



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>Psychology</b>
Level	<b>Intermediate 2</b>

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

Three new centres presented candidates this year, but overall there were 45 candidates fewer than last year.

The average mark was slightly lower than last year, but generally candidates still seem fairly well prepared. There was a slight decrease in A and B grades, alongside a slight increase in C and D grades, and slightly fewer No Awards made.

Each section had components which were answered very well, but equally each section had a component which was answered poorly.

The questions requiring reference to research studies were generally well answered across the paper.

It is gratifying to note that more of this year's candidates did appear to be entered at the appropriate level.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Prompts in research studies questions still seem to be proving useful, as the marks for the research studies were consistently good across all sections of the paper.

In Section B, the question on the hypothesis was remarkably well answered. This is often a tricky point for candidates to grasp at this level.

Question C3 (Non-verbal Communication) was the only topic to have the average mark for each component exceed 50%.

Question C4 (Altruism) followed closely behind, where the only component with less than 50% was part (d) on empathy–altruism hypothesis which had an average of 48%.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

In Section A1 (Self-concept) candidates appeared to have difficulty providing examples of 'decentring'. Perhaps this needs to be given more focus when preparing candidates.

In Section A2 (Learning Theories) the questions on Classical Conditioning and Social Learning Theory were generally not answered well. Similar failings were identified in the knowledge of candidates in this area last year, so again, perhaps attention needs to be paid to this area when preparing candidates.

In Section B, the question (d) regarding the hypothesis was answered well. However, the seemingly more straightforward questions asking the candidate to describe the main features of a field experiment and to describe an alternative non-experimental method were very poorly answered.

Question C1 (a) about the latent stage generally gained very low marks. Candidates did not appear to equate this with what they were perhaps taught as the 'latency stage'.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

While, in general, centres appear to be preparing candidates appropriately for the Course, there are still significant numbers of candidates — often clustered in specific centres — who are not tackling the mandatory C1 Personality topic. Inevitably, this results in a notable reduction in their overall marks. Centres and candidates need to be aware that this is a **mandatory** topic.

More preparation needs to be given to candidates for the topic Learning Theories, which is also mandatory.

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

Centres should also be aware that when submitting appeals evidence which uses only a two-part prelim plus a NAB, full Course coverage must be demonstrated. Therefore, in Section A, the two areas must be evidenced, and in Section C, Personality is mandatory and must be evidenced alongside the topic of choice.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Intermediate 2

Number of resulted entries in 2010	684
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	673
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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	33.0%	33.0%	222	70
B	15.6%	48.6%	105	60
C	16.5%	65.1%	111	50
D	5.9%	71.0%	40	45
No award	29.0%	100.0%	195	-

## **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, 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.