



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>Care</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 is the third year of the revised Care Higher. Informal verbal feedback from centres and written feedback from Markers at central marking was that it was a fair and balanced paper.

Some candidates appeared to have learned the subjects well and were able to write in a fluent and appropriate manner; however, a number of candidates are still gaining no marks for some sections of the paper, and other answers seemed to be written at Intermediate 2 level rather than Higher level. Centres should ensure that they prepare candidates to answer questions from any area of the mandatory content of each Unit (as noted in the Unit specification) and carefully consider the level at which they enter candidates. Care Courses are hierarchical, with the three mandatory Units, Sociology for Care, Psychology for Care, and Values and Principles in Care, being offered at Higher and Intermediate 2 level. Centres might consider timetabling Intermediate 2 and Higher Care together in order to allow candidates to move up or down a level.

Higher Care has a low pass rate and a number of measures have been taken to try to address this. An SQA Academy course was held at Scotland's Colleges in November 2009 with the aim of improving learning and teaching in Care Intermediate 2 and Higher. It received positive feedback from those who attended but the organisers were disappointed that more centres were not represented, as feedback suggested that it has a clear impact on preparing candidates for the external exam and in helping teachers write a robust prelim.

For the 2011 paper, the setting team have looked at ways of widening access to improved marks for candidates and have tried to ensure that as wide a range of the Course is covered, and that Course content is not sampled as specifically — as it has been in the past.

In addition to this, three resources have been developed which will provide additional opportunities for teachers and learners to prepare for, and improve performance in, Higher Care internal and external exams.

- ◆ SQA Understanding Standards Website — Materials from the 2009 paper will be available on the SQA Understanding Standards Website by the end of 2010. This will enable teachers to read real scripts and to mark them. They can then compare their marks to the official guidance and read the rationales behind the marking decisions.
- ◆ SQA TranSETT Solar Open Assessment — Formative assessment materials for the Higher Care Units will be available in 2010. This will enable centres to provide mini e-assessments on some of the Course content and provides a novel way of revising Course content and preparing for assessments.
- ◆ Scotland's Colleges Repository — Online learning materials for all three Higher Care Units, as well as other NC Health and Social Care Units for centres from this repository. The packages offer an opportunity for centres to provide an extended range of blended learning for their students. A password is required to access these materials. This can be provided by your college or by contacting Scotland's Colleges.

It is hoped that these measures, in addition to the comments contained in the 'Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates' section will help improve the pass rate for Higher Care in future years.

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

### **Section 1 and 3**

Candidates appeared to be well prepared for these sections and applied their knowledge to the case studies. The structure of these sections is similar to NABs as they have a case study and linked questions, so candidates are familiar with this format.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Section 2: Sociology for Care**

There were three questions in this section with high mark allocations. Although most candidates attempted all questions, many gave only brief answers and so did not manage to access all the available marks.

In many cases, candidates merely reproduced the key features of each theory, rather than answering the question that was asked. For instance in (a) 'Describe one similarity and one difference between feminist theory and functionalist theory', candidates listed all they knew about feminism and functionalism and so only gained Knowledge and Understanding (KU) marks, however if they linked some kind of evaluation to the similarity and difference they would have been awarded more marks.

Similarly, Question (c) 'Legislation is a good way of reducing social inequality. Explain why conflict theorists might disagree with this statement' asks for the candidate to link three things (conflict theory, social inequality and legislation). Many candidates did not include all three aspects in their response and therefore did not write answers that could gain full marks. Tutors should ensure that candidates are given practice with this type of question which combines different aspects of the Unit so that they do not just reproduce key features without linking them to the specific question that is asked.

### **Section 4: Integration**

For the first time, a 25 mark question was used in this section and a number of candidates produced excellent integrated answers. Four bullet pointed prompts were provided in the question to give guidance to candidates about how to answer the question, and most made an attempt to answer all aspects of the question. However, despite clear guidance about not using Rogers' Person Centred Approach, many candidates still referred to that rather than person centred planning, and thus did not gain marks for that section. A key issue with this question was that candidates did not go into enough detail about the bullet points and therefore did not access all marks available: their answer was correct, but it was not developed fully enough to gain more marks. Candidates have to be prepared to write fuller answers to questions that are allocated high marks.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The main advice to centres about improving candidate performance remains similar to previous years:

- ◆ Ensure candidates are entered at the correct level. As the Care Courses are hierarchical, centres should consider timetabling classes to facilitate the movement of candidates to Intermediate 2 level.
- ◆ Provide exam preparation classes. The Care Higher Unit (X241 12) has a nominal time allocation of 40 hours, and it is recommended that centres allocate class contact time to prepare candidates for the exam. Candidates will be less well prepared for the integrated Section 4 if centres do not allocate class contact time to prepare candidates for it. The section pulls together themes and topics from two of the three component Units, and it is essential for candidates to get preparation to answer this type of integrated question.
- ◆ Ensure that the full curriculum is covered. It is apparent when marking the external exam that some candidates have not covered all the Unit content. The list of what must be taught is covered in the 'Appendix to the Statement of Standards' in each Unit specification. It clearly outlines the mandatory content for each Unit. The external exam can sample from any of this content.
- ◆ It is important that a robust prelim which samples across the curriculum is prepared. It is also important that the external exam and prelim exam at Higher level are not predictable, so that candidates cannot 'guess' which topics might come up. If the prelim only includes questions on topics that candidates are comfortable with, candidates will not gain a realistic view of their ability. Some centres have worked collaboratively to develop joint prelims, but there are potential problems with the reliability of these prelims if they are not offered on the same day. Centres should contact the Qualifications Manager if they want to discuss any issues arising from writing a joint prelim.
- ◆ Ensure that the marking of NABs and the prelim is rigorous. The Understanding Standards section of the SQA website gives detailed information about how to mark scripts, and from 2010 will have material covering the revised Care Higher format. When processing candidate work for Appeals, it is often found that NABs and prelims have been marked too leniently. This gives candidates an unrealistic impression of their ability.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	654
Number of resulted entries in 2010	649

## 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	7.4%	7.4%	48	62
B	15.3%	22.7%	99	52
C	19.7%	42.4%	128	42
D	13.9%	56.2%	90	37
No award	43.8%	100.0%	284	—

### 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.