



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Sociology
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

Entries were similar to previous years, and the majority of candidates were from colleges of further education. However it should be noted that the new centres presenting candidates for the first time this year were all schools.

Candidates scored a range of marks from zero to full marks. The most successful candidates tended to score well across all three sections of the paper. Once again candidates scored well in Section C, demonstrating a very good knowledge of stratification and their chosen area, as well as essay technique.

A small number of candidates who scored highly demonstrated an understanding of theories and studies well beyond the requirements of Intermediate 2 and perhaps could have been entered at Higher.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Section A – The Sociological Approach

- ◆ Questions A1, A4, A5 and A6 were answered well.
- ◆ Candidates tended to answer questions on the sociological approach and research methods very well.
- ◆ Many candidates answered questions on theories well, but candidates who were most successful could answer questions on action and structural theories and were able to evaluate theories as required by the subject arrangements.

Section B – Socialisation

- ◆ Questions B4, B5 and B6 were answered well.
- ◆ Candidates tended to answer questions on the socialisation process well (QB5 and B6).
- ◆ Many candidates answered questions on the nature v nurture debate very well.
- ◆ Again, most candidates were able to answer using sociological knowledge in a straightforward way and candidates who could apply this knowledge tended to be most successful for instance answering QB3 well.

Section C – Social Stratification

Similarly to previous years, this question was answered very well. This is very positive as it requires an essay-type answer and candidates obviously prepared well in terms of knowledge of stratification and essay technique.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Section A-Studying human Society: The Sociological Approach

Qs A2 and A3: Some candidates found these questions difficult, though many candidates answered these questions well. Candidates who scored few or no marks for these questions

tended to try to describe the theories' features rather than factors that constitute a strength or weakness.

Some candidates found QA2 on action theory difficult, and there seemed to be a lack of preparation by these candidates.

Section B-Socialisation

QB1 was poorly answered by some candidates and some seemed to be mixed up as to what was a norm and what was a value. Furthermore, some examples given were stereotypes and centres should be vigilant in reminding candidates to use only sociological language.

Some candidates struggled to provide appropriate responses to QB2. Many of these candidates used inappropriate examples, for instance stereotypes rather than social roles; some candidates also used norms rather than roles. Similarly, in contrasting the roles many of these candidates did not use appropriate societies and roles.

In answering QB2 some candidates continue to use non-sociological language to describe roles and societies. Candidates should use sociological and inclusive language throughout their paper.

Candidates who answered this question well did so by using a clear role and clear and relevant contrasts.

Section C-Social Stratification

This question gave candidates a choice from five aspects of Social Stratification in which to demonstrate their understanding of the topic area. Most candidates chose Social Class or Gender. A few candidates chose Race and Ethnicity, and even fewer chose Age and Disability. This suggested restrictive teaching of the five aspects available for study.

Candidates tended to present well-structured answers that demonstrated a very good understanding of stratification in general. Candidates who scored highly in this section also demonstrated a good understanding of their chosen aspect of stratification, for instance social class or gender. Candidates who scored highly in this section also used a range of evidence to evaluate the link between social class, race or gender and mobility/age or disability and inequality.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to read all the instructions and questions in the examination paper carefully to avoid missing or misinterpreting any instructions/questions. Exam technique as well as content is something centres should prepare candidates for. Hence, candidates should be encouraged to write full answers and not very brief (sometimes one-word) responses.
- ◆ Candidates must be able to provide evaluative answers when explanation is asked for. Many candidates still answer this type of question in a descriptive way and so do not gain full marks. Therefore candidates should be prepared by centres to provide answers that contain explanation as well as descriptive answers.

- ◆ Candidates should be reminded that questions will be based on a sample drawn from the mandatory content for all three Intermediate 2 Units. Centres should prepare candidates for the whole syllabus, rather than particular aspects of it.
- ◆ Candidates must avoid the use of stereotypes and stereotypical language when answering questions. This is especially relevant in Section B and C.
- ◆ In addressing issues of inequalities in Section C, some candidates seemed unaware of the extent of and consequences of particular inequalities. In order to make evaluative links candidates need to be prepared.
- ◆ Some candidates used theories and studies when answering Section C, this is well beyond the requirements at Intermediate 2 level. It was evident through the marking process that a significant number of candidates would have benefited from being presented at Higher level. Centres should ensure that candidates are being presented at the correct level

**Statistical information: update on Courses
Intermediate 2**

Number of resulted entries in 2012	226
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	231
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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 70				
A	49.4%	49.4%	114	49
B	16.5%	65.8%	38	42
C	16.9%	82.7%	39	35
D	3.5%	86.1%	8	31
No award	13.9%	100.0%	32	-

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.