



## External Assessment Report 2009

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Subject	Physical Education
Level	Advanced 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

The number of candidates entered this year was 87 compared to 77 in the previous year. This included 9 new centres presenting for the first time. Within the cohort there was an encouraging rise in the overall pass rate compared to the previous year.

A comparative analysis of pass rate to previous year awards was considered a reliable indicator as the degree of difficulty since course elements remained consistent.

Evidence inferred that both course elements revealed an increase in the overall pass rate compared to last year.

5 candidates achieved			Grade A (band 1)
12	“	“	Grade A (band 2)
6	“	“	Grade B (band 3)
5	“	“	Grade B (band 4)
8	“	“	Grade C (band 5)
14	“	“	Grade C (band 6)
12	“	“	Grade D (band 7)

The evidence suggests that there was significant improvement in the performance of candidates in the upper range level. Two of these candidates gained course maximum marks, achieving 30 marks for Performance and 70 marks for the Project Report. In respect of the Project Report, all candidates demonstrated sound levels of enquiry supported with detailed research methodologies evident in their critical debate of their performance development.

However, there is a failure to recognise the standards required necessary to achieve a pass the Advanced Higher.

### This may be due to

- the number of new presenting for the first time
- lack of meaningful primary and secondary research considered
- lack of appreciation of the content demand of specific sections of the Project Report
- poor candidate commitment to independent study

Overall, however, the increased uptake and pass awards attained indicate a respectable improvement. In addition, the range of activities included was extremely varied.

### Areas in which candidates performed well

The practical performance standards improved slightly compared to previous years and there is strong evidence to support that candidates are doing well.

With regards to the Project Report there were excellent examples of candidates performing well. Particularly impressive, was the work submitted by 2 candidates who had achieved maximum marks; the work submitted was well cited in pertinent key concepts, the performance development focus was articulately introduced and developed with a high degree of critical debate derived from pertinent research methodology

Two other candidates achieved 65+ out of the maximum 70 marks available with another 6 achieving 50+ marks. Across most sections of the Project Report the candidates' demonstrated sound levels of logical, analytical and critical thinking when presenting and debating their arguments. The extensive range of research methods included substantiated their claims for improved performance.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

The work submitted by some candidates highlighted there were still problems with the management of the Project Report. The difficulties in the main stemmed from the performance focus being too wide ranging. For example, the decision to address technical and physical weaknesses at the same time became unmanageable.

The most recurring issue related to the quality of the research undertaken by many of the candidates. In some circumstances the depth of research carried out was restricted to integrating primary sources only whilst in other circumstances the selection of training/development programmes was inappropriate to fully address weaknesses identified. Subsequently the candidates were unable to progress their argument, justify claims for improved development or consolidate how acquired knowledge had been applied. When attempting to interpret and discuss their findings many responses were repetitive points raised about the process with many candidates presenting their discussion as a narrative account. Disappointingly the candidates were unable to fully access the 17 marks available.

This trend of offering a narrative repetitive account continued in section 4, 'Application to Performance' worth 12 marks. Here many candidates missed the opportunity to appraise, compare and contrast authors' works to augment their debate; in this respect claims for valid performance development could not be meaningfully substantiated.

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

All new presenting centres should be familiar with the course arrangements. It is advised to examine the content demand and importantly the specific demands of each associated section of the Project Report to support candidates in accessing full marks.

Centres are encouraged to take cognisance of the independent approach and rigorous research demands that candidates must undertake to ensure the compilation of a quality Project Report. Centre staff should also encourage candidates to offer more qualitative discussion exhibiting critical thinking by substantiating claims through valid findings referenced in pertinent data collection and research methodologies.

Centre staff should visit SQA web site for exemplification of NAB and Project Report materials.

It is also important for centres to take into account the grade award achieved by candidates at Higher level before encouraging them to embark on the Advanced Higher course.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	78
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	86
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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	17.4%	17.4%	15	70
B	11.6%	29.1%	10	60
C	23.3%	52.3%	20	50
D	12.8%	65.1%	11	45
No award	34.9%	100.0%	30	-

### 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.