



## External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Politics
Level(s)	Higher

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

The Higher Politics course was presented by 45 centres, accounting for 516 candidates. There were 12 new centres presenting candidates.

The number of centres and candidate presentations for both the current and new Higher Politics course (190 candidates and 13 centres) would mean a significant increase in the total number of candidates taking Higher Politics in session 2014–15 (up from 557 in 2013–14 to 706 in 2014–15).

As in previous years, this growth has been driven by an increase in the overall number of school presentations. For the Higher, 85% of candidates were from S5/6 and 15% were from the FE sector; 77% of the candidates in 2014–15 were from S6.

Overall the exam paper was well received with no adverse external feedback for Paper 1 or Paper 2.

Overall candidates again performed more strongly in the Paper 1. In line with recent experience, candidates produced well-structured answers that addressed directly the different components in the viewpoint. In Paper 2 many candidates also produced well-structured and highly analytical responses with detailed exemplification.

Most candidates provided comparisons with the USA in their responses for the questions in Section B in Paper 2.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

In Paper 1, most candidates produced high quality responses. In question 2 most candidates skilfully interpreted, evaluated and analysed the information in the sources. Almost all candidates are breaking down the viewpoint and as a result producing well-structured answers that make use of all sources. Most candidates clearly linked information from the sources to specific parts of the viewpoint.

In Paper 2, many candidates produced good quality responses that provided detailed descriptions and good exemplification, and contained high levels of analysis. Many candidates who attempted Question A2 provided high quality answers that compared and contrasted the key features of Liberalism and Socialism. Almost all candidates referred to the work of Locke and Marx in their answers. Candidates who scored highly tended to make comparative and analytical comments throughout their responses.

Question A3 was answered by a small number of candidates, but these tended to produce very detailed responses.

Many candidates attempted question B5. Candidates who attempted this question tended to produce high quality responses that compared and contrasted throughout their essay and also provided detailed and very relevant exemplification.

In Question C7 many candidates provided high quality responses that provided a high degree of exemplification, much of which was very relevant with information from the 2015 General Election.

### **Areas which candidates found demanding**

In Paper 1 a small number of candidates did not make full use of the sources for question 2, particularly from source G. In addition, some candidates did not make full use of Source B for question 1.

There were a very small number of candidates who appeared to spend too much time on question 1 and failed to fully complete question 2 as a result. A very small number of candidates did not focus on key terms in the viewpoint for question 2, such as 'significantly outperformed' or 'comprehensively defeated'

In Paper 2 a number of candidates appeared to try and question-spot. As a result some candidates were unable to answer 1 question from each section. Some other candidates appeared to produce answers for some questions that were not what was asked in the question itself. A number of candidates appeared to produce answers that dealt with Power, Authority and Legitimacy in response to question A1 which covered Direct and Representative Democracy.

In question B4 some candidates did not address both aspects of the question in their responses. Most candidates addressed the nature of constitutions but only some addressed the status.

A significant proportion of candidates did not provide exemplification for question C9.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	531
Number of resulted entries in 2015	493

## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 80				
A	38.9%	38.9%	192	56
B	23.1%	62.1%	114	48
C	20.1%	82.2%	99	40
D	5.3%	87.4%	26	36
No award	12.6%	-	62	-

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.