



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Early Education and Childcare
Level(s)	Higher

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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

In general, candidates performed well in the external assessment. The majority of candidates demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of children's development and holistic health needs. The overall performance of candidates remained consistent with previous cohorts of students.

Candidates were, in the main, well prepared for both exam papers (Paper One and Paper Two). It was apparent that some candidates performed better in the questions regarding children's holistic health needs. The majority of candidates attempted all questions. A number of candidates seemed to have difficulty linking their answers to the children in the case study. This is a key aspect of preparing for the external assessment and should be included in any exam preparation.

Some candidates lacked focus and detailed examples in some of their responses. This meant that, although they demonstrated some knowledge and understanding, they were often not accessing the full range of marks for a particular question.

Candidates must ensure they read the question carefully.

Some candidates only showed limited knowledge of linguistic development at ages 5–8.

Only a very small number of candidates were unable to demonstrate that they were working at Higher level. This showed that centres were supporting students through internal assessments and guidance procedures to undertake assessment at the right level for them.

It would be helpful if a standard format was used when presenting scribed or typed scripts. Consistency over line spacing, size of font and space to allocate marks would assist the marking process.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Question 2(a)(i): Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the theory of emotional, personal and social development. In particular, candidates competently described Bowlby's theory of attachment in detail. The majority of candidates were also able to give numerous examples of how this theory could be used in practice within a nursery.

Question 3(a): Candidates also showed very good understanding of theories that explain how children's basic health needs were met.

Question 4(a): Evaluations of the benefits of outdoor activities on holistic development were often detailed and relevant, and included examples of the impact on children's social, physical, emotional, cognitive and linguistic development. However, not all candidates included these aspects of development when detailing benefits for children and so some were unable to attain full marks for this question.

Question 4(d): The majority of candidates gave detailed and accurate descriptions of the role and responsibilities of staff when children are unwell.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Paper One Question 1(a): Some candidates found it difficult to describe the process of growth and development.

Paper One Question 1(c) and Question 1(d): Some candidates simply described influences without evaluating their impact on the child's linguistic or cognitive development. When candidates are preparing for the external exam, they should prepare to focus their answers on particular areas of development and give relevant examples. Some candidates repeated the answers they had given for language development in the cognitive development question.

Although many candidates had a sound knowledge of what nature/nurture is, many found it challenging to relate this to the child in the case study. Some candidates did not achieve full marks as they gave general answers not linked to the age and circumstances of Darius, the child in the case study.

Question 2(b): Many candidates described their knowledge of research methods rather than evaluating the use of the chosen research method. Candidates should read the question carefully and use the marks allocated as a guide for their answer.

Question 3(b): A few candidates gave general answers for both children rather than answering about each child's age and stage.

Question 3(c): Candidates should not make lists in their answer where description or evaluation are required.

Question 4(e): It appeared that some candidates did not read this question properly and did not include any evaluation as part their answer. Candidates should be aware that questions that require evaluation will not gain full marks when they only give a description.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

In exam preparation candidates should be reminded always to read the question carefully. Particular attention should be paid to the type of question, the marks allocated, and whether there is a particular area of development to be focused upon.

It remains challenging for some candidates to relate their answers to particular children described in case studies. It would be helpful if candidates gained experience in reading case studies and developing focused answers with the age/stage or family circumstances of a particular child in mind.

Candidates should continue to gain experience in focusing on a particular area of development (eg cognitive development) or factor (eg family lifestyle) and giving relevant, specific examples.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	771
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	746
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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	19.0%	19.0%	142	70
B	27.7%	46.8%	207	60
C	25.9%	72.7%	193	50
D	8.4%	81.1%	63	45
No award	18.9%	-	141	-

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.