



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Psychology
Level	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 generally good. Candidates who excelled and gained high marks in Section A — Questions 1 and 2 parts (e) and (f), and in similar extended response questions in section C — could have achieved Intermediate 2 level.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Section A1 provided confident responses, with the rouge test being the most common study described in A1 (f).

Section B (a) – (g) were answered better than (h) and (i), which suggests that more practice could be given to restricted response questions, eg B1 (i).

In section C, Altruism and Non-Verbal Communication continue to be the most popular topic choices, providing strong responses to the restricted response questions at the end.

Areas which candidates found demanding

The terminology/language is the most demanding aspect at this level. In some cases it is difficult to determine whether incorrect responses are a consequence of lack of understanding or if the subject requires greater language skills than other subjects, given that it is the candidates' first taste of this subject.

Personality was a challenging topic for candidates. In particular C1 (d) was not answered well. C1 (a) requires knowledge from the same area of the Course but provided stronger answers. It may be that candidates concentrate on the first three stages of psychosexual development and see the other two as less important.

In A1 (g) candidates often gave general descriptions of the effect parents and the media have on us, rather than focusing on the effect they have on our self-concept.

The term 'factors' in question C2 produced general responses to decision-making rather than specific factors mentioned in the unit descriptor.

The term 'features' in question C3 (d) produced examples and types of verbal and non-verbal communication rather than particular features in each case.

Candidates found it difficult to explain 'pluralistic ignorance' C4 (e), often describing people as being 'ignorant' because they don't help.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Candidates in some centres continue to attempt all parts of sections C2 – C4. It is unclear whether this is a consequence of unfamiliarity with the paper content/layout prior to exam, or if some centres are teaching more than one (or all) topic(s) from these sections. Candidates who do attempt all sections provide poor responses, often confusing theories/concepts from one topic to another.

If centres are delivering more than the required Course content because they have additional time, candidates would benefit from formative assessments based on exam structure rather than covering additional material.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2010	140
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	123
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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	31.7%	31.7%	39	54
B	17.9%	49.6%	22	45
C	13.0%	62.6%	16	37
D	8.1%	70.7%	10	33
No award	29.3%	100.0%	36	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.