



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>Care Practice</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

There was a slight drop in the numbers presented this year. There has also been a drop in the grades from last year and an increase in the number of candidates receiving no award. An explanation for this could be that centres repeated some of the problems from last year. There was also an increase in non-social-care placements this year and a substantial increase in the number of candidates being presented by some centres. However, the majority of issues which arose this year are similar to, or the same as, last year. This report therefore reiterates information that was presented in the 2010 report and remains current and valid for 2011. This information includes the following.

This year again, candidates who followed the project requirements and provided evidence for each section, achieved good results. These candidates choose a complex activity which is appropriate for the service user following very clear assessment of the needs of that individual. However, some centres continue to present candidates who undertake routine group activities. These are activities which are routinely delivered in the care environment by care providers or organised by activities officers. When this occurs, there tends to be much less assessment of individual need and a tendency to assess generally. Similarly, a number of candidates planned activities and then sought out service users 'who wanted to take part'. This resulted in much lower marks being allocated at central marking than had been given by centre assessors.

The majority of centres used the SQA assessment documentation pack and this led to well ordered projects which ensured the various elements were all presented appropriately. Although most candidates provided this evidence the content was poor in many cases.

Authentication of the activity was on the whole very good. However, a number of candidates provided reflective accounts that were not authenticated by the observing supervisor. Some candidates did have their 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 at central marking than had been given by centre assessors.

There is good evidence to suggest the current external project is assisting 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 ensure candidates achieve good grades. The vast majority of centres are using appropriate care environments. However, there are still some candidates being presented where the placement is inappropriate, for example nursery provision, where they are unable to display the necessary requirements of care planning.

Please note that all of the Evidence Requirements for this assessment must be presented in 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 few additional issues for 2011 include:

- ◆ A rise in the number of non-social-care placements such as nurseries and play groups was noticed. These placements do not allow the candidate to achieve all aspects of the project.
- ◆ Strengths and weaknesses in the evaluation should be about the activity and not about the candidate.

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

### **Plan**

Some candidates did well at the planning stage where they assessed specific need for an individual service user and highlighted benefits to them from the proposed activity.

Some candidates used the Working Document well and had a clear flow of tasks to be undertaken to complete the activity.

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 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.

### **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 substantial number of candidates did not undertake a complex activity. A routine activity which is part of the general placement setting was often used. A number of candidates planned activities 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 consequently no explanation of why the activity was therefore appropriate. A large number of candidates assessed needs that were general to everyone and therefore were not needs-led for the individual concerned.

A number of candidates did not submit preparation activities before the plan. These are discussed under Appendix A, page 25.

The Working Document was 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 there was not enough evidence of an actual relationship being built with service users or staff members.

A number of reflective accounts were not authenticated. Some were signed but from the candidates' written accounts it was evident the activities had not been supervised/observed.

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 were 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.

There was very little explanation of legislation — especially in relation to candidates' practice.

The language used by a number of candidates was inappropriate. Such language as 'wheelchair bound', 'toileting' and 'sufferer' goes against the value base of 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 evaluate 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**

The revised Higher PBNC Care Practice External Assessment document is now available on SQA's website and should be used by all centres delivering this qualification in session 2011–12.

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 making use of routine activities, encourage the candidates to concentrate on assessing needs of one particular service user and that they undertake an activity specific to one service user.

Ensure preparation activities are included to inform the plan.

Candidates should be reminded that where too few words are given, they miss opportunities for gaining marks; and where they significantly exceed the word count, responses will not be clear, concise or focused on the important issues.

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 which will lead to the completion of the project — not just the activity.

Ensure candidates are better 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 indicated in the marking guideline and does not narrate issues. It might be helpful to provide a taught session on reflection.

The activity must be observed and authenticated by the member of staff witnessing it by signing the actual reflective account. SQA documentation has a signature box at the bottom of each page. If word processing the activity, candidates should include the signature box as a footer.

Candidates must provide actual evidence of feedback as it is not enough only for the candidate to say 'things went well'. Examples of evidence could include: evaluation forms, a headed letter from staff within the organisation, photographs (with appropriate evidence of permissions given), and written notification from family and/or the service user (if appropriate).

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 2010	310
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	294
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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	10.5%	10.5%	31	140
B	18.7%	29.3%	55	120
C	35.4%	64.6%	104	100
D	11.2%	75.9%	33	90
No award	24.1%	100.0%	71	-

## **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.