



## External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Sociology
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

Candidates accessed the full range of marks — some achieved full marks. In general Section C was done very well, with most candidates opting for the topics of Social Class or Gender.

Section A was tackled very well by many candidates, demonstrating the ability to access sociological concepts and theories.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates who performed well structured their answers and used sociological terms throughout.

Most candidates answered Section A Q1 well and knew how to describe the differences between sociological and common sense explanations.

Most candidates coped well with questions on theories — for instance Section Q2 and Q3.

Section A Questions 5 and 6 on research methods were answered well by many candidates.

Candidates also answered Section B Q4 well as they were able to describe the socialisation process using any three agents.

Many candidates continue to answer Section C, on Social Stratification, well. This section requires candidates to demonstrate their extended writing abilities and to develop the sociological concept of stratification and its impact on mobility and/or inequality in one chosen area.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

There were no issues raised with regards to any particular questions in the paper.

Some candidates continue to find Section B — Socialisation very demanding.

Some candidates found Section B Q1 difficult, as they were not clear on the definition of 'values'. This then posed them further difficulties with Q2 as they were unable to identify a value. Other candidates answered Section B Q1 and Q2 well, and some gained full marks.

Some candidates were unable to explain the link between socialisation and social order.

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

Centres should prepare their candidates as much as possible in line with the requirements of the course as detailed in the Course Arrangement documents and Course Assessment Specification.

Candidates who performed well:

- ◆ structured their answers
- ◆ used the relevant sociological language
- ◆ had an understanding of terms such as values, culture, norms and roles
- ◆ answered consistently across all their sections of the paper

Centres should caution candidates as to the examples and the language they use in the paper to ensure that stereotypical exemplars and language are not used.

Candidates should be reminded that questions can be drawn from across the syllabus and not just some specific areas. Please refer to Arrangement documents and Course Assessment Specification.

Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions carefully to ensure they answer the question that is asked. It is also worthwhile investing time to develop technique by answering questions from past papers.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	231
Number of resulted entries in 2014	278

## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 70				
A	29.1%	29.1%	81	49
B	19.8%	48.9%	55	42
C	19.4%	68.3%	54	35
D	5.0%	73.4%	14	31
No award	26.6%	-	74	-

## 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.