



External Assessment Report 2010

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

There was an increased uptake (106 entries compared to 86 in 2009) and the pass awards attained indicate a respectable improvement, in particular in the success of those candidates in the upper award boundaries.

A comparative analysis of pass rate to previous years' awards was considered a reliable indicator, as Course elements remained consistent.

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

In relation to the performance attained by those candidates in the upper range level, the evidence suggests that these candidates demonstrated exceptionally high levels of enquiry. The introduction of their performance focus was relevant and concise. The quality of pertinent research methodologies was wide ranging and supported critical appraisal about the processes and changes to performance development.

The works of various authors were cited and debated critically to demonstrate informed thinking. Whilst most candidates gave justifiable claims for performance improvement, some candidates knowledgeably debated the limitations of significant developments.

In relation to the performance attained by those candidates in the lower range level, evidence suggests that these candidates are including more reliable data methods, thus supporting a more methodical approach to interpretation and analysis of results and discussion of training priorities and performance development.

In respect of the other candidates, the evidence highlights a failure to recognise the standards required to achieve a pass at Advanced Higher.

This may be due to:

- ◆ the number of new centres presenting for the first time
- ◆ lack of appreciation of the content demand of specific sections of the project report
- ◆ poor candidate commitment to independent study

Areas in which candidates performed well

The practical performance standards remained fairly consistent with previous years, and there is strong evidence to show that candidates are doing well. Impressively, some candidates referenced their district and national representation in selected sports.

In respect of the project report, there were excellent examples of candidates performing well. Particularly impressive was the work submitted by four candidates who had achieved maximum marks. The quality of the work submitted was excellent; where reliable data methods were unavailable for the specific performance focus, the candidates were creative

in their approach in designing detailed alternatives to support their debate. The work was well referenced, with appendices and extensive bibliographies included.

Fifteen other candidates achieved 50+ out of the maximum 70 marks available, with a further five candidates achieving 45 of the maximum 70 marks available. Across most sections of the report these candidates demonstrated sound levels of logical, analytical and critical thinking when presenting and debating their arguments. The range of research methods included substantiated their claims for improved performance.

Areas which candidates found demanding

The work submitted by some candidates highlighted that there were still problems with the management of the report. The difficulties in the main stemmed from the candidates not appropriately citing their work in relevant key concepts and key features, and so the performance focus was lost or became unmanageable.

The most recurring issue related to the quality of the research undertaken. The range of methodologies was limited, which prohibited meaningful debate about the selected performance issue. In this respect, the quality of research carried out by many of the candidates was restricted to integrating primary sources only. 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 findings, many responses were repetitive points raised about the process, with some 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 and demonstrate how 'new' acquired knowledge had been applied to improve performance development.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

All new presenting centres should be familiar with the Course Arrangements. Centres are advised to examine the content demand, and importantly the specific demands of each associated section of the report, to support candidates in accessing full marks.

Centres are encouraged to take account of the independent approach and rigorous research demands that candidates must undertake to ensure the compilation of a quality 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 the SQA website for exemplification of NAB and report materials.

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

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	86
Number of resulted entries in 2010	106

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	27.4%	27.4%	29	70
B	20.8%	48.1%	22	60
C	22.6%	70.8%	24	50
D	14.2%	84.9%	15	45
No award	15.1%	100.0%	16	–

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.