



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Early Education and Childcare
Level	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 general standard of response has continued to improve year on year; Markers' comments at central marking reflected this, and it is noted that more than 50% of candidates achieved grades 'A' and 'B'.

Candidates demonstrated an ability to answer both papers with equal aptitude. As always, a small minority were unable to evaluate theory in practice.

Feedback from centres demonstrated that everyone thought the papers were a fair and thorough examination of the contents of the Course Units.

Areas in which candidates performed well

- ◆ The majority of candidates demonstrated a thorough knowledge of child development, theory and practice.
- ◆ Most candidates were obviously well-prepared in examination techniques. The most able candidates demonstrated an ability to read widely beyond the Course materials.

Areas which candidates found demanding

- ◆ Some candidates misread questions, and therefore lost marks by (for example) confusing 'benefits of' with 'means of providing'. There were too many generalised answers, listing holistic, broad needs, rather than specific examples.
- ◆ There were more stereotypical answers for culture and other socio-economic factors, with a heavy emphasis on the negative, than those giving a balanced view.
- ◆ Candidates' knowledge of the features and principles of growth and development was patchy.
- ◆ Answers to the question about longitudinal studies varied from the very well-informed to those who had apparently only read the pack.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ Candidates should be made aware of the importance of recognising the difference between KU and AE/App answers. This has been reflected in the minority of candidates demonstrating an inability to evaluate theory in practice.
- ◆ As previously identified, central marking has proved invaluable as a professional development activity, and centres are encouraged to continue participating in SQA activities.
- ◆ Centres should continue to ensure that candidates have practice in how to read examination questions and answer them appropriately.
- ◆ Centres should take care to ensure that their candidates are more familiar with the multi-cultural nature of modern Scottish life.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	701
Number of resulted entries in 2010	731

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	25.9%	25.9%	189	70
B	24.9%	50.8%	182	60
C	24.4%	75.1%	178	50
D	7.9%	83.0%	58	45
No award	17.0%	100.0%	124	—

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.