



## External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	<b>Early Education and Childcare</b>
Level(s)	<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 decrease in candidate entries. However, there was an increase in the number of centres presenting candidates for the exam.

The majority of candidates attempted all questions in both papers, with only a small number appearing to have difficulty in managing to complete both papers.

Overall, candidates seemed well prepared for the exam. Knowledge and understanding of the Units was evident in candidate responses. Fewer candidates, however, gained high marks for questions requiring evaluation skills.

Paper 1 appeared to be more challenging for some candidates. A few candidates scored significantly low marks throughout both papers, and it was evident that they did not have the necessary skills or level of understanding required for SCQF level 6.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

The majority of candidates displayed a good knowledge of child development in both question papers.

Candidates had a comprehensive understanding of different parenting styles.

Questions asking about the theory of children's cognitive development were well answered. In particular, candidates were familiar with Piaget's theory, and gave detailed answers with examples to show their understanding.

Candidates were clearly familiar with the work of Maslow and were able to describe his theory.

Question 4 (which asked questions linked to all aspects of the course in an integrated way) was well answered. Answers to these questions were detailed and comprehensive, with some candidates attaining full marks. Candidates also demonstrated a good knowledge of the benefits of outdoor play for children.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

There were two main areas where candidates found difficulty in attaining high marks.

Questions that required candidates to evaluate were challenging throughout both papers. Often, candidates were only presenting their knowledge of a topic rather than evaluating the impact of a factor on a child.

Candidates also appeared to find it difficult to link some answers to the particular children or family situations given in the case study. These candidates gave general answers or did not take account of the situation described in the case study. For example, when candidates described parenting styles in Paper 1, they often described all the parenting styles they had knowledge of rather than choosing one relevant to Connie and evaluating the impact this could have on her.

Although candidates had good knowledge of children's developmental stages, some candidates gave answers as a list rather than describing these.

The question on the World Health Organisation appeared to be difficult for quite a few candidates. It was unclear if this was due to poor study skills, or the timing of this unit within the course, or some candidates simply being unaware of the definition of 'Health'.

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

In preparation for the external assessment, opportunities to practice linking knowledge and understanding to a particular child/family in a case study should continue to be given.

Encourage and support candidates to select relevant knowledge in their answers to enable them to evaluate and develop full answers.

In preparing prelims or other exam preparation exercises, centres should carefully read the Course Arrangements and the Course Assessment Specification to ensure the full range of the course is covered.

Exam preparation and study skills sessions should reinforce the need to read questions carefully. Remind candidates to pay attention to the command words within questions. For example, if the question requires a description, they should not merely list stages of development.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	711
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	689
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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	17.3%	17.3%	119	70
B	24.7%	41.9%	170	60
C	26.1%	68.1%	180	50
D	8.4%	76.5%	58	45
No award	23.5%	100.0%	162	-

## 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.