



External Assessment Report 2015

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 an inevitable decrease in the number of Intermediate 2 Psychology candidate entries this year due to centres now delivering the National 5 qualification.

The percentage of candidates who achieved the Course remained consistent with previous years.

Candidates continue to provide best responses to Self-Concept and optional topics, but responses to mandatory topics such as Learning Theories and Personality continue to be weaker.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Most candidates performed well in Section A1: Self Concept; and responses to the concepts of decentring and egocentrism were good. The optional topic in Section C on Group Processes was approached well.

Areas which candidates found demanding

As in previous years, not all candidates appeared to be fully prepared for the mandatory topic of Learning Theories.

- ◆ Question A2 (a) The concept of 'learning by association' was often not well described.
- ◆ Question A2 (d) Similarly to previous years, Social Learning Theory (SLT) was often not well described, with many candidates not applying the appropriate terminology: imitation, role modelling, identification, etc. As highlighted in previous reports, SLT is a key learning theory cited in the Course Arrangements Documents.
- ◆ Section B: Q (b) Candidates' suggested hypotheses were generally weak, particularly in terms of operationalising variables.
- ◆ Section B: Q (g) Many candidates were unable to name three measures of central tendency.
- ◆ Section C3: Non-Verbal Communication (NVC). Some candidates seemed to be unable to differentiate between *functions* of NVC and *types* of NVC.

Centres are urged to highlight to candidates that use of psychological terminology is expected at this level of study; see above in relation to learning by association, SLT, measures of central tendency.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	564
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	281
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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	38.1%	38.1%	107	70
B	16.4%	54.4%	46	60
C	16.7%	71.2%	47	50
D	7.1%	78.3%	20	45
No award	21.7%	-	61	-

The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

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.