



External Assessment Report 2012

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

This was the sixth presentation of the reviewed Sociology Intermediate 2 examination. It continues to be a robust and exacting examination attracting a range of marks across the spectrum.

All individual questions scored marks across the range from zero to full marks. However, many candidates lost marks by ignoring advice given in previous External Assessment Reports and the Understanding Standards advice.

Once again, candidates performed very well in the Social Stratification question in Section C, with many essays attracting very high marks. Some candidates again found questions in Section B difficult, and some candidates resorted to using stereotypical responses.

Candidates who demonstrated a range of knowledge and understanding across the requirements of the paper, and backed by good exam technique, tended to do best. Candidates who achieved an A pass answered consistently well across all sections of the paper and were able to use sociological language consistently — for instance, in Section A, Question A5, by including relevant terms such as ‘quantitative’.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Section A – The Sociological Approach

- ◆ Questions A1, A2, and A5 were in general answered well. Candidates demonstrated a good grasp of what is meant by sociological explanations and research methods.

Section B – Socialisation

- ◆ Questions B3 and B5 were answered well. Many candidates were able to demonstrate a good understanding of the socialisation process.

Section C – Social Stratification

- ◆ This question was generally answered very well. The most popular choices were Class and Gender, whilst the least popular was Disability. Candidates tended to define stratification very well, demonstrating a good understanding of the overall concept. Many candidates were then able to illustrate their comprehension of specific aspects of stratification, for instance Class or Gender, in their essays. It should be noted that although some candidates used theories and studies in their response in Section C, it is not a requirement at Intermediate 2 level.

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 feminism, and some responses were common-sense rather than sociological. Centres should note that candidates may be questioned on the features of feminism (see Arrangement documents).
- ◆ Question A4. Candidates who achieved an A pass answered this question well. However, other candidates did not, and gave poor descriptions of features of action theory. Again, centres should note that candidates may be questioned on the features of action theories (see Arrangement documents).
- ◆ Question A6. Many candidates answered this question by listing advantages and disadvantages of official statistics, rather than explaining why 'X' was an advantage/disadvantage.

Section B – Socialisation

- ◆ Question B1. A significant number of candidates were unable to describe the term 'values'. This would indicate a lack of preparation. Centres should remind candidates of the terms they are required to define and use (see Arrangement documents).
- ◆ Question B2. Candidates were asked to explain the ways in which a social norm they had studied was different in two contrasting cultures. Many candidates successfully described a social norm but used stereotypical examples in their responses. Centres should be vigilant with regards to candidates' use of stereotypes and stereotypical language.
- ◆ Question B3. Candidates who achieved an A pass answered this question well. However, some candidates appeared to be unprepared in that they were unable to make the basic link between socialisation and social order.

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.
- ◆ Candidates who performed well in this section were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in an extended response. Some candidates used theories and studies in their answer, demonstrating sociological knowledge beyond that required at Intermediate 2 level. Many candidates wrote extensively on stratification and class/gender/race/age/disability, but some candidates found it difficult to produce an extended response.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Centres should remind candidates that success in Intermediate 2 Sociology requires good exam technique as well as sociological knowledge. Practicing questions, acting on feedback, and ensuring the relevant knowledge is in place are all features of success in the final exam. Candidates should be encouraged to make use of information on SQA's Sociology pages and Understanding Standards to assist them further.
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to write full answers — not very brief (sometimes even one-word) answers. Candidates should explain what they mean and use examples wherever appropriate.
- ◆ 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 (for instance, Question A6) and so do not gain full marks. 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 just particular aspects of it.
- ◆ Candidates should be reminded that the standard required for a pass at Intermediate 2 is more than is required for a NAB pass. Centres should make this clear to candidates, using past paper questions, Marking Instructions, SQA Sociology pages, Understanding Standards and other available resources.
- ◆ Candidates should be instructed to avoid the use of stereotypes when answering questions. They should be encouraged to use appropriate sociological language, for example Question A3 'patriarchy' or Question A4 'micro'.
- ◆ 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 2011	233
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	226
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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	48.2%	48.2%	109	49
B	15.0%	63.3%	34	42
C	13.3%	76.5%	30	35
D	3.5%	80.1%	8	31
No award	19.9%	100.0%	45	-

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.