



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE
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 slight increase in candidate entries for Early Education and Childcare (Higher) in 2013. The majority of candidates were well prepared and attempted all of the questions in both papers. Many candidates planned their time well, allowing sufficient time for questions with high marks. In a significant number of papers, candidates' strengths were in accessing the knowledge and understanding marks, but the application and evaluation of theories and concepts was challenging.

Paper 1 proved more challenging for candidates. Some candidates did not read questions carefully and therefore did not give broad enough answers covering all of the specified age ranges. In Papers 1 and 2 the majority of candidates demonstrated good overall knowledge of relevant theorists.

Areas in which candidates performed well

In both papers candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of child development and holistic health. They had good understanding of theories of development and of how these could be used in practice.

Some examples of strengths demonstrated by candidates were:

Question 1 (e) and (c): Most candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the theory and stages of emotional, personal and social development. They applied this clearly to the role of nursery staff. Many candidates used Bowlby as the theorist to illustrate current practice in the early years. Both of these questions were answered well by a high number of candidates.

Question 3 (a): Most candidates could clearly describe the signs and symptoms that indicate a child is unwell — many candidates accessed full marks.

Question 4 (a) and (b): Many candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of language development. They clearly described a theory of language development and were aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the theory chosen.

Question 4 (d): candidates clearly understood holistic development and were able to explain how the activity specified could promote many aspects of holistic development.

Areas which candidates found demanding

There were aspects of both paper 1 and paper 2 which candidates found challenging. .

Question 1 (b): Many candidates could not describe the term 'object permanence' clearly.

Question 1 (d): A number of candidates did not read this question carefully. Instead of describing development up to the age of three, they concentrated only on development at the age of three years.

Question 3 (e): Several candidates did not explain the impact of education and health care on the children. These candidates often confused or joined together education and health care. These answers often only accessed half marks.

Question 4 (c): A few candidates did not choose one parenting style and lost time evaluating all of these factors. Many candidates chose to focus on parenting style. Often, candidates went into too much detail describing different parenting styles instead of giving a short summary. This resulted in some candidates running out of time to evaluate the impact this factor could have on language development.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

General

Some candidates may need more practice in their exam technique to read questions carefully and ensure their answer reflects the question.

Object permanence proved challenging for some candidates to explain. This could be due to when it was delivered in the course. Candidates may need support to revise and revisit concepts from the beginning of their course.

Candidates were often more comfortable answering the knowledge and understanding section of questions. Exam preparation should give opportunities to develop skills in evaluating and applying theories and concepts. Centres are reminded that Early Education and Childcare is a Higher level Course at SCQF level 6.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	689
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	771
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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 100				
A	22.2%	22.2%	171	70
B	26.8%	49.0%	207	60
C	26.7%	75.7%	206	50
D	9.2%	85.0%	71	45
No award	15.0%	100.0%	116	-

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.