

## Principal Assessor Report 2005

**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 2004	14,261
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	13,420
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### General comments re resulted entry numbers

There has been a slight decrease in entry numbers which is disappointing. It is interesting to note that 0.2% of the entries came from S3 whilst 0.3% came from candidates in S5.

## Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	28.8%
Grade 2	19.6%
Grade 3	15.6%
Grade 4	16.7%
Grade 5	12.8%
Grade 6	4.8%
Grade 7	1.6%
No award	0.1%

### Comments on any significant changes in distribution of overall awards

Grade Boundaries were set to maintain standards with previous years. The proportion of Credit awards rose significantly.

## Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
K/U	32	22	16	28	13	9	20	16	11
ES	40	26	19	36	25	18	28	20	10

## Comments on grade boundaries for each assessable element

### Knowledge and Understanding

At Credit level, the grade boundaries are 69% for a Grade 1 and 50% for a Grade 2, the a priori scores. The scores on the General paper tend to reflect the difficulty experienced by the majority of F/G candidates in handling this element of the examination. The examining team will be taking steps to address this situation for 2006. The scores of 80% and 55% reflect the accessibility of the Foundation paper.

### Enquiry Skills

The cut-offs applied for Grades 1 and 2 are slightly down on 2004 although still close to the a priori scores. They are a reflection on the more challenging aspects of the examination this year. At General level, the scores are absolutely on the mark as far as the a priori scores are concerned whilst at Foundation level, the cut-offs have remained constant for the past three years. It is disappointing that at Foundation level a minority of candidates still have difficulty with the question styles, despite recent attempts to make items more accessible.

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

Marginally more candidates this year, as opposed to 2004, attempted all three options in Syllabus Area 3. They tended to be the poorest candidates. The number of centres teaching China appears to have fallen slightly whilst those teaching Russia is insignificant.

#### Foundation/General level

The overall response to the Foundation paper was excellent, with the vast majority of candidates able to answer both elements of the paper. This was also the case for Enquiry Skills at General level. However, few candidates scored well for Knowledge and Understanding at General level. Overall the vast majority of candidates were entered at the correct level.

#### General/Credit level

A small number of candidates should have been entered for Foundation/General rather than General/Credit. A number of these candidates failed to make any great headway on either element. There was no indication that candidates were unable to finish either the General or the Credit paper in the allotted time.

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

#### Foundation Level

Q1 (a) Very well done.

Q1 (b) Very well done also.

Q1 (c) Most candidates were able to find the two differences. Almost no-one scored zero.

Q1 (d) Very well done.

Q1 (e) Very few candidates were unable to identify the two exaggerated statements.

Q2 (a) Very well done. This type of question allows the Foundation paper to become more accessible to a number of candidates. Some markers commented that the question was possibly too easy. This has been noted and may be acted on for future examinations.

Q2 (b) Very well done.

Q2 (c) The vast majority of candidates recognised the link between 'Housing for Elderly People' and 'Residential care'.

Q2 (f) This was well handled with only a few candidates either missing it out or using the same point for both advantages and disadvantages. Credit was given for one way but not the other.

Q3 Candidates did extremely well in all four parts to the question no matter which country they answered on.

Q4 (a) Very well done.

Q4 (b) This question was a further development of a style of question first introduced in 2003. It proved to be very successful as far fewer candidates missed out questions where extended writing was called for. A number of candidates merely used the cartoon whilst many more used the cartoon to elaborate on points which may have been highlighted in the cartoon.

Q4 (c) Very well done.

Q4 (d) Very well done.

Q4 (e) Very well done.

## General Level

Q1 (a) Well answered with good exemplification from a number of candidates, especially G/C. Fathers 4 Justice was a popular example of a pressure group in action.

Q1 (b) Well answered by all candidates. This style of question has proved to be very successful with candidates.

Q1 (d) The use of the source seems to have helped all candidates as it focused them much more clearly on what they had to write about.

Q1 (e) Most candidates scored at least 1 mark. Very few got nothing at all.

Q2 (b) This was answered well by the majority of candidates. The fact that candidates could choose either the housing or financial aspect of the question helped.

Q2 (c) Well answered with most candidates making the explicit link between the view and the source.

Q3C (a) Candidates who studied China tended to be fully aware of political rights and as such found little difficulty with this question.

Q3 (c) As per Q1 (b).

Q3 (d) This appeared to be a good discriminator as very many candidates got at least two marks whilst a number of candidates found the other two marks more difficult to come by. A number of G/C candidates wrote answers that were far too long for the number of marks on offer.

Q4 (a) A large majority of G/C candidates handled this question well with good exemplification, from the war on terrorism to UK involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. Some candidates interpreted international conflicts as being diplomatic rather than military.

Q4 (b) A good number of G/C candidates answered this question well with good exemplification. Many made good use of the map to give context to part of their answer.

Q4 (c) The vast majority of candidates handled this question well, although a few did not make the explicit link between the two parts of the view and the appropriate source material.

Q4 (d) The style of question appeared to help candidates focus on what was required to get the marks available

## Credit Level

Q1 (a) Well answered with good exemplification from a number of candidates. This was especially the case when candidates chose either MPs or MSPs.

Q1 (b) This was well answered with the source material being linked to the two different points of view.

Q1 (c) Feedback from interested parties is that this question was perceived to be taxing. By and large it was well handled by candidates and especially by those who read the question carefully and understood that by going through a similar process for four of the bullet points that marks were there to be had in a fairly straightforward manner.

Q2 (a) Well answered with good exemplification from a number of candidates. Central Government closely followed by local councils elicited the best set of answers.

Q2 (b) This style of question with the bullet points worked well. A well answered question.

Q3 (b) Feedback from interested parties is that this question was perceived to be difficult as there was so much reading to do. Results show that candidates handled this question well. Many candidates got a minimum of half marks and did not appear to be phased by what was being asked of them. Interestingly, there was a 75%/25% split in favour of Brent Landon.

Feedback from markers tends to suggest that overall those candidates attempting China did better than their counterparts who answered on the USA.

Q4 (a) Well answered with good exemplification from a number of candidates. Slightly unclear wording of the question did not put candidates off. A small minority of candidates interpreted the question as using power in a good way, e.g. sending experts.

Q4 (b) Well answered with good exemplification from many candidates.

Q4 (c/d) A majority of markers commented that the quality of responses had improved this year. This is heartening as questions on hypothesis and aims have tended to be poorly done.

Q4 (e) The change of topic caused no problems for candidates and was well handled by most.

Q4 (f) This question was extremely well done. The amount of reading was not a problem. It appeared to be the case that candidates were familiar with such a page from their own studies and were able to handle the information very successfully.

## Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

### Foundation Level

Q2 (d) A number of candidates were under the impression that writing letters to an organisation always elicits exactly the information which is being looked for.

Q2 (e) A number of candidates made a very good attempt at this question and were duly rewarded. It is, though, a difficult style of question for all candidates. What was apparent was that a fair number of candidates had no idea of the type of work done by Age Concern. This tended to mean that a number of the answers were way off the mark. Almost all answers were of the 'open question' variety. This may well have been the case because of the lines in the layout of the question which didn't really lend themselves to candidates writing 'closed questions'.

### General Level

Q1 (c) Too often aims were simplistic and added little to the topic.

Q2 (a) A number of candidates answered this question really well by picking and describing recent government policies. Too many, however, had very little idea about what was being looked for in this question.

Q2 (d) There was a mixed response to this question. The question was left open to allow a variety of answers and those candidates who had been well trained in how to go about answering such a question picked up the marks quite easily. Too many candidates, however, were unsure of what exactly they were supposed to be doing. This led to too many answers merely being a repeat of the figures without any conclusion being drawn at all.

Q3A (a) Many candidates did not restrict themselves to political rights but strayed into any rights, especially that of the right to carry a gun. The use of American examples was also poor.

Q3A (b) Many candidates got the idea of the American Dream but not really much else.

Q4 (a) A real dividing line between F/G and G/C candidates. Almost all F/G candidates struggled on this question. The exemplification used by too many candidates, such as WW1, WW2, Nazi Germany and the Cold War, was completely out of place. The wording of such a question may have to be looked at more closely in the future.

Q4 (b) This was a completely mainstream question with no ambiguities in the wording yet it was very poorly done by far too many candidates and missed out completely by a number of candidates.

### Credit Level

Q1 (a) Answers on Local Councillors were very poorly done with vague ideas about asking people what they wanted and then passing the information on to either MPs or MSPs.

Q1 (c) It would appear to be the case that some candidates do not seem to study the sources adequately resulting, occasionally, in nonsense statements, e.g. "Only 8.7% of MPs went to school." This had an effect on the marks gained by a number of candidates.

Q2 (c) This question could be described as a good discriminator as a number of candidates were able to score up to half marks in a fairly straightforward manner. This was mainly done through the use of Source 3. Genuine Grade 1 candidates got the link between Sources 1 and 2 and therefore were able to score highly. Too many candidates did not attempt to draw conclusions as to the extent of selectivity. Many resorted to the old-style answer of equating selective use of facts with exaggerating or more precisely with being right or wrong. Unfortunately, a number of candidates misunderstood terminology such as 'Day patients', 'Inpatients' and even what constitutes 'The Elderly'.

Q3A (a) Answers to this question were mixed in quality. A large number of candidates coped well with this question and gave good and sympathetic exemplification. Too many candidates, however, merely gave poor, stereotypical answers about different minority groups.

## Recommendations

### Feedback to centres

To enable candidates to find the Foundation paper accessible, the setting team will continue to use both the format of filling in the blanks, although the number of alternatives may well be increased, and also that of providing a cartoon or pictorial evidence for extended writing knowledge and understanding questions. Candidates should, therefore, be made well aware of these styles of questions. It may also be the case that the practice of providing pictorial prompts is extended into the General paper.

A question format such as that of Credit Q2 (b) will continue to be used in both General and Credit papers.

It is strongly recommended that centres re-emphasise to candidates that an overall conclusion on the extent to which there has been selective use of facts is essential if full marks are to be achieved. It is also essential to remind candidates that there are degrees of selectivity going from zero to 100%.

It is pleasing to note that there was little confusion between the ways in which MPs and MSPs represent constituents. However, knowledge of the work done by Local Councillors was extremely poor. It would be good to find candidates as confident when talking about their local representatives as they are when discussing the work of MSPs or MPs.

In both the 2003 and 2004 PA Reports, attention was drawn to the need for candidates to provide recent examples of government policies when answering Syllabus Area 2 questions. This is still the case and although credit was given this year for examples such as Child Benefit, this really can't be allowed to continue.

A number of markers reported that a sizeable minority of candidates tend to use examples which are very stereotypical when answering a question on inequality in the USA, e.g. Hispanics are illegal immigrants or all Blacks live in ghettos. It would be helpful if these kinds of notions were discouraged.

Bearing in mind the extent to which the European Union affects our lives, it is disheartening to find that this part of the Course still causes so many difficulties for candidates. It may well be the case in future that in order to minimise the effect that this apparently difficult area has on marks, that both parts of Syllabus Area 4, 'Alliances and Security' and 'The Politics of Aid', are integrated into all three papers. This would have the effect of evening out the relative degrees of difficulty in SA 4 across the three papers.