



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Modern Studies
Level(s)	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

Presentations increased by over 300, to just under 3700. The stage of presentation profile changed slightly, with 40% candidates presented in S4 and just under half being presented in S5. Overall, the quality of answers from candidates presented in S4 is higher than those presented in S5 and S6. Where presentation groups are larger, results tend to be better. Overall, performance in this year's examination was of a similar standard to last year.

Section A, Study Theme 1, Government and Decision Making in Scotland, remains the more popular option. In Section B (Social Issues in the UK) each of the study themes, Equality in Society: Wealth and Health in the UK, and Crime and the Law in Society, is attempted by significant numbers of candidates. In Section C, International Issues, the USA was by far the most popular option. South Africa and China are reasonably popular topics, with only a few centres teaching Brazil. The European Union is taught in only a few centres.

The format of the question paper was unchanged compared with previous years, and the optional questions were broadly comparable with no significant difference in performance between options. Performance in evaluating questions remains stronger than in Knowledge and Understanding questions. Knowledge and understanding demonstrated in social issues topics is generally good. It is important that centres teach up-to-date contexts so that candidates can provide contemporary and accurate exemplification in their answers.

The full range of marks was awarded, with the vast majority of candidates making a good attempt at the paper. Many candidates produced excellent answers across all sections. Most candidates completed the paper. Only a small proportion scored fewer than 25 marks. The great majority of candidates were presented at the correct level.

Areas in which candidates performed well

- ◆ Questions 1d) and 2d): Most candidates used the information in the sources well, and many scored full marks.
- ◆ Questions 3a) and 4a): Most candidates showed good knowledge and understanding in these questions, although many provided explanations rather than descriptions as asked.
- ◆ Questions 3b) and 4b): While most candidates showed good understanding of the issues it is important that they use their knowledge and understanding to answer the question set and are clear about what the question requires, rather than try to turn the question.
- ◆ Questions 3c) and 4c): In general the decision making question is well done, with candidates able to access the information in all the sources.
- ◆ Question 7a): A straightforward and mainstream question. Candidates who were able to provide exemplification from the USA scored high marks.
- ◆ Question 7b): For those candidates able to provide specific exemplification of Asian Americans, this question produced many good answers.

- ◆ Questions 5c), 6c), 7c), 8c) and 9c): Answers to this type of question have improved in recent years. Candidates who use the bullet point prompts to structure their answers and make good use of the evidence from the sources tend to score well.

Areas which candidates found demanding

- ◆ Questions 1a) and 2a): Many candidates demonstrated little knowledge of the powers of the First Minister or the Prime Minister.
- ◆ Questions 1b) and 2b): These questions provided the opportunity for candidates to provide up-to-date exemplification of the constitutional debate (in Scotland) and the House of Lords (in the UK). While some candidates were able to score high marks by providing up-to-date and relevant knowledge, others were unable to distinguish between the terms 'devolution' and 'independence'. In the case of the House of Lords, answers referring to the current membership and structure of the House of Lords did not reflect changes made over the past decade.
- ◆ Questions 1c) and 2c): Questions requiring candidates to demonstrate selectivity in the use of facts remain disappointing. While some candidates did not appear to understand some basic Modern Studies concepts, and others misinterpreted the data in the sources, the main difficulty seems to be with candidates failing to understand what is required in this type of question.
- ◆ While the decision making questions in social issues are generally well done, some candidates would score more marks by making more extensive use of the evidence in the sources. Many candidates will use a number of individual pieces of evidence from each source to support their decision. They would score more marks by linking evidence across the sources and ensuring that they provide reasons for rejecting the other option.
- ◆ In Knowledge and Understanding questions, as always, it is important to read the question carefully. Some candidates do not score as well as they might if they attempt to give explanations in questions which only require descriptions, or give descriptions when explanations are required. For example, in Questions 3a) and 4a) many candidates gave explanations of poverty amongst children and reasons for young people committing crime.
- ◆ In International Issues, many answers continue to be vague and dated and lack any recent knowledge of the country studied. At Intermediate level, questions may be focused on specific aspects of the International Issue studied. Answers that fail to make specific reference to examples from the country studied will not gain full marks.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

Most candidates completed the paper and fewer candidates committed rubric violations, although some lost time by beginning one study theme and then changing their mind and moving on to another. It is important that candidates are familiar with the format of the Question Paper and are prepared to answer the study themes they are familiar with.

Answering Knowledge and Understanding questions

- ◆ Be aware of the difference between 'describe' and 'explain' questions and answer accordingly.
- ◆ Answer 'in detail'. In order to do this, candidates must provide additional description and explanation supported, where appropriate, by recent examples.
- ◆ Answers which consist of a list of points will gain few marks. Candidates should develop the points made with detailed explanations and exemplification.
- ◆ Use the number of marks allocated to each question as a guide to how much to write. Writing longer answers than required will not gain additional marks and may cause problems in completing the paper.
- ◆ Answer the questions as set. Fewer marks will be awarded if a candidate attempts to 'turn' the question.
- ◆ Where a question is in two parts make sure that both parts are attempted. It is not necessary to have an equal number of points for each part in order to achieve full marks.
- ◆ Demonstrate specific knowledge. In International Issues, full marks will only be achieved if candidates demonstrate specific knowledge of the country studied which is both accurate and up-to-date.

Answering Evaluating questions

- ◆ Make full use of the sources by linking evidence within sources and between different sources to provide detailed arguments. The use of a single piece of evidence from a source, no matter how long, will only gain one mark. To gain more marks, evidence should be linked with evidence from either within the same source or in other sources.
- ◆ Many candidates lose valuable time and gain no additional marks by quoting a piece of written information from the source and then paraphrasing the quotation. This is generally unnecessary. Some evidence may have to be explained or put in context — particularly statistical evidence, which may have to be interpreted — but this should be brief.
- ◆ When explaining 'selectivity in the use of facts' and giving reasons 'to support and oppose', it must be made clear whether the evidence being used in the answer is showing selectivity or not, and whether the evidence is supporting or opposing the view.
- ◆ Candidates need to develop skills in the interpretation and use of statistical sources. Generally, statistical evidence requires some interpretation to indicate its significance for the question and how it links to other evidence given. It is usually not enough to give figures without any context. Great care must be taken when using figures close to 50% and claiming this to be a majority — candidates should make reference to other figures to put them in context or give an explanation.
- ◆ While it is good practice for candidates to have a structured format for answers to organise the evidence contained in the sources, an overly-structured approach where, for example, the viewpoint is repeated several times throughout an answer, is unnecessary and time consuming.
- ◆ It is good practice to use a report-style format in the decision making exercise. However, the format often adopted at Higher may not always be the most suitable for Intermediate 2. Candidates must provide evidence to explain why they rejected the other option; otherwise they will be unable to score full marks.
- ◆ In the decision making question, when providing supporting arguments for the option chosen, only evidence drawn from the sources will be credited. As in other Evaluating questions, candidates will be credited for linking evidence both from within and between sources.

- ◆ For full marks, selective use of facts questions must contain balance. It is not enough only to provide evidence that disagrees with the view, ie shows selectivity. Evidence must also be given to show where evidence from the sources supports the view, ie to show the viewpoint is not selective. Candidates must use the viewpoint and make clear in what way the evidence they are giving is showing selectivity. Similarly, in questions where evidence is given to support and oppose a point of view, it is important that candidates refer to the point of view in the answer.
- ◆ To score well in conclusions questions, the bullet points must be used to organise the evidence and should be used as headings. An overall judgement related to the bullet point, based upon the evidence used, must be given. The conclusion may be given at the beginning or the end of the explanation. Conclusions should be based upon several pieces of evidence drawn from across the sources. It is not enough to come to a judgment based upon only one piece of evidence.

**Statistical information: update on Courses
Intermediate 2**

Number of resulted entries in 2012	3334
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	3676
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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 70				
A	28.9%	28.9%	1062	49
B	23.7%	52.6%	873	42
C	21.8%	74.4%	801	35
D	7.8%	82.2%	287	31
No award	17.8%	100.0%	653	-

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, SQA therefore 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 Business Manager 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.