



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Psychology
Level	Intermediate 2

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 Course Arrangements and question paper structure, therefore there is a difficulty in judging the variable components as they differ from previous years.

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 to concentrate more on the core areas of Section A and the choice areas of Section C.

A new format for Section B — Investigating Behaviour was introduced in which the questions were clearly identified and split into generic questions and case study specific questions. This was received in a very positive light by Intermediate 2 candidates and is seen as a positive step for both the stronger and weaker candidates, demonstrated by the increase in marks achieved. However, this change may have to be ratified by a change in the Course assessment specification for future question papers.

The review of content and structure in Section A has resulted in two mandatory topics of study instead of three, and the reduction in mandatory research studies within each topic, eg Carl Rogers has been removed as a mandatory study in Section A1, Piaget has been removed in Section A2. Also, Question A2 has a more focused approach in Learning Theories rather than the previous area of Cognition and Learning.

Mark allocations have been reduced from 10 marks for extended response questions to a maximum of 8 marks, but still retaining the KU and AE balance. This has allowed a wider accessibility to the weaker candidates whilst still allowing headroom.

Overall performance shows a marked improvement. Although there was a reduction in the number of A grades, there were more candidates gaining B grades, and fewer No Awards. Four candidates gained full marks. Overall achievement is very positive and suggests that the post review changes as mentioned have been successful — but it is still too early to judge the variable components at this stage.

Formal and informal comments from Markers indicate that there has been a qualitative increase in the general standards which overall suggests a higher level of preparedness of candidates.

Areas in which candidates performed well

- ◆ There were improvements in responses to the research study questions with most of the critical components included in the extended answers. More discrete prompts are presented to assist candidates.
- ◆ Non Verbal Communication (NVC) and Group Processes consistently received high marks from Section C — this is consistent with previous years and still proves to be of high interest amongst candidates.

- ◆ Section B — Investigating Behaviour was better answered especially with weaker candidates. Whether this was due to the changed format or a less demanding scenario is uncertain at this point.

Areas which candidates found demanding

- ◆ Learning Theories Question (a)(ii). This was very poorly answered alongside Question (d) which was unexpected as both components are not new and suggest candidates are not prepared properly.
- ◆ Question C1 (b) — Personality. This question became very anecdotal with little or no connection to the theoretical concept.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Overall, candidates were well prepared for the new Course content and question paper structure. The following points are given as a reminder to centres:

- ◆ More attention is needed in preparing candidates for the Learning Theories topic.
- ◆ Centres should be aware that when submitting appeals evidence which use only a two part prelim plus a NAB, full Course coverage must be demonstrated. Therefore, in Section A, the two areas must be evidenced and in Section C, Personality is mandatory and must be evidenced alongside the topic of choice.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	542
Number of resulted entries in 2010	684

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark — 100				
A	39.2%	39.2%	268	70
B	17.4%	56.6%	119	60
C	14.3%	70.9%	98	50
D	5.0%	75.9%	34	45
No award	24.1%	100.0%	165	—

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.