



External Assessment Report 2014

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| Subject(s) | Psychology |
| Level(s) | Intermediate 2 |

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

There was a slight increase in the number of Intermediate 2 Psychology candidate entries this year with two new centres now delivering the qualification. The percentage of candidates who passed was very slightly lower than last year, but consistent with previous years. Candidates continue to provide good responses to Self-Concept and optional topics, but responses to mandatory topics such as Learning Theories and Personality continue to be inconsistent.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Research questions requiring description and evaluation were in general well answered, as were Questions A1 (Self-Concept), C2 (Group Processes), C3 (Non-Verbal Communication) and Question C4 (Altruism).

Areas which candidates found demanding

Not all candidates appeared to be fully prepared for some mandatory sections of the paper, including Learning Theories and Personality.

- ◆ Question A2 (c): Many candidates continue to be unclear on the difference between negative reinforcement and punishment.
- ◆ Question A2(e) & (f): Similarly to last year, Social Learning Theory (or its terminology) still appears to be unfamiliar to some candidates, with many offering Skinner or Pavlov as examples of SLT research in addition to being unable to explain imitation and identification. As highlighted in previous reports, SLT is a key learning theory cited in the Course Arrangements Documents.
- ◆ Section C, Personality: This is the mandatory topic in Section C. Surprisingly, a number of candidates were unable to distinguish between validity and reliability, or to fully describe Eysenck's multi-trait *approach* (as opposed to simply describing the EPI, which they may have done in Question C1(c)(i)).

It was also unexpected to see so many candidates suggest projective tests (Rorschach/TAT) being used in employment interviews rather than in clinical settings.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres are strongly reminded that they should 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, together with past papers and their associated marking instructions, are extremely useful for preparing candidates for the external assessment.

Centres are also reminded to make clear to candidates that use of psychological terminology is expected at this level of study.

Statistical information: update on Courses

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| Number of resulted entries in 2013 | 518 |
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| Number of resulted entries in 2014 | 564 |
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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 | 31.6% | 31.6% | 178 | 70 |
| B | 18.6% | 50.2% | 105 | 60 |
| C | 19.7% | 69.9% | 111 | 50 |
| D | 7.1% | 77.0% | 40 | 45 |
| No award | 23.0% | - | 130 | - |

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.