

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Modern Studies

Qualification area

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

Modern Studies Standard Grade

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	13837
Post appeal	13981

Number of entries in 2003	
Pass marks	14523
Pre appeal	14594

General comments re entry numbers

The slight increase in presentation numbers is welcomed. It is pleasing to note that there has been very little movement to Intermediate 1 and 2 Modern Studies as a replacement for Standard Grade. However, some Standard Grade candidates are entered at inappropriate levels. This is most apparent in centres where the presentation group is clustered at the top or bottom of the ability range.

Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

Knowledge and Understanding

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Marks	23	16	15	11	14	8
Percentage	72	50	54	40	70	40

Enquiry Skills

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Marks	28	23	26	20	20	10
Percentage	70	57	72	56	72	36

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

In Knowledge and Understanding the cut-off scores at Credit and Foundation are satisfactory. They are close to the a priori scores of 50% and 70%. The General Level cut-offs are a function of the cut-offs at Credit and Foundation levels. However, the team were disappointed that these were so low. This indicates that the KU questions at General Level were not accessible to Foundation/General candidates.

In Enquiry Skills the team were delighted to see that the cut off scores are close to the a priori scores of 50% and 70% at all 3 levels.

The biggest causes for satisfaction were:

The upward movement in the Foundation Knowledge and Understanding cut-offs compared to recent years.

The downward movement of the Credit Enquiry Skills cut-offs compared to recent years.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The setting team were delighted by the quality of candidates answers this year. Many candidates provided outstanding responses to complex questions at Credit Level. Although the cut-off scores are lower than recent years, the quality of many answers in Enquiry Skills was outstanding. The reason for the lower cut-offs was a rigorous application of the marking instructions in an attempt to discriminate between the really outstanding candidates and those who are simply very good.

The Foundation paper is clearly becoming more accessible to candidates. The key elements of knowledge and understanding required remain the same but different question formats have allowed candidates to express their knowledge more coherently.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

At all levels only a tiny minority of candidates answered questions about China or Russia. Candidate performance in all three options in Syllabus Area 3 was similar.

Foundation Level
Knowledge and Understanding

In Syllabus Area 1 the vast majority of candidates could recognise rights and responsibilities Question 1 (a). Most were able to describe ways in which trade unions could try to get a pay rise but fewer were able to explain why the method selected was a good one Question 1 (d).

In Syllabus Area 2 the vast majority of candidates could distinguish between government help and voluntary sector help for the unemployed Question 2 (a).

Many candidates were able to explain why many people want to go and live in the USA. It was pleasing how many Foundation candidates wrote knowledgeably about the American Dream Question 3 (a). Candidates also gave good descriptions of ways in which American people are not all equal. Some made use of the drawings but many wrote about other aspects of inequality Question 3 (b).

In Syllabus Area 4 most candidates understood the concept of power in the context of aid. This contrasts with other years when they have been unable to understand the concept when it is assessed in the context of International Organisations. Question 4 (a).

Enquiry Skills

Questions 1 (b) and 1 (c) were well done by the vast majority of candidates. They were particularly good at identifying differences between the Scottish Parliament and the UK Parliament Question 1 (c).

In Syllabus Area 2 the Investigating questions Questions 2 (c) – (f) were well done by many candidates. Candidates were well equipped to describe how to obtain information from a website Question 2 (f).

In Syllabus Area 3 the vast majority of candidates were able to express support for a given point of view Question 3 (c) and identify true and false statements Question 3 (d).

In Syllabus Area 4 most candidates used the factfile about Mali effectively to score highly in Question 4 (d). They were able to identify the distracter statement without any problem.

General Level

Knowledge and Understanding

Candidates gave excellent descriptions of how the needs of some elderly people can be met by their family

Question 2 (a). Most candidates also gave clear explanations of the problems faced by lone parents when looking for employment Question 2 (b).

Many candidates gave excellent explanations of why American people should participate in politics. Exemplification in this area was often up-to-date Question 3 (Ac).

Many candidates were able to give one good explanation of why countries want to join NATO. This referred to collective security and/or shared defence costs.

Enquiry Skills

The vast majority of candidates produce good answers to questions where they are asked to identify exaggeration.

Many candidates also scored well in the Investigating Skills Questions 1 (c) – 1 (e).

Question 2 (d) was very well done by the vast majority of candidates.

Credit Level

Knowledge and Understanding

Many candidates gave excellent answers about New Deal and the National Minimum Wage Question 2 (a). They were up-to-date and well argued.

Candidates gave good examples of social inequality in the USA, especially in the area of housing and the justice system. A minority had a tendency to make sweeping generalisations.

Many candidates had strong knowledge and understanding of the political factors involved in deciding which countries receive aid. Some gave excellent examples such as the present government situation in Zimbabwe.

Enquiry Skills

In questions asking candidates to identify selective use of facts 1 (c), 3 (c), the strongest candidates were able to identify selectivity rather than just identifying where the person stating a view was 'wrong'. At Credit Level candidates are expected to identify how the person has been selective in the use of facts rather than just where they are 'wrong'.

Many candidates produced excellent answers to Question 2 (b), relating the information about Newtonhall and Inverkirk to the Kwikring priorities. The quality of some answers, assimilating large amounts of information, and producing clear and reasoned recommendations, were outstandingly good.

The majority of answers to the Investigating Skills Questions 4 (c) – 4 (f) were excellent. In particular candidates were well prepared to describe how they would use the Internet and Libraries to help with an investigation.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Foundation Level

Knowledge and Understanding

Although most candidates could give some explanation of why building wells and vaccination programmes were good ways of meeting the needs of people in Africa, many did not develop their answers in any way

Question 4 (b).

Enquiry Skills

In Question 2 (b) a minority of candidates gave themselves problem by trying to use all the information in the sources, rather than simply making a choice and justifying it in positive terms from the source material.

The Investigating Questions 2 (c) – 2 (f) caused problems for a minority of candidates. Although most identified a good heading, many were unable to explain why a letter would be a good way to get information. They thought, incorrectly, that letters always elicit responses. In Question 2 (e) a minority of candidates were unable to restrict the questions they wrote to financial matters.

When asked to choose a country to provide with aid Q4 (c), a minority of candidates attempted to use all the information provided rather than just selecting the information which backed their considered opinion.

Many F/G candidates and some G/C candidates gave very superficial advantages and disadvantages of using surveys Question 1 (e).

General Level

Knowledge and Understanding

Although most candidates understand the concept of representation, many are unable to exemplify the concept in the context of the Scottish Parliament. A significant number of candidates use Westminster terminology when they have been asked specifically about the Scottish Parliament Question 1 (a). A minority of candidates do not understand representation and confused the concept with campaigning.

Some candidates had difficulty with linking the economy of the USA to living standards Question 3 (Aa).

When asked to identify one European conflict they had studied, a significant minority of candidates identified a non-European conflict. Many chose to deal with Iraq and described the recent conflict. They wrong stated that the UN was the driving force in this conflict. Only a very small number of candidates used Iraq as an example and scored highly by correctly discussing the role of Arms Inspectors and the debate in the Security Council. Answers were found dealing with conflicts such as Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Palestine, World War One, World War Two, the Cold War, Northern Ireland, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Korea and others.

Enquiry Skills

In Question 1 (b) a minority of candidates failed to read the question properly. They were asked to identify exaggeration rather than identify similarities and differences between two Pressure Groups.

When asked to reach conclusions, a significant minority of candidates gave very low-level superficial conclusions.

Credit Level

Knowledge and Understanding

Candidates had difficulty in describing the rights and responsibilities of trade union members. Many answers to Question 1 (b) gave rights and responsibilities of the Union as a whole.

A minority of candidates gave examples of government policies in Syllabus Area 2 which are very dated – eg Job Club, Locate In Scotland Question 2 (a).

Enquiry Skills

Many Candidates failed to read the instructions for Question 2 (b). They were required to use Sources 1 and 2 and to link the information about the towns (plural) to the background information. A significant minority of candidates discussed only one town.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Investigating Skills questions at General Level have caused some difficulty. The first sub-question has asked candidates to provide two aims or headings for an investigation topic. The second sub-question then asked them to provide two questions, linked to the aims or headings, to include in a survey. This frequently leads to repetition from candidates for which they have not been penalised. The setting team are considering ways of avoiding the problem of repetition. Specifically, questions may ask for aims **or** headings, rather than allowing candidates to give either.

Candidates appear better-equipped to answer questions on political and social contexts than on economic contexts. Centres should make sure that candidates are familiar with key economic terminology such as inflation, GDP etc.

When teaching candidates how to draw conclusions (at General and Credit Levels), centres should make candidates aware of different levels of conclusion. Simple conclusions, which would attract only 1 mark, usually use only one data set and refer to the 'highest' and 'lowest' figures or the simple trend. Complex conclusions, which attract more than one mark, include inter-relationships between data sets both within and across sources.

Questions about the security interests of European countries can be answered in the context of non-European conflicts (eg War on Terrorism, Iraq Conflict). However, only points related to the security interests of European countries can be credited. Questions may be written in such a way that candidates do not have to answer in terms of one of the major International Organisations-UN, NATO and EU). More recent 'Alliances' and 'Coalitions' may provide suitable exemplification for the security interests of European countries. Centres should ensure that candidates have information about a recent European conflict (eg former Yugoslavia) and the security interests of European countries outwith Europe (eg UK involvement in International Coalition against terrorism and Iraq).

Candidates have a tendency to make sweeping generalisations in some questions. This applies particularly to statements about women, ethnic minorities in the UK and the USA, white Americans and people from African countries. Where possible candidates should avoid statements such as "Blacks in America are poor"; "Africans are starving". Such statements should be qualified to make it clear they do not apply to all members of the group.

When teaching Trade Unions (and Pressure Groups), centres should ensure that candidates understand the difference between the rights and responsibilities of individual members as opposed to the rights and responsibilities of the organisation as a whole.

When teaching selective use of facts ES questions at Credit Level, centres should ensure that candidates understand the difference between 'detecting bias/exaggeration' and 'detecting selective use of facts'. The latter requires candidates to show how the person making the statement in the question is selective (by giving examples of where they are accurate and where they are wrong in their use of facts). Alternatively the candidate may make (and be required to make) an overall comment on the extent to which the person is selective in their use of facts (eg entirely selective, partially selective, only slightly selective etc.) The candidates would be expected to identify the sources from which the person is more selective in their use of facts.

When dealing with recent government policies in the context of Syllabus Area 2, centres should note that policies/schemes such as the Job Club will no longer be acceptable as 'recent' exemplification. Candidates should be aware of which policies have been introduced by Labour since forming the government in 1997.

In Enquiry Skills questions candidates should assume that they must refer to every source for a question in their answer in they are to have a chance of gaining full marks. Most centres teach pupils this 'rule'.

When writing a hypothesis at Credit Level, candidates are best to phrase it as a statement. A minority of candidates write questions, which are more appropriate as aims for an investigation.