



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	CARE PRACTICE
Level(s)	HIGHER

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

There was a significant reduction in the number of candidates presented for Care Practice Higher this year. The figure for 2012 was 296, but it was 190 in 2013. There were no new centres and no returning centres. Eight centres presented this year whereas there were 12 in 2012. All of them were further education colleges. The fall in numbers presented this year is clearly as a result of fewer centres presenting. There was a small reduction in marks allocated and grades achieved this year, which supports the notion that the standard of the projects this year are very similar to that of last year.

The majority of centres used the SQA assessment documentation pack, and this led to a good number of well-ordered projects which ensured the various elements were presented, eg pre-planning activities and the working document. A couple of centres were using out-of-date mark allocation sheets, which may have disadvantaged candidates in the quantity of work they produced.

Authentication of the activity was on the whole very good. However, a number of candidates provided reflective accounts which were not authenticated by the observing supervisor. Some candidates did have the reflective account signed by the supervisor, but it was obvious from the candidate write-up that they undertook the activity without supervision. This resulted in much lower marks being allocated by the central markers than had been given by centre assessors.

There is good evidence to suggest this current external project is assisting candidates to achieve positive results when they keep to the requirements and provide good evidence for each stage. Centre support and direction is key to this process by ensuring candidates are guided to complex activities and away from routine group activities. The type of placement is also essential to ensure the candidate can achieve a good grade. The vast majority of centres are using appropriate care environments, and this has been improving over the years.

Please note that all of the evidence requirements for this assessment must be presented within the project documentation. Evidence from log books and the team working project, if used, must be cross referenced and be relevant to the specific activity and service user.

A detailed Marker's Guide has been available to centres for a few years. This guide was produced to give a clearer breakdown of mark allocations within each section and particularly the sections with large marks such as Reflection on Relationships Developed (30 marks) and Reflection on Qualities and Skills (30 Marks). There have been minor changes to this document over the last year. Centres should make sure they are using the most up to date version.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Plan

- ◆ Some candidates did well at the planning stage where they assessed specific needs for an individual service user and highlighted benefits to them from the proposed activity.
- ◆ On the whole planning was completed more effectively than the development stage of the project.

Development

- ◆ Some candidates made very effective use of their updated working document submitted in this stage by highlighting and explaining changes and adding new activities.
- ◆ Most of the activities presented had been observed and authenticated by the same individual.
- ◆ Some of the better candidates were able to choose a very individual activity to suit the assessed needs of the service-user — these activities appeared to have a hugely positive impact on the service user and the candidate.

Evaluation

- ◆ Candidates tended to do well in highlighting what was successful or not within the project, and were able to say how things could have been improved.
- ◆ Most candidates were able to say what they learned from the project.
- ◆ On the whole evaluation was completed more effectively than the development stage of the project.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Plan

- ◆ A substantial number of candidates did not undertake a complex activity. A routine activity that is part of the general placement setting was often used. A number of candidates planned an activity and then sought service-users 'who wanted to join in'. These activities were ineffective for assessment of individual need.
- ◆ There was very little evidence of research of the individual need of the service-user and explanation of why the activity was therefore appropriate. A high number of candidates assessed needs that were general to any individual and therefore were not needs-led for the individual concerned.
- ◆ The Working Document was very poorly completed. Some centres did not provide a working document as part of the project and lost substantial marks.

Development

- ◆ A substantial number of candidates did not complete this section well. This was due to either evidence not being submitted or submitted work not meeting the standards to warrant allocation of higher marks. A high number of candidates only gave a narration of the activity or stated skills and qualities used. There was little or no reflection provided in many cases.
- ◆ In many cases there was not enough evidence of an actual relationship being built with service-users or staff members.

- ◆ A high number of candidates presented little or no actual evidence of feedback for the activity. Many only commented it had gone well.
- ◆ Issues of confidentiality raised as some candidates presented photographs with no evidence of permission being sought to allow them to do so. Many candidates talked about reading case notes, which would seem inappropriate given the nature of their placement.
- ◆ Language used by a number of candidates was inappropriate. Such language as 'wheelchair-bound', 'toileting' and 'sufferer' goes against the value base required of good care practice.

Evaluation

- ◆ Candidates tended to recount what they had done rather than evaluate or offer constructive criticism of the process.
- ◆ Candidates evaluated their role in the activity poorly, again saying what they had done rather than evaluating the effectiveness of their role. In many cases candidates did not discuss the role of other team members.
- ◆ Many candidates who offered criticism did so in relation to the activity and not the project as a whole.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Centres should ensure they are using the most up-to-date documentation for this project.
- ◆ Ensure candidates undertake a complex activity. If making use of routine activities, encourage candidates to concentrate on assessing specific needs of one particular service-user. More usefully, encourage candidates to undertake an activity specific to one service-user.
- ◆ Ensure preparation activities are included to inform the plan.
- ◆ Provide a working document for the plan and include an amended and updated copy of this within the development stage. This document should include key tasks to be undertaken that will lead to the completion of the project — not just the activity.
- ◆ Ensure candidates are more informed about confidentiality issues to be maintained within the placement, especially in relation to accessing personal files.
- ◆ The activity must be observed and authenticated by the member of the care staff who witnessed it by signing the actual reflective account. SQA documentation has a signature box at the bottom of each page. If typing the activity, candidates should include the signature box as footer.
- ◆ Candidates must provide actual evidence of feedback as it is not enough only for the candidate to say things went well.
- ◆ Ensure appropriate language used when describing and engaging with service-users.
- ◆ Ensure candidates develop reflective and evaluative skills.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	296
Number of resulted entries in 2013	190

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 200				
A	15.8%	15.8%	30	140
B	30.0%	45.8%	57	120
C	34.2%	80.0%	65	100
D	8.4%	88.4%	16	90
No award	11.6%	100.0%	22	-

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.