



External Assessment Report 2012

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 has been a significant improvement in candidate attainment this year. This is very pleasing, and congratulations go to staff in centres, who clearly prepared their candidates well. There was a sense from the central marking team that candidates' performance was higher this year, and this has been borne out by the statistical information.

The successful candidates tended to clearly follow the project requirements and provided good evidence for each section. The external project is therefore helping candidates to achieve positive results when they keep to the requirements and provide good evidence for each stage. Tutor 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 ensuring the candidate can achieve a pass by being able to provide evidence for a social care assessed activity. The increased standard for the project has also been helped by candidates providing more of the required information within the body of the project where it is required, with much less dependency on log book information.

SQA has been proactive this year in providing delivering centres with support to improve candidate performance:

- ◆ The external assessment document has been updated to ensure clarity of purpose and process.
- ◆ A training day was provided by SQA Academy and Scotland's Colleges. This was well attended by participants from a number of colleges. Many issues were clarified in relation to the project, and specifically how marks should be allocated.
- ◆ The component Units of the Course were externally verified. This offered an opportunity for centres to clarify issues pertaining to the external project.
- ◆ A detailed marking guide has been produced, and further efforts were made to ensure wider distribution of this to centres throughout the year — for example, at the training and EV events.

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 the benefits to them from the proposed activity.

- ◆ Some candidates used the working document well. They had a clear flow of tasks to be undertaken to complete the project.
- ◆ There was an increase in the number of candidates providing preparation activities. A significant number of candidates gave very detailed examples, but it is worth noting this section is only for 4 marks.
- ◆ On the whole, planning and evaluation were completed more effectively than the development stage of the project.

Development

- ◆ Some candidates made very effective use of the updated working document they submitted in this stage by highlighting and explaining changes and adding new activities for completion of the project.
- ◆ A significant number of the activities presented had been observed and authenticated by the same individual.
- ◆ There was an increase in actual evidence of the activity in the form of questionnaires, letters of support from staff members, comments from supervisors.

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 and planning were completed more effectively than the development stage of the project.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Plan

- ◆ A number of candidates did not undertake a complex activity. A routine activity that was 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 an explanation of why the activity was therefore appropriate. A high number of candidates assessed needs that were general to everyone and therefore were not needs-led for the individual concerned.

Development

- ◆ A substantial number of candidates did not complete this section well. This was due either to evidence not being submitted, or to 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. Little or no reflection was provided.
- ◆ In many cases there was not enough evidence of an actual relationship being built, or reflection of this, with service-users or, significantly, with team members.
- ◆ A significant number of candidates talked about reading case notes, which would seem inappropriate given the nature and duration of their placement. There was more than one incidence of candidates including the service-user's actual care plan as an appendix.

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

- ◆ Ensure appropriate social care environments are used. Nursery placements are not acceptable unless social care tasks are being undertaken
- ◆ Ensure candidates undertake a complex activity. If they are making use of routine activities, encourage candidate to concentrate on assessing the needs of one particular service-user.
- ◆ Provide a working document for the plan and include an amended and updated copy of this in 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.
- ◆ Ensure the candidate reflects on all areas as per the marking guideline, and does not narrate issues, especially in relation to relationship-building, qualities and skills demonstrated, and progress of activity.

- ◆ The activity must be observed and authenticated by the member of staff witnessing it, who must sign the actual reflective account. Centres should encourage the supervisor to make comments about the activity in the comment box on the Activity 'Placement Project Reflective Account' page. SQA documentation has a signature box at the bottom of each page. If they are typing the activity, candidates should include a signature box as footer.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to make more effective use of theoretical knowledge and legislation in the reflective account.
- ◆ Ensure appropriate language is used when describing and engaging with service-users.
- ◆ Ensure candidates are able to be evaluative.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	294
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	296
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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 200				
A	22.6%	22.6%	67	140
B	27.4%	50.0%	81	120
C	32.8%	82.8%	97	100
D	4.4%	87.2%	13	90
No award	12.8%	100.0%	38	-

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.