

Principal Assessor Report 2005

Assessment Panel:

Social Sciences

Qualification area

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

Psychology (Old) Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2

Statistical information: update

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2004	64
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	38
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Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2004	483
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	127
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General comments re resulted entry numbers

The number of participants who undertook Psychology (Intermediate 1 and 2, old Arrangements) dropped significantly this year. This was expected, given the introduction of the new syllabus during August 2004. Consequently, 2004/5 was the last diet in which candidates could be presented for external examination under the old Arrangements. The new Arrangements are now fully operational.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Intermediate 1

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 60	-	-	-	-
A	50.0	50.0	19	42
B	10.5	60.5	4	36
C	0.0	60.5	0	30
D	0.0	60.5	0	27
No award	39.5	100.0	15	-

Intermediate 2

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 60	-	-	-	-
A	20.5	20.5	26	42
B	20.5	40.9	26	36
C	20.5	61.4	26	30
D	7.9	69.3	10	27
No award	30.7	100.0	39	-

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 arrangements evolve and change.

Comments on any significant changes in distribution of awards/grade boundaries

There were no significant changes in distribution of awards during the 2004/5 diet. There were only 38 entries for Intermediate 1. Fewer candidates achieved an upper A, however more candidates achieved lower A. More candidates achieved at grade B; fewer achieved at C and there were fewer no awards compared to the previous diet. A normal distribution of marks was observed with Intermediate 2; there were 127 entries. Fewer candidates achieved upper and lower grade A; candidates achieving grades B and C increased; however more candidates failed to achieve at Intermediate 2.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Intermediate 1 : Overview

Most candidates performed very well – 60.5% achieved (grades A-C) and there were fewer no awards than the previous diet. It was quite apparent that those candidates who received no award did not follow the instructions regarding the number of questions to be attempted within the options. A number of candidates attempted to answer the full script. Overall, results were very encouraging and are clearly a consequence of centres preparing their candidates very well.

Intermediate 2 : Overview

Normal distribution was observed. The overall pass rate was down slightly on the previous year, although a very respectable 61.4% of candidates achieved at grades A-C. Many of the candidates who did not achieve at Intermediate 2 may have achieved a pass at Intermediate 1. There were more candidates presented at S4, S5 and S6, fewer candidates were presented from FE; this change in cohort may reflect the slightly poorer performance this diet. Most candidates performed very well and were adequately prepared for the examination.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

In line with previous years, An Introduction to Psychology (section A) and the *description* of concepts was answered well by most candidates. Better responses were given to research methodologies and examples throughout the options (in previous years, this section typically proved difficult for candidates).

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

- Answering the correct number of concept questions within each of the two options.
- Time. Both papers are challenging in respect to the time allocated.
- Application questions continue to be answered less well. Candidates are often unsure exactly what is required of them. At Intermediate 2, an *explanation* of the situation, using psychological terminology, is required to achieve full marks. It is acceptable to describe and explain the scenario, without the use of psychological terminology at Intermediate 1. Many candidates simply *described* the scenario at both levels.
- Appropriate use of language and spelling; particularly less mature styles were observed within the school cohort. Inappropriate language, which should be picked up on during internal assessment, includes deterministic, sexist, judgemental and politically incorrect styles.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

The old Arrangements are no longer operational, however centres may present candidates with a stand alone unit(s), or units as part of a larger award.

- All centres should be aware of, and use the most recent addition of the Arrangement documents.
- Candidates should be entered at the appropriate level – Intermediate 1 should be utilised more, where appropriate.
- Clear instructions regarding what questions, and how many questions, to be answered.
- Ambiguity surrounding the interchangeable nature of the classification of research examples.
- Prescriptive studies are not recommended, but perhaps a list of more appropriate studies could be presented to candidates.
- Candidates would benefit from exemplars of application questions.
- Avoid the use of inappropriate language, in particular deterministic, sexist, judgemental and politically incorrect styles. Candidates may not be aware their style is inappropriate.