

## Principal Assessor Report 2004

**Assessment Panel:**

**Steering Group for Contemporary Social Studies**

**Qualification area**

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

**Contemporary Social Studies, Standard Grade**

## Statistical information: update

<b>Number of resulted entries in 2003 (Post-appeal)</b>	235
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<b>Number of resulted entries in 2004 (Pre-appeal)</b>	214
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## General comments re entry numbers

There has been a year-on-year drop of some 9% in presentation numbers, significantly lower than in some previous years. As indicated in previous years, the assumption has been made that the retention of the Investigation, in contrast to the other Social subjects, has made CSS a less attractive option. It is also clear that many departments have come under pressure from senior management to follow the Access 3 route. This tends to be pursued in the context of the discrete social subjects, rather than under the banner of CSS, although it is equally possible to present at Access 3 level in CSS. There has also been some uptake by new centres.

## Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of awards

Grade 1	-	0
Grade 2	-	0
Grade 3	-	3.7%
Grade 4	-	19.6%
Grade 5	-	43.0%
Grade 6	-	22.0%
Grade 7	-	3.7%
No award	-	8.0%

### Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

As ever, there is a very significant imbalance in the performance in the Knowledge and Understanding and Evaluating elements, with a much poorer attainment in the former. Within the KU element, however, there were some welcome indications of improvement. The proportion of Grade 7 awards, commented on in 2003, has been halved to stand on 10%. Last year, a poorer cohort was assumed. This year, an improved cohort may be the explanation; alternatively, preparation by centres may have improved, or the paper may have become more accessible, which is certainly what the setting team have been striving towards. The other significant improvement has occurred at Grade 5 in KU (up 7 points), confirming an overall improvement in the Foundation Paper. This overall improvement is reflected in the Evaluating element in the General paper, up 5 points on last year.

### Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

<b>Standard Grade Assessable Element – Grade</b>	<b>Knowledge and Understanding Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Minimum Mark for Grade</b>	<b>% Mark</b>
1	30	20	66
2	30	14	47
3	40	24	60
4	40	17	43
5	40	21	53
6	40	15	38

  

<b>Standard Grade Assessable Element – Grade</b>	<b>Evaluating Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Minimum Mark for Grade</b>	<b>% Mark</b>
1	30	21	70
2	30	14	47
3	40	26	65
4	40	18	45
5	40	24	60
6	40	17	43

### Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

The grade boundaries are within the norms established in previous years and very close to teachers' estimates. At General level, in the Knowledge and Understanding element, allowance was made for problems caused by the last question, in order that candidates did not suffer a double penalty.

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

The marking team were pleased by the general response of candidates. Although the cohort seemed, with some notable exceptions, to be primarily Foundation-level candidates, paper completion seemed much improved on some past years, as was the number of single digit paper totals. This improvement did not always translate into improved quality of answer, but was gratifying, nevertheless, in view of the attempts that the setting team has been making to make the papers more accessible to candidates.

### Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

As ever, Evaluating questions were completed to a much higher standard than those in Knowledge and Understanding. At Foundation level, candidates coped well with summarising questions. As last year, it is worthwhile pointing out that ‘summarising’ is a discrete skill that demands of the candidate a degree of synthesis of the data provided. A template is provided at Foundation level. At other levels, candidates should be taught to be systematic in their approach, giving maxima and minima, for example, when numerical data is provided, and looking for patterns, rather than trying to translate whole graphs or tables into words. The ‘Environment’ section tends to be better done than the other two, with candidates showing a good grasp of basic concepts such as conservation.

### Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

The problems that most candidates face can be summarised under two headings; the first, basic language skills; the second, a failure to revise or ‘learn up’ the details of the coursework.

The first penalises the candidates in many different ways, from the usual failure to observe the instructions in the question, viz. ‘From the source’ and ‘From your own knowledge’, to a clear lack of comprehension as to the meaning of the question. Candidates are given no marks if they provide an answer taken from the source, when the question says ‘From your own knowledge’.

Candidates still lose marks too often through ignoring the emboldened word in the instructions, e.g. in the General paper Q7(b), many candidates continued to answer from the perspective of the worker, rather than the company.

Candidates should be clear as to what they should be trying to do when the question asks them to describe an advantage, or disadvantage of something. For example, in the Foundation Q7, an advantage of a dishwasher is not that it washes dishes – that is simply a statement of what it does. The advantage might be in the ease or speed that it takes to do it, or in the fact that it allows one to do other (more enjoyable things) in that time.

This is similar to the problems that candidates experience with questions that ask for changes to be identified or described, e.g. in the Foundation paper Q10. For the change to be made explicit, it is really necessary to identify the ‘before’, as well as the ‘after’. Many candidates simply list the ‘after’, which may, at best, receive partial credit for implied correctness, but not full marks. Where a table is provided as the source, the horizontal banding is intended to encourage the candidate to scan across the years.

Q2 (b) asked candidates to give two ways in which conservation groups might object to a development (a fairly standard formula). Quite often candidates lose marks by saying, ‘They could protest about it’. This is just reformulating the question and does not indicate how they might protest, which is what the question is asking.

(‘Holding a protest’ would be acceptable as it clearly conveys the idea of a demonstration.)

Candidates do lose marks by failing to reformulate the wording used in the sources. This is less likely to happen at Foundation level and will not happen if the source makes it extremely difficult or impossible to reword. It would normally be expected at General level, however. Where a candidate simply lifts a whole chunk from the given text, it is difficult to assess if he/she has hit on the correct answer by luck or by good judgement. To avoid any dubiety and to demonstrate the understanding that is being looked for by the marker, candidates should always try to answer in their own words, wherever possible. For example, in the General paper Q3, the candidate who gives as one reason why farmers are being encouraged to produce organic food, “We will have more colour in our fields, we will hear more birdsong and have a landscape that is more pleasant to look at.” will not gain full credit. The candidate who wrote, “Organic farming is less damaging to wildlife....” Is both showing understanding and is summarising (which is what the question demanded).

The gaps in knowledge tend to have been highlighted in previous years. The Public Enquiry remains seemingly intractable, with a majority of candidates still believing that the final decision is made by a show of hands or some kind of vote. (Foundation paper Q3 (b)). Likewise, local conservation groups cannot (decide to) hold a Public Enquiry.

The distinctions in the categories of employment, in the General paper Q6 (b), may seem somewhat arcane, but are part of the syllabus and must be examined. This question was particularly poorly done.

It has to be assumed that, as part of the study of conservation, candidates will be familiar with the names of leading conservation organisations such as the RSPB. Significant numbers of candidates answered this question wrongly. (Foundation paper Q4(b))

In the General paper Q9, it was clear that many candidates did not understand what an ‘incentive’ is, in the context of industry.

## Recommendations

### Feedback to centres

- Candidates should follow the rubric of the question – ‘from the source’ or ‘from your own knowledge’.
- Candidates should answer the questions asked, especially where it asks for (dis)advantages or changes.
- Candidates should attempt to answer in their own words wherever possible.
- Candidates should be encouraged to revise, especially in areas like the Public Enquiry.
- Candidates should be encouraged (always) to use the figures given in graphs/tables/maps to back up their statements. This makes it clear that the candidate is ‘using the evidence’ and can make a significant difference to the marks gained.

e.g. Foundation Q8(a) :

“The number of Trade Union members has fallen” – correct statement: 1 mark.

“The number of Trade Union members has fallen by 6.2 million/by several millions/by nearly a half “ – correct statement, backed up by figures from the source: 2marks.