



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>Early Education and Childcare</b>
Level	<b>Higher</b>

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**

This year we noticed a wider range of responses and marks between candidates. In this year's examination there appeared to be a significant group of learners who were not yet working at Higher level. Teachers/tutors and candidates are encouraged to reflect on their performance over the year to decide if candidates are ready to sit the external assessment.

Candidates generally were more confident in Paper 1, and marks for Questions 1 and 2 were generally stronger for the majority of candidates. Candidates continue to perform better when demonstrating their knowledge and understanding. Many candidates showed weaknesses in their ability to apply their knowledge or to evaluate theories.

### **Areas in which candidates performed well**

Question 2 (a) (i): Most candidates had a good knowledge of theories of language development and could explain these theories in detail.

Question 3 (e): Many candidates had a good understanding of the role of the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People and were able to explain this in detail.

Question 4 (a): Most candidates had excellent knowledge of theories of emotional, personal and social development, and some were creative and thoughtful in applying this theory to practice.

### **Areas which candidates found demanding**

Question 1 (a): Traditionally, children's physical development is an area of strength for many candidates. However, many candidates merely provided a list of reflexes without a description, and other candidates appeared to have limited or confused knowledge of this area of development.

Question 2 (d): Some candidates confused methods of observation with research methods in this question and so gave repetitive or inaccurate responses.

Question 4 (d): Many candidates gave responses that were very general and did not take into account the age of the child in the case study. While credit was given for appropriate cognitive development responses, this limited the marks that some candidates gained in this question.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

### **General**

Centres should work with candidates to assess if they are ready to sit the external assessment based on performance in formative and summative internal assessment, prelims and other exam preparation. Many candidates appeared to be working at Intermediate 2 level.

Centres should continue to support candidates with exam technique including: reading questions carefully, working with scenarios and case studies, and understanding the command words in questions such as 'describe' and 'evaluate'.

The Arrangements document provides centres, teams and individual lecturers/teachers with valuable information on the range and content to be covered within the Course. This should be read by anyone involved in delivering the qualification and in preparing candidates for the external assessment.

Centres should continue to challenge candidates where they demonstrate stereotypical or very generalised ideas about poverty and inequalities.

Candidates demonstrated strengths in knowledge and understanding of theories of language and emotional, personal and social development. To be successful in the external assessment at Higher level, candidates must also be able to develop their skills in evaluation and applying their knowledge to practice in a given situation.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	731
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	711
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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	11.1%	11.1%	79	68
B	18.0%	29.1%	128	58
C	27.1%	56.3%	193	48
D	11.3%	67.5%	80	43
No award	32.5%	100.0%	231	-

## **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, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.