

## Principal Assessor Report 2003

**Assessment Panel:**

**Personal and Social Education**

**Qualification area**

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

**Personal and Social Education Intermediate 1,  
Intermediate 2 and Higher**

## Statistical information: update

<b>Number of entries in 2002</b>	
<b>Pre appeal</b>	25 (Int 1), 29 (Int 2), 71 (Higher)

<b>Number of entries in 2003</b>	
<b>Pre appeal</b>	21 (Int 1), 48 (Int 2), 84 (Higher)

## General comments re entry numbers

Intermediate 2 showed a 71% increase in entries. Higher showed a 21% increase in entries. There was a slight fall in entries at Intermediate 1. This is encouraging, although overall the number of entries is still very small.

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

Intermediate 1 C – 25, B – 30, A – 35

Intermediate 2 C – 49, B – 59, A – 69

Higher C – 52, B – 62, A – 72

### General commentary on passmarks and grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create mark schemes which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum 50% of the available marks (notional passmark) and a very well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70%, it is almost impossible to get the standard absolutely on target every year, in every subject and level
- Each year we therefore hold a passmark meeting for each subject at each level where we bring together all the information available (statistical and judgmental). 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 senior management team at SQA
- We adjust the passmark downwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly more demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- We adjust the passmark upwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly less demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- Where the standard appears to be very similar to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries
- 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 are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. And just because SQA has altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry 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
- Our main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain standards across the years, even as syllabuses evolve and change

### Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Higher – same grade boundaries applied this year as last year. 83% of candidates achieved a pass at A-C level this year compared to 75% last year. The standard of the exam was consistent with the previous year and it was pleasing to note that overall candidates demonstrated a greater understanding of the demands of the paper which was generally well done with full insightful answers supplied by candidates.

Intermediate 2 – same grade boundaries applied as last year. 58% of candidates achieved a pass at A-C level this year, compared to 71% last year. The standard of the paper set was not more challenging than the previous year and it was disappointing to note that overall the response by candidates was poor in this paper. A surprisingly high number of candidates appeared to be operating at Intermediate 1 level – not Intermediate 2 – and had been entered for this level when it was apparent that the demands of Intermediate 2 were too challenging for them. A significant number of candidates were unable to attempt large sections of the paper.

Intermediate 1 – Same grade boundaries applied as last year.

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

Higher – a good overall response was shown by candidates. An understanding of all 5 key elements was demonstrated and also there was a good understanding of the personal awareness and development techniques. This showed an encouraging improvement from previous years.

Intermediate 2 – a poor overall response was shown by candidates. Some candidates were obviously not working at Intermediate 2 level. These candidates failed to answer large sections of the paper. The difficulty in addressing the questions highlighted a lack of knowledge of the underpinning aspects of PSE.

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

Higher – question 3 (a) candidates showed a perceptive understanding of roles

- question 3 (b) (I) identification of key elements was well done.

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

Higher – question 1 (a) (iii) candidates still had difficulty with including time element in action plans

- question 1 (b) (I) for some candidates skills selected for task management were not relevant to task management
- question 3 (b) (ii) and (iii) as in previous years pupils found it difficult to demonstrate an understanding of both co-operation and negotiation.

Intermediate 2 – question 1(a) (ii) most candidates did not attempt a mind map – instead they provided a list of points

- question 1 (a) (iii) no time frame given by most candidates – yet this is an essential part of action planning reported on every year in this report.
- Question 2 (b) (I) very few candidates named a personal development technique.

Overall, candidates did not show evidence of reading paper carefully.

## Recommendations

### Feedback to centres

In order to achieve success in the external component of the exam, candidates need to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the theoretical processes which underpin the course as a whole. This means that they need to know – the names of all the key elements, the component skills associated with each key element, the name and use of an awareness and development technique, the purpose of both initial and final self evaluation questionnaires, the type of contents which should be listed in an activity outline – an action plan – an activity log, the benefits of co-operation / negotiation / feedback, why roles and responsibilities are important and the purposes of a final review. This year the Higher was particularly well done and it was encouraging to see that many candidates were able to display an understanding of the above points.

The difference in level between Higher and Intermediate 2 still needs to be appreciated by staff in centres. Whereas Intermediate 2 candidates will show an understanding of the above points – and be able to apply these in an unseen new context – a Higher candidate will display a sophistication in their ability to use this knowledge in both new and complex situations. This year some of the candidates entered at Intermediate 2 level were clearly not able to work at this standard. This was disappointing for the marking team who suggested that issues surrounding composite class construction may have led to some candidates being submitted for an assessment at a level at which they were clearly not capable of achieving. Candidates need to be made aware of the likely nature and format of questions in the external paper – and practice in tackling past exam papers would help with this. The exam papers are constructed to assess knowledge of the key elements, plus the processes involved in analysing personal development (as per list above – these processes mirror the NAB requirements for a single unit) and are designed to sample learning across all three units (PAD, SAD and VAD). When centres are creating their own prelim papers it is important to check that all of these points are adequately covered. For example, some prelim papers submitted for appeal purposes last year, did not assess across this whole range of experience – perhaps by assessing action planning in two questions – and then not assessing both the co-operation and negotiation aspects of interpersonal skills. Based on these biased internal results staff may then erroneously estimate a result at a level at which the candidate has not been adequately prepared. When constructing prelim papers it would be useful to take a recent past paper and produce a list of the type of items assessed – and the assessment methods utilised. This standard could then be used to construct an appropriate prelim paper.

However, generally this year it was very encouraging to see that a good number of Higher candidates showed an in depth familiarity with both the key PSE elements and the theory behind personal awareness and development techniques. The area which is still causing some difficulty (and this is raised in this report on an annual basis) is that of demonstrating an understanding of action planning techniques which make clear reference to time-scales. Some candidates are still losing unnecessary marks by not attaching detailed times to each of the various steps.

Overall, it was good to see that more candidates are providing full detailed answers to each part of the question – and that when asked to do so – candidates can relate these answers to their own experiences.