



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Psychology
Level(s)	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

The overall performance was better than the previous year. This was largely due to an improvement in the options section c). Each topic, apart from NVC, showed an improvement in the average mark gained. There was a 1 mark drop in the average mark for NVC.

The average candidate achieved over 70% in Section A. Section B showed poorer performance with the average falling just above 50%. Section C showed the greatest variability, with C1 (Personality) and C3 (NVC) averaging just over 50%. C3 (Group Processes) showed a poorer performance than in previous years at just over 40%, and C4 (Altruism) showed the best performance at around 70%.

NVC remains the most popular option in this section, with over 50% of candidates choosing it.

Areas in which candidates performed well

An improvement was noted in short answer responses (ie 4 and 6 mark questions in sections A and C). In this paper these questions may have been seen as more accessible because they were broken down into smaller components. In previous years these types of questions were regularly left with no response.

There was also an improvement in responses to 'study' questions. This was flagged as an area which could be improved on in the 2012 External Assessment Report and improvement was shown in all topics apart from Group Processes. This suggests good use of External Assessment Report by teachers/lecturers.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Candidates did not perform as well in section B as in the previous year. The key components that brought marks down in this section were B1e) and B1i). Only the very strong candidates attempted a response to these components.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The same advice would be given as last year, in that the terms used in the topic content pages of the unit specifications are often used at this level for short answer questions. Candidates who prepare a glossary of these terms may well find these questions straightforward.

Given the poor performance in B1i) (description of the experimental method) this year, and a similarly weak performance in description of the case study method in the previous year, perhaps more emphasis needs to be placed on descriptive responses in this section.

**Statistical information: update on Courses
Intermediate 1**

Number of resulted entries in 2012	116
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	91
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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	30.8%	30.8%	28	56
B	17.6%	48.4%	16	48
C	29.7%	78.0%	27	41
D	4.4%	82.4%	4	37
No award	17.6%	100.0%	16	-

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.