

Principal Assessor Report 2002

Assessment Panel:

Physical Education

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
included in this report**

Higher Level Physical Education

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	
Pre appeal	
Post appeal	3699

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	3696
Post appeal	

General comments re entry numbers

It is likely that final numbers will be slightly higher but this was the total at the pass mark stage. With Intermediate 2 presentations now established it appears that total entries of around 3700 for Higher may be the norm.

General comments

Overall the performance of candidates this year has shifted down slightly when compared against last year's cohort. The high Performance marks of previous years were again maintained with the mean score down only 0.2 to 75.8. Particular concerns still exist about the relatively modest achievements of students in Investigation of Performance and Analysis of Performance. Candidates' abilities relative to Analysis of Performance were down significantly this year with the mean score being 23.3, a drop of 1.4 marks on last year's score. Similarly in Investigation of Performance, the mean score has also shifted down by 0.6 of a mark to a total of 14.5, which is below half the available marks.

Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

Physical Education Higher 2002

Grade	Band	Minimum Mark
A	1	153
A	2	126
B	3	119
B	4	113
C	5	106
C	6	100
Compensatory	7	93
No Award	8	87
No Award	9	0

General commentary on grade boundaries

Notional percentage cut-offs for each grade

Question papers and their associated marking schemes are designed to be of the required standard and to meet the assessment specification for the subject/level concerned.

For National courses the examination paper(s) are set in order that a score of approximately 50% of the total marks for all components merits a grade C (based on the grade descriptions for that grade), and similarly a score of 70 % for a grade A. The lowest mark for a grade B is set by the computer software as half way between the C and A grade boundaries.

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

The relative imbalance between students' achievements in Performance and in Analysis and Investigation of Performance makes the setting of pass marks a difficult exercise for those involved. Students, who have a very high Performance mark, must also have demonstrated a reasonable level of competence in Analysis and Investigation of Performance if their overall performance is to match the grade descriptions of course awards at grades A,B and C. However, the pass mark cannot be set as high as to penalise students who have passed in Performance but who have, relative to the mean performance mark, a modest mark for this element. The recent increase in weighting for Performance from 40% to 50% has made this relative imbalance even more pronounced

The Grade boundaries listed above are considered to fairly address the current circumstances and have been the same for the last 3 years.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Although the vast majority of candidates performed reasonably well and an even spread of awards were achieved, there was evidence that some candidates had been inappropriately presented or insufficiently prepared for the demands of Higher level external assessment. Markers were asked to refer to the Principal Assessor instances where candidates achieved only a very low mark in either their Investigation Report or their Analysis examination. A substantial number were referred from each of the assessments and there was often the situation of a number of candidates from the same centre having to be referred. Some centres had candidates referred from both analysis and investigation assessments. This situation has implications for the moderation of unit assessment and the centre information has been passed to the relevant SQA staff.

Markers reports indicate that there has been an increase in the number of centres adopting a prescriptive and standardised approach to completing the Investigation of Performance Report. In these instances students did not have the opportunity to plan and complete their report in a way that best suited the chosen activity and line of inquiry. Instead they were asked to use a standard framework to complete the report inserting information relevant to their own topic in each section. Some centres have gone a stage further and require all candidates to complete the investigation in the same activity ie students from a centre all investigating a technical aspect of their performance in Badminton. Inevitably reports written using these approaches look very alike and are often referred to the PA with concerns about malpractice. Marker's felt that although these strategies may have helped less able students to manage the stages of an investigation, it actually seriously constrained more able students in the presentation of their work.

Markers also reported that their appeared to be an increase in the instances where students were attempting to apply a pre-planned answer in their response to Analysis of Performance questions. This strategy has always been used and its success is dependent on how well you are able to fit the prepared answer to one of the questions set. In many instances this year candidates did not relate their response to the key words of the question and instead wrote all they knew about the particular analysis area. Some centres now seem to give students prepared answers to learn so it is not unusual to find the same answer appearing again and again, sometimes word perfect, in the centres pack of papers. These circumstances are however in a minority and many candidates were well prepared, answered well and in good depth, reflecting on the practical experiences of the course as the context for their answers.

The number of candidates studying in the area of Performance Appreciation does not seem to have increased and only a very small number of candidates attempted questions from this area.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Investigation of Performance

Almost all centres now seem to fully understand the requirements of the investigation task and most students attempted all the key stages of the investigation process. The topics chosen were in all but a very small number of cases appropriate. Most candidates scored well in Area 1 of the mark scheme.

Many candidates had gathered relevant and significant data about their chosen topic. For some though a lack of depth and detail in data was a limiting factor in that it allowed only a modest level of interpretation and discussion of the issue.

From many candidates the quality of the work was good or excellent. These students had clearly become involved in the investigation process and had used it as a focus for the development of an aspect of their performance. Interpretation of data gathered and the discussion of relevant primary and secondary sources and issues was used to clarify important issues and inform relevant training.

Analysis of Performance

Question Paper

Although in general the quality of student response was modest there was a significant number of answers which were good or excellent.

Knowledge of data gathering methods and what students had learned about the strengths and weaknesses of their own performance was generally good in all areas of Analysis. This was particularly evident in the students' ability to explain how information had been gathered about full performances or the detail in their knowledge of the specific criteria that were necessary to closely analyse an aspect of skills and technique.

Although a question from the Performance Appreciation section was not attempted by many candidates, those who did answer in this area mainly did well. Their knowledge of the features of a quality performance generally had depth and detail and they were able to relate them to the nature and demands of their chosen activity.

Depth and detail of knowledge of stages of learning, methods of practice and the principles of effective practice was generally good.

Many candidates were able to discuss a complete view of fitness for performance referring to the physical, skill related and mental demands of successful performance.

For many candidates' Structures, Strategies and Composition was their strongest section. Descriptions of chosen Structures, Strategies and Composition were generally sound or detailed and most were able to outline the advantages, weaknesses and variations of their chosen item.

The 3 questions available in each section seemed to equally attract a proportion of the students.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Investigation of Performance

The ability to identify, interpret and discuss significant performance issues arising from the data gathered and the sources reviewed, remains the most common weakness. It is in this section that the student explains the significance of their key findings and how they have helped inform the design of their training programme and the development of the central focus of the inquiry.

Weaknesses in this area often led to a situation where the conclusions drawn on completion of the investigation were based on what the candidate would have wished rather than what could validly be concluded from the interpretation and discussion of the Primary and Secondary sources undertaken.

As was commented on in the 2001 Report student's work tended to lose its initial performance focus. For example some investigations on aspects of Preparation of the Body and Skills and Technique went into great detail explaining the training programmes followed for the chosen features of performance, but only gave limited consideration to the potential effects of the proposed training and development for their whole performance.

Many of the investigations were over the 1500 word limit and it is clear that many students have difficulty in completing the task even within the permitted tolerance of 2000 words. Often this was due to poor editing and a failure to use appendices correctly. The exam team would support SQA's proposal to introduce a scale of penalties for excessive wordage.

Analysis of Performance

For a significant number of students the Higher level examination was very challenging and they were only able to score modestly.

There was a general pattern of some students being relatively successful at answering the parts of questions that assessed Competency 1 in describing and explaining performance and then having difficulty with Competencies 2 and 3 where the demonstration of a level of critical thinking was required. They generally lacked the ability to show how they would apply relative concepts and knowledge in the development of their performance. For example, descriptions of the specific fitness demands of successful performance in an activity would be sound, but a discussion of how the principles of training could be applied in the planning and implementation of an appropriate training programme would present difficulties.

Areas of common misunderstanding

Analysis Question Paper

The term "fundamental skills and or techniques" in question 7, was used to allow students to describe a wide range as appropriate to the activity selected but some students were confused by the term and were unclear what was required.

The importance of phases of training, (question 5) when planning a training programme was generally not well understood or answered by students.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Analysis of Performance

- Students should be encouraged to take time to read, and to try to understand fully, all that is being asked in examination questions. Markers reported again this year that “describe” questions that are followed by the invitation to “give reasons why” or “give specific examples” are only partially answered.
- Candidates should be encouraged to relate their responses to what is asked in the question. Frequently students write down everything they know about a particular area, much of which is not relevant to the question asked. Although candidates often display knowledge they fail to apply their knowledge to the key points of the question.
- Centres should ensure that candidates are able to offer the level of depth and breadth of knowledge of key concepts that is appropriate to Higher level. The work of some candidates presented is well below that of the standards illustrated in national exemplification of Higher level answers.
- Most students tend to do fairly well when asked to describe or explain key concepts of knowledge and understanding. Typically though they encounter difficulties when asked to apply knowledge and understanding in order to construct an appropriate response.

Investigation of Performance

- The work should retain a performance and activity focus at all times. Some students get so involved in particular conditioning or technique development programmes that they forget that they must explain how this work is benefiting their whole performance in the chosen activity. This is particularly important towards the end of the Investigation where the mark scheme offers rewards for candidates who can discuss the effectiveness of the Investigation process and explain the specific effects it has had on their Performance.
- The quality of the data gathered by the student is crucial. Unless it has a level of depth and detail students find it difficult to draw interpretations which will be significant to the progression of their topic and which will help them identify the needs of their training programme.
- The series of steps followed during the Investigation process are often well described and good marks are gained for identifying and justifying an appropriate topic, gathering relevant and significant data, and then outlining an appropriate course of action.
- The main difficulty, as identified in last years report, lies in the students ability to identify, interpret and discuss the significant aspects of performance that arise from the data gathered about the topic.
- There is often only a limited development of the central focus in the interpretation and discussion of primary and secondary sources, even though the data presented would have allowed a meaningful development. This weakness often results in students tending to score poorly in the interpretation and discussion sections of the mark scheme where the largest allocations of marks are available. In these circumstances the conclusions drawn are often based on what candidates would have wished rather than that what can be validly claimed from an evaluation of the work undertaken.