



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Sociology
Level	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

This was the fifth presentation of the reviewed Sociology Intermediate 2 examination. It continued to be a robust, and exacting examination which saw a substantial increase in uptake this year.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Section A – The Sociological Approach

- ◆ Questions A1, A2, A4, A5 and A6 were answered well.

Section B – Socialisation

- ◆ Questions B1, B2, B3 and B4 were answered well.

Section C – Social Stratification

- ◆ Similarly to the first four years of presentation, this question was answered very well. This was gratifying because it was anticipated that candidates would find this question demanding as it required an essay-type answer and they had obviously studied the topic area very well.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Section A – The Sociological Approach

- ◆ Question A3. Candidates who achieved an A pass answered this question well. However, other candidates did not, and gave poor descriptions of features of visual evidence. These candidates could have been prepared better by centres.

Section B – Socialisation

- ◆ Question B4. Candidates who achieved an A pass answered this question well. However, other candidates did not. Candidates were asked to explain the ways in which a social value they had studied was different in two contrasting cultures. Many candidates did not describe a social value but described a social norm instead. This was disappointing, and these candidates could have been prepared better for the exam.

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 and 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.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The advice given in previous years still applies:

- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to read all the instructions and questions in the examination paper carefully to avoid missing or misinterpreting any instructions/questions.
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to write full answers — not very brief (sometimes one-word) answers.
- ◆ 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 should be instructed to avoid the use of stereotypes when answering questions.
- ◆ Some candidates used studies when answering Section C. Studies are not required 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 2010	179
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	233
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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	40.3%	40.3%	94	49
B	21.5%	61.8%	50	42
C	12.9%	74.7%	30	35
D	3.9%	78.5%	9	31
No award	21.5%	100.0%	50	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, 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.