

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

Modern Studies

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
Included in this report**

Modern Studies — Standard Grade

Statistical information: update

Number of resulted entries in 2003 (Post-appeal)	14,594
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Number of resulted entries in 2004 (Pre-appeal)	14,261
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General comments re entry numbers

The slight decrease in presentation numbers is disappointing. A small proportion of the decrease can be accounted for by a switch to Intermediate in a few centres. A small number of centres continue to enter candidates at levels which are inappropriate.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

Pre-appeal figures

Grade 1	27.6%	Credit	50.1%
Grade 2	22.5%		
Grade 3	16.8%	General	31.7%
Grade 4	14.9%		
Grade 5	11.8%	Foundation	16.7%
Grade 6	4.9%		
Grade 7	1.5%		

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

The proportion of candidates gaining a Credit award reflects the high quality of candidate work produced. The figure is significantly higher than in 2001 or 2002 and continues the upwards trend established in the late 1990s.

The decrease in the proportion of Grade 7 awards is particularly pleasing. Fewer than 2% of candidates were given a Grade 7 — the first time this has happened. The increase in the proportion of general awards is accounted for by a greater number of Foundation/General candidates achieving a Grade 3 or 4.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Standard Grade			
Assessable Element –	Knowledge and Understanding		
Grade	Maximum Mark	Minimum Mark for Grade	% Mark
1	32	23	71.9
2	32	17	53.1
3	28	18	64.3
4	28	13	46.4
5	20	14	70
6	20	10	50
Standard Grade			
Assessable Element –	Enquiry Skills		
Grade	Maximum Mark	Minimum Mark for Grade	% Mark
1	40	28	70
2	40	20	50
3	36	25	69.4
4	36	19	52.8
5	28	20	71.4
6	28	10	35.7

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

In Knowledge and Understanding the grade boundaries are close to the a priori scores of 50% and 70%. The cut-off score for a Grade 1 (23) has been constant for three years. The cut-off for a grade 2 (17) shows an increase of 1 compared to 2002 and 2003. This reflects slightly more accessible KU questions at Credit level. Grade boundaries at General level are broadly in line with previous years. At Foundation level the lower grade boundary was 50%. This is significantly higher than in previous years and reflects more appropriate performance in Foundation KU by many candidates and a question paper at this level which accurately reflects the requirements of the EGRC.

For Enquiry Skills the grade boundaries are again close to the a priori scores, with the exception of the cut off for a Grade 6. For Credit level the cut off score (28) is unchanged from 2003. The cut off for a Grade 2 (20) shows a decrease of 1 mark from 2003, bringing it in line with the a priori figure. At Foundation level a minority of candidates continue to find ES questions inaccessible and make little attempt at answering the questions. This is reflected in the low cut off score required to achieve a Grade 6.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

A small minority of candidates attempted questions 3A, 3B and 3C. More than 95% of centres teach the USA, around 4% teach China and fewer than 1% teach Russia.

Foundation/General Level

It was pleasing to note that many Foundation/General candidates were able to make a reasonable attempt at the General paper. A very small number of these should clearly have been entered for General/Credit. Few candidates scored very poorly in the Foundation paper.

General/Credit Level

A very small number of candidates should have been entered at Foundation/General level rather than General/Credit. A minority of Credit candidates continue to write too much in answers to General questions and run out of time in the General paper. There is no evidence that these same candidates run out of time in the Credit paper.

A small number of centres encourage pupils to write an introduction and conclusion to every question in the Credit paper. This practice is disadvantageous to candidates who often have insufficient time to complete the papers.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Foundation Level

Q 1 (a) Almost all candidates were able to identify the concepts of rights and responsibilities accurately.

Q 1 (b) Candidates who disagreed with the view of Pat Clark were almost always able to provide good justifications.

Q 1 (e) Many candidates produced excellent questions. The lay-out of the page was criticised by some Markers although there was little evidence of any disadvantage to candidates. The reason for providing boxes rather than lines was to encourage candidates to produce 'closed' questions with a range of tick box answers. Very few candidates did this — most produced sound 'open' questions.

Q 1 (f) Many candidates were able to describe difficulties in obtaining information from a television programme. Pleasingly, many answers focussed on the content of the programme and related it to the investigation topic although answers on the practicalities of obtaining information from television programmes in a generic sense were also acceptable.

Q 2 (a) Almost all candidates performed well in this question.

Q 2 (b) The majority of candidates correctly identified the two exaggerated statements. Some candidates went further and tried to explain why they were exaggerated although this is not required at Foundation level.

Q 2 (c) This question format worked well. Most candidates were able to correctly identify why benefits and training schemes are a good way of helping unemployed people meet their needs.

Q 2 (d) The vast majority of candidates correctly identified two differences between the sources.

Q3A (b) Almost all candidates understood what was meant by the American Dream.

Q 4(a) Almost all candidates were able to identify examples of the power of NATO in operation.

Q 4(b) Most candidates correctly identified two differences between the sources.

General Level

Q 1 (b) Most candidates successfully linked the information about their chosen candidate to the information about Glenmarsh Textile Factory. Approximately equal numbers of candidates chose Davie Paterson and Sheila Cameron — and many gained full marks.

Q 1 (c) The 'two part' format for this question worked well. It helped F/G candidates to gain some credit for this question.

Q1 (d) Many candidates generated excellent conclusions which related to changes over time or the comparative success of different parties.

Q 2 (b) This question was very well answered. Candidates gave a range of answers relating to low income families, families with children, the elderly, the disabled and carers.

Q 2 (c) Almost all candidates found this question accessible — including F/G candidates.

Q 2 (d) Many candidates accurately identified two differences relating to the success or otherwise of Free Personal Care and the responsibility of the government to pay for care. A minority of candidates copied virtually the whole of both sources without pinpointing the points of comparison.

Q 3A (b) Most candidates produced good answers to this question.

3A(e) Many candidates had some idea of the advantages and disadvantages of using a library. The fact that so many commented on the dated nature of source material was interesting. Some also commented on the helpful nature of librarians.

Q4 (c) Candidates from both F/G and G/C cohorts did well in this question.

Q4 (d) Again, candidates did well in this question. Almost all reached a valid conclusion about the first bullet point and many also did so for the second bullet point.

Credit Level

Q1 (a) Many candidates gave good descriptions of the rights and responsibilities of pressure groups. The best answers related each right to a relevant responsibility in a well-structured format.

Q1 (c) Most candidates coped well with this question.

Q2 (e) Most candidates gave good descriptions of how to arrange a visit to a factory.

Q2 (f) Most candidates were able to provide good descriptions of advantages and disadvantages of interviewing the manager.

Q3A(a) Most candidates were able to give descriptions of ways in which American citizens can participate in politics. Some lacked detail and accurate American exemplification.

Q3 (c) This question was very well done by almost all candidates.

Q4 (a) Many candidates gave detailed descriptions of security measures taken by European countries to protect themselves against threats such as international terrorism. Some concentrated on well-established measures such as membership of NATO but many also described heightened airport security, tighter border controls, the proposed introduction of ID cards etc.

Q4 (b) Many candidates gave two or more detailed economic reasons why countries want to join the EU. In the context of this question candidates did understand the term 'economic'.

Q4 (c) Many candidates provided good answers to what was a difficult question. They linked the aims of the ICTY to the evidence in Sources 1–3 and gave valid reasons to support and oppose the view of Thomas Moller. Candidates who produced structured answers scored particularly highly. Candidates whose answers lacked structure were still able to score middle-range marks.

Q4 (d) Many candidates assimilated the arguments for and against and reached a well-reasoned overall conclusion.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Foundation Level

Q 1 (b) Candidates who agreed with the view of Pat Clark had more difficulty in providing a justification worthy of 2 marks.

Q 1 (d) A minority of candidates were unable to identify a reason why questionnaires are a good way of obtaining information for an investigation.

Q 2 (c) A minority of candidates were unclear about the nature of Community Care. They believed that Community Care was either a Benefit or a Training Scheme. Some candidates did not read the whole question before answering. They did not realise that they had a selection of terms to choose from. Some had subsequently gone back and scored out original answers to insert the correct ones. This was a new question format and the setters will look at the best way of presenting this type of question.

Q3A (a) A minority of candidates simply repeated information from the table with no evaluation at all.

Q3A (c) Many candidates did nothing more than repeat information from the visual prompt. In these cases they were awarded a maximum of 2 marks. For more marks they were expected to expand and/or exemplify the point from their own knowledge. Some candidates confused an internet opinion poll with on-line voting.

Q4 (c) Most candidates used the visual prompt to identify one way in which the UN has helped many people in Kosovo. However, when expanding their answers a significant minority betrayed their lack of knowledge and gave examples of UN work more appropriate to Africa.

General Level

Q1(a) A significant number of candidates missed this question out. The setting team were surprised by this as they felt this was a mainstream Trade Unions question. Many of the candidates who did answer the question produced good responses.

Q1 (c) Most candidates described ways in which MSPs could find out about problems in their local area. However, a significant number were very vague about how the MSP could draw attention to the problem. Some also made specific reference to UK Parliament actions that were inappropriate for an MSP.

Q 2(a) Many candidates were unable to give up-to-date examples of government policies. Some regarded benefits as a suitable example. This was credited only where the candidate argued that benefits were a temporary measure until employment was found or that benefits were set at a level to encourage people to find work.

Q3A(a) A minority of candidates were not sufficiently specific in their exemplification. They wrote about issues of disadvantage that could apply equally to all three areas — housing, education and health. While accepting that the issues are inter-related the setting team had hoped for more specific answers. Very few candidates, even G/C, made specific reference to different ethnic minority groups in their answers.

Q3A(b) Many candidates clearly did not understand the term ‘inflation’. They did not require to do so to answer the question. However, a minority attempted to use the information about inflation in relation to economic competition from abroad.

3A(c) The quality of aims provided by candidates was, in many cases, disappointing. Some did little more than paraphrase the investigation topic. Few provided insightful aims. Some G/C candidates tried to provide hypotheses.

3A(d) Some candidates misread this question and provided advantages of the Internet. In fact what was asked for was a description of how to use the Internet.

Q4 (a) Many candidates were unable to define clearly the work of a specific UN agency. In relation to UNICEF disappointingly few flagged up that the main concern was with women and children. Answers on WHO tended to be better.

Credit Level

Q1 (a) Some candidates were unable to exemplify the rights and responsibilities of pressure groups. This was disappointing. Some also chose to use Trade Unions as an example of a pressure group. They were credited for this although the setters had hoped to see more detailed descriptions in the context of recent pressure group activity.

Q1 (b) Many candidates reached only superficial conclusions from the drawing. More detailed advice on how to address questions of this nature is included in the 'feedback to centres' centre.

Q2 (a) Many candidates gave lengthy descriptions of the drawbacks of housing and the alterations that could be made to make it better for elderly people. They were given some credit for this but comparatively few made good points about the reasons why some elderly people live in unsuitable housing (eg financial issues, locational issues).

Q2 (c) Although many candidates gave a relevant hypothesis, some lacked insight and depth.

Q2 (d) A significant minority of candidates gave very superficial aims which did not always relate to their hypothesis.

Q3A(b) Almost all candidates identified instances of selective use of facts but few explained the extent to which Hilary Wallace had been selective. Further advice on this is to be found in the 'feedback to centres' section of previous reports.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

One of the Enquiry Skills questions at Credit Level required candidates to draw conclusions from a cartoon-type source. This is a question format which was familiar until a few years ago. Many candidates reached very low-level conclusions that involved little more than copying from the source. At Credit Level candidates are expected to reach more in-depth, complex conclusions. One way of doing this is to link more than one piece of information from the cartoon to reach a more generalised conclusion. For example, the fact that the girl is disinterested in voting could be linked to the fact that the elderly lady wants to vote to reach a generalised conclusion about age and voting behaviour.

At Foundation Level candidates should be made familiar with the question-type employed for Question 2 (c).

It was clear that some candidates had little or no knowledge of Trade Unions. The question about trade union activity could have produced more excellent answers using up-to-date exemplification.

At General Level some Credit/General candidates, who are clearly good Credit candidates, continue to write too much. They find it difficult to finish the General paper which may cause them undue stress. Able candidates should be encouraged to make two or three valid points in an answer to a 4-mark question and then move on.

Use of specific Scottish examples in Scottish Parliament questions continue to be disappointing. Previous PA Reports have highlighted this shortcoming. Unfortunately many candidates continue to use exemplification from the UK Parliament when responding to questions that clearly flag up a Scottish context.

In the 2003 PA Report attention was drawn to the need for candidates to provide recent examples of government policies when answering Syllabus Area 2 questions. Some candidates still exemplify 'recent policies' with reference to Job Clubs and Job Centres. Although some credit has been given for this, in future it will be necessary for candidates to mention more recent policies when answering questions in this area.

Answers to KU questions on the USA tend to produce sweeping generalisations. Some candidates appear to confuse problems that ethnic minority groups may face in the USA with problems associated with developing countries in Africa. Candidates should have clear and specific examples of USA policies in areas such as health, education and housing that would allow them to answer questions on these social issues. It may not always be the case that candidates are given a choice of topics in these questions.

Whilst candidates did understand the use of the word 'economic' in the context of reasons for countries joining the EU, there were other areas of the paper where key economic terminology was not used appropriately. Many General candidates did not understand the term inflation. All Modern Studies candidates should be aware of the meaning of key economic terms such as inflation, unemployment, GDP or economic growth.

Although many candidates are aware of the security interests of European countries in 21st Century contexts, it would be advantageous to candidates if more centres taught specific examples (eg European involvement in the war on terrorism, Iraq, Afghanistan).