



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Psychology
Level(s)	Intermediate 2

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

There was a slight decrease in candidate numbers this year. The average candidate mark was also down very slightly on last year. No particular aspect of the paper clearly accounted for this, but it was interesting to note inconsistent responses to mandatory topics such as Learning Theories and Personality.

Areas in which candidates performed well

- ◆ Research study responses continue to be good across most sections of the paper, eg Questions A1b), A2b), C2e), C3e), C4d).
- ◆ Question C3 (Non-verbal Communication) and Question C4 (Altruism) continue to be very well answered.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Notably, as mentioned above, not all candidates appeared to be fully prepared for some mandatory sections of the paper, including Learning Theories, Personality and Investigating Behaviour.

- ◆ Question A1d): although Erikson's theory is cited in the course Arrangements Documents as a key self-concept theory, some candidates did not appear to be familiar with Stage 5 of the theory relating to adolescent identity.
- ◆ Question A2d): similar to last year's responses, Social Learning Theory (or its terminology) still appeared to be unfamiliar to some candidates. Again, this is a key learning theory cited in the course Arrangements Documents.
- ◆ Section B, Investigating Behaviour: some candidates gave generic responses to questions that were specific to the scenario.
- ◆ Section C, Personality: as the mandatory topic in Section C, it was disappointing to find a number of poor candidate responses to Freud's basic Id, Ego, Superego theory.

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 marking instructions, are extremely useful for preparation of 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
Intermediate 2**

Number of resulted entries in 2012	639
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	518
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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	30.7%	30.7%	159	68
B	25.1%	55.8%	130	58
C	18.0%	73.7%	93	48
D	6.6%	80.3%	34	43
No award	19.7%	100.0%	102	-

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.