

## Principal Assessor Report 2004

**Assessment Panel:**

Social Sciences

**Qualification area**

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

Sociology  
Advanced Higher

## **Statistical information: update**

<b>Number of resulted entries in 2003</b>	4
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<b>Number of resulted entries in 2004</b>	6
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### **General comments re entry numbers**

2004 saw an increase of 2 candidates, which, despite showing an upward trend since Advanced Higher Sociology began, nevertheless remains a disappointing statistic. This year also saw one other centre presenting, whereas previously only one centre presented.

## Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of awards

A	66.7%
B	16.7%
C	0.0%
D	16.7%
No award	0.0%

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

With only six candidates presented in 2004 and a smaller number or none in previous presentations, it is not possible to draw any meaningful conclusions on the change in distribution of the awards, though most candidates did attain an A pass this year; no candidates achieved an A pass in 2003. The marked scripts were scrutinised by other Markers.

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

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	66.7	66.7	4	63
B	16.7	83.3	1	54
C	0	83.3	0	45
D	16.7	100*	1	
No award	0	100*	0	

\*Rounded down from 100.1 per cent

### 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 grade boundaries for each subject area

The Standard of the exam was unchanged and therefore *a priori* grade boundaries were retained.

## **Comments on candidate performance**

### **General comments**

- The standard of performance by most candidates was excellent.
- No candidates responded to questions from Section D.
- Most candidates from both centres answered the same questions.

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

- A2. This question was answered well by all candidates.
- B1. Most candidates responded to this question with great competence.
- C1. Candidates responding to this question generally answered very strongly.
- Evaluation was generally very strong.

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

- No significant difficulties, though the candidates attaining the C pass and D grade provided much briefer responses and more limited evaluations than the other candidates.

## **Recommendations**

### **Feedback to centres**

- Candidates must write consistently well across the paper to gain higher marks.
- Candidates need to exercise effective time management – eg approximately one hour for each of the three essays. There is a tendency for the third essay to be significantly shorter than the first two.
- To achieve a C pass, candidates need to perform at a standard above that required for an Upper A at Higher. To gain an A or B pass, candidates need to provide very strong responses to each part of each question, particularly in terms of evaluation and relating the answer specifically to the question asked.