



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Psychology
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

Although there was an overall decrease in candidate numbers, four new centres presented candidates this year and the average mark rose slightly from last year. 73.5% of candidates achieved A-C awards.

The majority of candidates continue to be entered at an appropriate level and are generally well prepared for the exam — in particular for questions relating to research studies.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Research study responses are still consistently good across all sections of the paper, eg Question A1(e), Question A2(b)(ii), Question C3(d).

In Section B (with the exception of Question (a), see below) candidates' responses were of a good standard.

Question C3 (Non-verbal Communication) and Question C4 (Altruism) continue to be very well answered.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Candidates appeared to have difficulty explaining Question A1(c)(ii) using appropriate psychological terminology, ie '*What is meant by adaptation of schema?*' A typical response to this question was couched in terms of everyday language and simplistic example rather than reference to concepts such as 'assimilation', 'accommodation' and 'equilibrium'.

There was a notable lack of understanding of the Social Learning Theory concept of 'identification' in Question A2(d), with candidates often referring to 'social identification' as studied in Self-Concept.

It was unfortunate to see that a number of candidates related Question B1(a) '*Describe the experimental method of research*' to the prompt scenario, rather than describing the method in general terms.

From the mandatory section on Personality, Questions C1(d)(i) and (ii) were poorly answered. These questions referred to Eysenck's personality 'dimensions' and it seemed that many candidates were unfamiliar with this key term.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

While, in general terms, centres appear to be preparing candidates appropriately for the Course, there are still significant numbers of candidates who are not readily using psychological terminology in their responses. This was most evident in two of the mandatory topics: Learning Theories and Personality. Centres need to be aware that this is a requirement of the Course at this level and candidates still need to be better prepared in this respect.

Centres must follow the guidance provided in the Arrangements documents and adhere to the mandatory content of each Unit and topic. Questions can be asked on any aspect of mandatory content.

The Course Assessment Specification, Specimen Question Paper and past papers and their marking instructions are also useful in preparing candidates for the external assessment.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2011	673
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	639
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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 100				
A	40.5%	40.5%	259	70
B	18.2%	58.7%	116	60
C	18.8%	77.5%	120	50
D	5.2%	82.6%	33	45
No award	17.4%	100.0%	111	-

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.