



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Modern Studies
Level(s)	Intermediate 1

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

In the final year of the Intermediate 1 Modern Studies examination, the number of presentations decreased significantly to just over 50 candidates. This fall in presentations and change in the stage of presentation profile was accompanied by a slight decline in the overall performance in this year's examination.

In Section A, both study themes were attempted by candidates. This was also the case in Section B. In Section C, International Issues, the USA continued to be the most popular option, and very few candidates attempted any of the other options.

The format of the question paper was unchanged from previous years, and the optional questions were broadly comparable with no significant difference in performance between options.

Performance in source-based questions was stronger than in knowledge and understanding questions. The knowledge and understanding demonstrated in social issues topics was generally good. Candidates who were able to provide contemporary and accurate exemplification in their answers performed well.

A wide range of marks was awarded, and most candidates made a good attempt at the paper. Some candidates produced good answers across all sections.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Knowledge and understanding of Social Issues in the United Kingdom was generally good, and was satisfactory in Political Issues in the United Kingdom in the contexts of pressure groups and newspapers.

Candidates generally do well in the source-based, evaluating questions.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Knowledge and understanding of International Issues was generally limited, with some candidates showing little up-to-date and relevant knowledge of the context they had studied.

Some candidates found the 'conclusions' question and the 'options' question challenging.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	418
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	55
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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 - 60				
A	23.6%	23.6%	13	42
B	14.5%	38.2%	8	36
C	25.5%	63.6%	14	30
D	5.5%	69.1%	3	27
No award	30.9%	-	17	-

The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

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.