



External Assessment Report 2014

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| Subject(s) | Psychology |
| Level(s) | Intermediate 1 |

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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 candidates performed well. However, there continue to be a few students who still answer all the question options within the paper. The use of past papers to familiarise candidates with the paper instructions should reduce instances of this.

The average candidate achieved over 75% in Section A. Section B showed a much improved average performance when compared to last year, increasing from just above 50% to 75% this year.

In line with previous years, Section C showed the greatest variability, with C1 (Personality) and C2 (Group Processes) averaging just below 50%. C3 (NVC) and C4 (Altruism) showed a stronger performance than in previous years at 68% and 73% respectively. NVC remains the most popular option in this section with over 50% of candidates choosing it.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Improvement continues to be noted in the ability of candidates to deliver short answer responses (ie 4 and 6 mark questions in sections A and C).

There has also been continued improvement in responses to 'study' questions in all sections, except C1 (Personality) in which candidates performed poorly this year, averaging 26%.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Poor performance was shown in response to question C1(d) when compared to study questions that were answered in other topics.

Question B1(e) was also answered poorly. This required a description of the case study method for 4 marks. The average mark for this question was 24%.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Continued formative questioning on research studies in each topic is encouraged. Given the weak response to B1(e) it is also suggested that formative questions should be given on descriptions of methods used by Psychologists.

Centres should use past papers to familiarise candidates with the structure of the question paper in order to reduce instances of candidates answering every question in the paper as opposed to choosing between options.

Statistical information: update on Courses

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| Number of resulted entries in 2013 | 91 |
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| Number of resulted entries in 2014 | 84 |
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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 | 29.8% | 29.8% | 25 | 56 |
| B | 16.7% | 46.4% | 14 | 48 |
| C | 14.3% | 60.7% | 12 | 40 |
| D | 4.8% | 65.5% | 4 | 36 |
| No award | 34.5% | - | 29 | - |

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.