



## External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Psychology
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

# Comments on candidate performance

## General comments

Overall performance was good and showed an increase in the percentage of candidates gaining an A-C grade from last year.

There were fewer candidates who attempted all options in Section C which shows that more centres had prepared candidates well for the paper compared to previous years.

There are still a number of candidates who gained very low marks through not attempting most of the questions. This is reflected in the high proportion of No Awards. It may be that these candidates were able to pass NABs one unit at a time but were not prepared for an exam on the subject. Alternatively it may have been that they have not passed unit assessments.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

In section A the topic of Learning Theories was handled particularly well. The average candidate achieved over 70% in this topic. Self-concept also produced good responses, with an average mark of just over 60%.

Section B was generally answered well with an average mark similar to that of Self-concept.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

A1(e) asked for the effect parents and peers have on self-concept. However, candidates often gave responses that related to the effect parents and peers have on behaviour rather than self-concept. They also combined the effect of parents and peers, rather than seeing them as separate effects.

Section C produced more varied responses than the other sections and thus less stable marks with most averaging around 50%. The exception was C4 (altruism). This was the second most popular option in this section and produced an average mark of over 60%. The overall reason for the poorer performance in Section C was found in the 4 and 6 mark questions, ie (f) and (g), in each of the topics. In many cases candidates did not attempt these questions at all, relying simply on the short answer questions to gain a pass.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Candidates should be familiar with unit specifications. The terms used in the mandatory content pages of these documents are often used at this level for questions such as C1 (c),

C2 (d), C4 (d). Having candidates prepare a glossary of these terms may improve the performance of weaker candidates.

Candidates should prepare research study questions using the framework of the exam paper: Researcher(s) Name, how they carried out the study, what they found out. This may encourage more candidates to attempt these questions.

Candidates should be encouraged to attempt all questions in the topics they have studied. This is likely to result in an overall improvement in their grades.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2011	123
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	116
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## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 80				
A	35.3%	35.3%	41	56
B	15.5%	50.9%	18	47
C	14.7%	65.5%	17	39
D	8.6%	74.1%	10	35
No award	25.9%	100.0%	30	-

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). 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 management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ 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, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry this 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.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.