



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Psychology
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

This is the first year of the revised Arrangements and content change, but at Intermediate 1 level there was also a radical change in the question paper layout. The Course Arrangements and content remain similar to Intermediate 2. Candidate entries were up in 2010, which is suspected to be due to candidates dropping down from Intermediate 2.

The reduction in mandatory content from the minor review of 2009 Sections A — Understanding the Individual, and Section C — the Individual in the Social Context, has allowed centres and candidates to concentrate more on the core areas of Section A1 and the choices areas of Section C.

This was also the second year of Marking From Image and again it proved to be quite efficient in submitting marks electronically and increased quality assurance and other statistical information. The overall candidate performance was excellent with a 73% pass rate and it was agreed that this was significantly due to the reduction in mandatory content, the structure of the paper and a new mode of delivery which placed emphasis on multiple choice. This allowed a more direct way of questioning and certainly enhanced the amount of time candidates had per question compared to previous papers.

Areas in which candidates performed well

There was general improvement on issues raised in 2009. There was a far better level of response shown in clearly identifying the demand of the questions. The use of research evidence has increased which seems to demonstrate that centres are placing a much bigger emphasis on research or where dual teaching is taking place. In Section C, Non Verbal Communication (NVC) and Group Processes were well answered.

Areas which candidates found demanding

There was a great deal of confusion regarding the Learning Theories topic where candidates found it difficult to differ between the concepts of reinforcement and punishment.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Some candidates are still completing all questions in the paper and not choosing options. This may be due to bi-level classes and centres must prepare candidates for the layout of the question paper.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	117
Number of resulted entries in 2010	140

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark — 80				
A	32.1%	32.1%	45	56
B	19.3%	51.4%	27	47
C	21.4%	72.9%	30	38
D	8.6%	81.4%	12	33
No award	18.6%	100.0%	26	—

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.