it was only worth 2 marks.

- ◆ Question 4 (a) — poorly answered with a number of candidates missing it out altogether. This part of the Course is without doubt where the poorest responses in the exams occur. Sadly also, questions where candidates are asked to complete an extended writing task always prove difficult to some. The use of the graphic, in this instance, did not really help to minimise this problem.

### **General level**

- ◆ Question 1 (a) — fairly well done in that the vast majority of candidates, at both levels, scored 2 marks. These marks came from the first part of the question. The second part was very poorly done with very few candidates displaying a real knowledge of the processes within local government.
- ◆ Question 1 (c) — a lack of development in the answers curtailed the marks awarded.
- ◆ Question 3A (b) — this was not well done by many candidates. Too many candidates merely badly re-hashed their answer to Q1 (c).
- ◆ Question 3A (d) — not as well done as expected. Linkage was missing from many answers.
- ◆ Question 4 (a) — poorly done by candidates especially at Foundation/General level. It is recognised by the team that this is a demanding part of the Course although this was a straightforward question on NATO. The graphic was, possibly, too subtle for a number of candidates and as such, did not prove to be beneficial to many candidates.

### **Credit level**

- ◆ Question 1 (a) — there was a lack of good, detailed knowledge on what happens within the Scottish Parliament, on the part of a number of candidates.
- ◆ Question 3A (a) — poorly done by too many candidates who did not address the question of political rights and merely wrote about 'Rights' in general. Lots of answers were geared around the right to bear arms which received no credit.
- ◆ Question 4 (a) — this was a bit of a mixed bag. It was pleasing to note that the vast majority of candidates knew what the acronyms stood for but too many answers were very generalised with no real delineation between the different agencies. There was some exemplification used by candidates but this was not the majority. Very few candidates answered on the WFP.

### **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 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 use of high quality exemplification, especially in Syllabus Area 3, should again be prioritised by centres.

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 new style 'Selective in the Use of Facts' question will continue. Teachers should avail themselves of the guidance on answering this type of question which is posted on the Modern Studies section of the SQA website, if they have not already done so. The style of question as used in Credit Question 1 (c) will become the norm for a question of this type.

It is worth mentioning again that 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 is worth reiterating again this year that centres should carefully study the marking instructions, which are posted on the SQA website, for each of the papers. As they detail the ways in which marks are awarded for candidates' answers, it is an important tool in helping candidates frame particular answers. It can be as important as the knowledge or evidence required to answer a question. It is the case that with a greater emphasis on technique, answers, marks and grades can be improved.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	12490
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## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Grade 1	27.7%
Grade 2	17.8%
Grade 3	21.6%
Grade 4	14.4%
Grade 5	11.9%
Grade 6	5.0%
Grade 7	1.5%
No award	0.0%

### 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	32	23	16	28	17	13	20	13	9
ES	40	28	21	36	24	18	28	19	13