

UNIVERSITIES OF MANCHESTER LIVERPOOL LEEDS SHEFFIELD AND BIRMINGHAM

## JOINT MATRICULATION BOARD

## Secondary Modern Schools and the General Certificate of Education

## SECONDARY MODERN SCHOOLS AND THE GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION

1. Previous to 1951 it was by no means unusual for "central" and "senior" secondary schools to present candidates for the School Certificate Examination, some the whole of an upper form, others small and perhaps selected groups. Many of these candidates did well in the examination. The institution of the General Certificate Examination in 1951 with its higher minimum pass standard and, at first, a minimum age for entry raised problems for such of these schools and their successors as wished to present candidates for an external certificate acceptable to the professions and, should it be required, to Universities. The pass-lists of the Joint Matriculation Board shed some light upon the present place of the G.C.E. in relation to the needs and aims of secondary modern schools. It is hoped that the summary here given will serve as material generally useful for discussion, not as combustible matter for any particular flame of controversy.

2. Schools which present candidates for the Board's General Certificate Examination fall into four main groups: grammar, technical, secondary modern and "others". Here only entries from schools classified by the Ministry of Education as secondary modern schools are considered. The Ministry's group of "others" includes some bilateral grammar and modern schools as well as selective central schools. It may be therefore that the candidates under consideration were not selected for technical education, if there is any such provision in their locality, or for a selective central school. It is also possible that some schools may be included in the group which might be called "comprehensive" if they were under some other authority. As the reorganization of secondary education is carried further, the members of this group and their numbers may vary. Changes of classification have already occurred; some schools which in 1951 had a grammar school stream but were still then classified as "modern" have now been reclassified as grammar schools. This summary therefore deals with a general type, or perhaps somewhat varying types, of entry rather than with entries from a closely definable group.

3. Details of entries since 1951 for the General Certificate Examination of the Joint Matriculation Board from schools classified as secondary modern schools are given in Table 1. The modification for 1953 and subsequent years of the age-limit, which in 1951 and 1952 debarred from entry pupils under sixteen years of age, does not seem to have had a noticeable effect upon the number of such entries. The continuing increase in the number of schools presenting candidates, and in the number of candidates presented, can equally well be explained by the development of secondary modern schools



throughout the country, the progress individual schools are making in consolidating the work of their upper forms, and the increasing interest in the G.C.E. shown by the schools, perhaps by the pupils, more probably by the parents of the pupils.

4. The 1,243 candidates entered in 1954 comprised 659 boys and 584 girls. Three-quarters of them were between 16.0 and 16.11 years old but the range was from one boy who was under 15.0 to one boy and one girl who were both over 19.0 on 1 September 1954. The fact that in all fifty-nine candidates were over 18.0 years old suggests the degree of elasticity of the present definition of what constitutes a secondary modern school. Table 2 shows that of those in the 16.0—16.11 age-group three candidates attempted one Advanced subject together with Ordinary subjects, that of those in the 18.0—18.11 age-group thirty-five offered Ordinary subjects only and that the two oldest candidates also offered Ordinary subjects only.

5. Table 3 gives the subjects offered in 1954 and the numbers entered for each that year. The Ordinary subjects offered cover a wide range. As might be expected, English Language was most commonly offered; English Literature, Geography and Mathematics were next in order. There was a substantial entry for French and some interest in other modern foreign languages. In each of the four years there has been a small number attempting Latin but so far no one has offered Greek; nor has any candidate from this group of schools so far entered for the General Paper. The newer technical subjects have not yet attracted as much attention as the longer established Woodwork, Metalwork, Domestic Science and Geometrical and Machine Drawing. At the Advanced level English Literature, History, Geography and Art have been more often attempted than the sciences over the four years. That Advanced Latin with the Scholarship papers in the subject has been offered again suggests the fluidity of the definition of this group of schools, and probably indicates that the school staffs do their utmost to make special provision for individual pupils. Over the period of the four years in which the G.C.E. has been in operation there have also been entries for the Scholarship papers in History, Geography, Art, French, Mathematics (both syllabuses), Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology.

6. The numbers passing each year in the individual subjects—Table 3 gives details for 1954—suggest that the candidates find difficulty with English Language, English Literature, History, French, Mathematics and Physics; on the other hand in Woodwork, Metalwork and Domestic Science the percentage passing each year has been higher than that for all the entries for these subjects over the whole examination. The work in Art fell away somewhat in 1954; hitherto it had been better than that of the whole entry.

7. The number of Ordinary subjects offered by each candidate is tending to fall. In 1951 the largest group of candidates offered seven subjects, in 1952 the largest group offered six, in 1953 and 1954 only five; as bare averages this represents a fall from 5·7 subjects offered by each candidate in 1951 to 4·5 in 1954. The entries at Ordinary level over the Board's G.C.E. Examination as a whole show a similar tendency to offer fewer subjects at a sitting. Direct comparisons with School Certificate conditions are not easy. In the S.C. Examination a candidate was required to offer English Language and at least five other subjects; in the G.C.E. Examination one subject can be offered by itself. Thus in 1954 of the candidates from secondary modern schools ninety-eight offered only one Ordinary subject each and three offered only one Advanced subject. Further the G.C.E. *pass* standard approximates to the S.C. *credit* and the Ministry expects that pupils will not be encouraged to offer in the G.C.E. subjects in which they are not likely to reach this higher *pass* standard. Perhaps the 860 candidates who offered four or more Ordinary subjects (excluding those attempting Advanced subjects also) can be most nearly compared with candidates for School Certificates under the pre-1951 conditions. Of them ninety passed in all the Ordinary subjects they offered, in number from four to eight, including five candidates who offered and passed in eight. At the other extreme ninety-six failed in all the subjects they attempted, including five who offered and failed in eight subjects and seven who offered eight but passed in one only. In the last years of the S.C. Examination the average number of subjects offered by each candidate was 8·1 and the average number of *credits* awarded 4·0. Over the whole entry for Ordinary subjects only in the Board's G.C.E. Examination of 1954 the average number of subjects offered by those attempting at least four Ordinary subjects was 6·5 and the average number of subjects passed by those candidates was 4·0. For the corresponding group of 860 candidates from secondary modern schools the average number of subjects offered was 5·5, the average number passed 2·8.

8. If any conclusions from any of the above figures are attempted, it is essential that the implications of §2 should be most carefully watched. The definition of a secondary modern school varies in different parts of the country and the degree of reorganization of schools so far achieved varies from authority to authority; the group "secondary modern schools" is not as yet a stable or a consistently constituted group. But it is a matter of interest and of considerable moment to watch the fortunes of pupils from these schools when they sit for an examination which has grown out of an examination originally designed for grammar schools, whatever the new examination may now be or is yet to become.



**TABLE 1**  
**GENERAL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION ENTRIES FROM SECONDARY**  
**MODERN SCHOOLS**

	<b>1951</b>	<b>1952</b>	<b>1953</b>	<b>1954</b>
1. Number of secondary modern schools .. .. .	42	46	56	68
2. Total number of candidates presented .. .. .	845	949	967	1,243
Number of candidates offering Ordinary subjects only .. .. .	822	907	925	1,212
Number of candidates offering Ordinary with Advanced subjects .. ..	8	19	20	19
Number of candidates offering Advanced subjects only .. .. .	15	23	22	12
3. Total entries for Ordinary and Advanced subjects .. .. .	4,738	4,699	4,376	5,509

TABLE 2

ENTRIES (SUMMER EXAMINATION 1954) BY AGE AND NUMBER OF SUBJECTS OFFERED

AGE ON 1 SEPTEMBER 1954	Number of subjects offered at ADVANCED level	Number of subjects offered at ORDINARY level										SUB-TOTALS
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Under 15	0	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
15.0 to 15.11	0	—	25	7	8	10	8	7	—	3	—	68
16.0 to 16.11	0	—	49	83	95	172	208	197	77	50	1	932
	1	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	3
	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17.0 to 17.11	—	—	49	83	96	174	208	197	77	50	1	935
	0	—	20	19	24	23	31	39	11	7	—	174
	1	3	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
18.0 to 18.11	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	—	5	20	20	24	23	31	39	11	7	—	180
	0	—	4	6	10	8	6	1	—	—	—	35
	1	—	1	1	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	6
19.0 and over	2	4	6	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12
	3	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
	—	7	12	9	12	9	7	1	—	—	—	57
	0	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	2
19.0 and over	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	2
		12	106	119	142	216	255	244	88	60	1	1,243

TABLE 3  
ENTRIES AND PASSES IN INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS  
(SUMMER EXAMINATION 1954)

SUBJECTS	ORDINARY		ADVANCED		
	Number of candidates	Number passing	Number of candidates	Number passing (Adv.)	Number "allowed Ordinary"
English Language .....	896	399	—	—	—
English Literature .....	619	287	9	2	3
History .....	405	202	8	7	—
Geography .....	537	321	6	3	—
Economics .....	2	1	—	—	—
Scripture Knowledge .....	214	98	2	2	—
Art .....	374	250	6	5	1
Music .....	37	22	2	1	—
Latin .....	14	12	2	2	—
French .....	344	165	—	—	—
German .....	22	8	—	—	—
Spanish .....	4	1	—	—	—
Mathematics .....	—	—	6	—	—
Mathematics Syllabus I .....	432	199	—	—	—
Mathematics Syllabus II .....	104	44	—	—	—
Maths. and Theor. Mechs. ..	—	—	—	—	—
Physics .....	—	—	—	—	—
Physics Syllabus I .....	90	39	—	—	—
Physics Syllabus II .....	2	2	—	—	—
Chemistry .....	73	32	3	1	1
Physics-with-Chemistry .....	104	53	—	—	—
Botany .....	—	—	2	1	1
Zoology .....	—	—	1	1	—
Biology .....	177	96	6	6	—
Geology .....	—	—	—	—	—
General Science I .....	185	76			
General Science II .....	15	7			
Elementary Physiology .....	24	7			
Woodwork Syllabus I .....	110	84			
Woodwork Syllabus II .....	39	24			
Metalwork .....	57	36			
Mechanical Science .....	18	13			
Domestic Science Paper I. . .	13	10			
Domestic Science Paper II. .	20	11			
Domestic Science A .....	86	61			
Domestic Science B .....	34	29			
Domestic Science C .....	48	31			
Commerce .....	33	8			
Commercial Subjects .....	53	40			
Book-keeping .....	72	21			
Commercial Mathematics . . .	2	2			
Geom. and Mach. Drawing. . .	170	82			
Geom. and Engin. Drawing. .	23	4			
Engin. W. Theory and Pract. .	3	3			
Navigation .....	3	0			

PRINTED BY  
MORRIS & YEAMAN (PRINTERS) LTD.,  
10, SHORT STREET, CITY ROAD, MANCHESTER, 15  
AND PUBLISHED BY  
THE JOINT MATRICULATION BOARD  
315, OXFORD ROAD, MANCHESTER, 13  
17980.1.55