



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>Modern Studies</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 1</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

There was a further significant increase in the number of candidates in this year's examination, taking the total number to over 1,000. Over half of candidates were presented in S4 with just over one third being presented in S5. Overall, the quality of answers from candidates presented in S4 was higher than those presented in S5 and S6. Where presentation groups are larger, results tend to be better.

Section A, study theme 1 — Government and Decision Making in Scotland, remains the most popular topic. In Section B — Social Issues in the UK, Crime and the Law is answered more frequently than Wealth and Health in the UK. In Section C — International Issues, the USA was by far the most popular topic; South Africa and China are reasonably popular topics with only a few centres teaching Brazil; the European Union is rarely taught.

The format of the question paper was unchanged compared with previous years and the optional questions were broadly comparable. Evaluating remains significantly stronger than Knowledge and Understanding across all sections of the paper. The knowledge demonstrated in social issues topics is generally good. Some candidates demonstrate little knowledge across the paper and often answers are basic without any significant explanation or exemplification.

Almost the full range of marks was awarded with relatively few candidates unable to make a reasonable attempt at the paper. Few candidates failed to complete the paper due to lack of time and the number of rubric violations seemed lower than in previous years. Most candidates appeared to have been presented at the correct level.

## 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 UK, is better than either of the other sections.

The graphic in Question 3 (a) appeared to be helpful to those candidates who made use of it, however, across the paper there appeared to be less use of graphics in other questions.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

Question 1(b) - this straightforward question was poorly done by many candidates who focused on 'fundraising activities' instead of the expected sources of funds for local councils.

Overall, Knowledge and Understanding was weak, particularly in Sections A and C.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

### **General**

In order to reduce the number of rubric violations, centres should produce a prelim exam which closely replicates the demands of the final paper and allow candidates the opportunity to see past papers. Centres should make sure candidates know in advance which questions they should tackle in the final exam.

Centres should encourage candidates to attempt all three questions in the paper.

### **Answering Knowledge and Understanding questions**

- ◆ Answers which only list basic points will gain few marks; candidates should develop the points made with limited explanations and recent examples.
- ◆ All questions are worth 4 marks so two points need to be made to gain full marks.
- ◆ Be aware of the difference between 'describe' and 'explain' questions and answer accordingly.
- ◆ In International Issues, make sure examples from the country studied are given.
- ◆ If the question has a graphic, candidates should try and use it to support the answer given.

### **Answering Evaluating questions**

- ◆ When two sources are given in a question, both must be used for full marks.
- ◆ In support/oppose questions, candidates must make reference to the view in their answer.
- ◆ In exaggeration questions, candidates should quote each example of exaggeration in full then give the evidence to prove it is exaggerated.
- ◆ In the decision making 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.
- ◆ When statistical information is given in the source, quote figures from the source when supporting an argument or conclusion.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	937
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	1,062
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### 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	25.0%	25.0%	266	40
B	24.0%	49.1%	255	34
C	21.3%	70.3%	226	28
D	8.1%	78.4%	86	25
No award	21.6%	100.0%	229	—

## **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.