

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

Care

Qualification area

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
Included in this report**

Care Practice: Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2003 (pre appeal)	350
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Number of entries in 2004 (pre appeal)	413
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General comments re entry numbers

The 2004 submission numbers showed yet again an increase in submissions from 2003.

The total entries for the award were significantly increased indicating that many centres and candidates find the award appealing and worthwhile.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards and grade boundaries

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	31.2	31.2	129	145
B	28.3	59.6	117	125
C	21.3	80.9	88	105
D	3.9	84.7	16	95
No award	15.3	100.0	63	

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

The grade boundary remained at the level of 2002.

The rationale for setting the pass mark at this level was that there have been no changes in the project demands on the student. No changes to marking guidelines.

Other grade boundaries were set accordingly.

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

There was a small percentage increase in the number of candidates not gaining an award above C; feedback from markers would suggest that this is possibly due to some candidates not including all the evidence requirements and some candidates not completing all the demands of the development stage of the project.

There is a small increase in the number of candidates gaining an award at grade C and B which follows the trend of the past few years and indicates that the candidates are preparing better and have a clearer understanding of requirements.

Awards at grade A follow the trend of recent years showing a slight reduction. Markers generally reported fewer exceptional submissions this year.

There were no amendments to the marking guide and all centres are now familiar with them. This is reflected in the grades gained, and ensures that students are awarded the most marks for their personal contribution.

This Higher now seems to be finding its level, fewer anomalies being observed and centres have developed expertise and familiarity with the award.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

A total of 18 centres entered candidates for this award although only 17 centres submitted. 383 projects in total were received for central marking.

The marking team comments generally commended centres for good standard of presentation of materials; all centres had submitted evidence from all three sections of the project. However some centres did not submit the full logbook and only photocopied the pages they felt relevant. There were also some centres who did not submit the evidence required for working in teams. The result of this led to candidates being penalised, as markers could not credit candidates without the evidence.

Evaluation of the project was generally poor, it appears candidates did not understand the difference between reflection and evaluation. Many evaluations submitted read as an account of the activity and not an evaluation of the project. Another weakness was in candidates evaluating the placement experience not the project.

Centres in general appear to be more confident in their candidates' submission, however markers commented that some centres submitted incomplete projects. These candidates are unlikely to achieve. Centres should be aware that candidates can submit on a later date or be withdrawn.

A number of centres only partially marked the projects, one centre gave a mark for the plan and evaluation as 40/40 but did not show the breakdown to indicate where the marks were gained. It is difficult to achieve concordance with centres' estimates where centres do not mark.

There were a number of centres whose log book and project submissions were not signed appropriately including sections where authentication of the candidates' work is awarded marks. Log books in general lacked input from placement supervisors and lecturers. However, those candidates who had guiding comments and constructive criticism from either supervisor or lecturer showed improvements particularly in evaluating their practice thereby gaining marks. The review of the candidates' logbook is vital in this Higher, observation and markers reports would suggest that some centres need to improve their practice in this regard.

A number of observations made by markers highlighted that some candidates had been inappropriately placed, thereby disadvantaging them. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the placement provided can offer the candidate adequate supervision from a qualified supervisor, the opportunity to show development of skills and qualities, safe practice, positive care environment and the opportunity to plan and carry out a suitable activity to meet clients needs as per project guidelines. Mainstream educational placements prove problematic for candidates and it might suggest that the Early Years Higher would be a more appropriate award. Placements such as 'The Ambulance Service' where candidates have little chance of developing any kind of relationship with clients, and are limiting in terms of meeting any of the project briefs should also be carefully reviewed before placing candidates.

A recurring theme from the last two years is still evident in some centres' submissions, mainly the project being a way of meeting the candidates needs to gain the award. The project aims to be a vehicle where by the candidate can exhibit their ability to identify clients' needs, then plan and carry out an activity to meet those needs, and finally evaluate their own practice. Many candidates failed to establish what clients' needs were or how the chosen activity would meet clients' needs. There are several examples of candidates choosing an activity and then 'finding an appropriate client'. There are many examples of candidates simply controlling an activity that is a fixed part of the placements routine. It is understandable that placement providers may not want their routines changed by visiting students but if the student has no part in the preparation of an activity or even the selection of clients taking part, it is difficult for them to meet the requirements of the project. There is still a difficulty for some candidates who chose to do Brief 1: *An Activity of Daily Living*. The aim of this activity is for candidates to carry out the one activity on one client three times, not three different activities one client or one activity on three different clients.

This particular activity is often difficult for candidates whose placement is on a busy medical or surgical ward where clients are only on the ward for a very short time, or for the candidates who are on placement for only the nominal 40 hours required for the Practical Skills for Carers Unit. It is noted that candidates who are placed over a longer time, prove to develop working relationships much better and relationships with clients also improve, therefore the activities chosen and carried out are also much more appropriate to clients' needs.

Some candidates also lost marks because they had not interpreted the briefs appropriately, there seems to be a difficulty in candidates understanding Therapeutic Activity. Many candidates said they were choosing this brief then proceeded to carry out a social activity such as a shopping trip. One candidate said she was carrying out an activity to assist her client's social needs and need for interaction with others, then chose an activity that isolated the client with his music, the client edited a personalised CD. An interesting activity and no doubt enjoyed by the client but it did not meet the stated need for social interaction with others.

Activities carried out by candidates on the whole were appropriate, however one candidate planned to do an unsupervised activity and the centre did not pick up on this. Evidence from markers indicates that a number of activities took place without supervision at all, or where a care worker was with the candidates, yet the supervisor signed the activity report as an authenticated account of the activity.

If an activity has to be changed due to circumstances beyond the candidate's control, good practice would dictate that where this is a major change a revised plan should be submitted. There was evidence from one centre that a candidate had planned a particular activity to meet a client's needs, then on the day was refused permission from the placement to carry it out. A new activity and indeed new client was chosen but no reference to any updated or revised plan was given, this made evaluation difficult for the candidate and resulted in the candidate losing marks.

There was overall a lack of research evidence submitted, very few bibliography submissions and in terms of relating theory in plans or evaluation sections, candidates often misapplied a theory. There was very little evidence of teamwork theory or safe practice in plans or evaluations.

Some centres had really improved on the presentation of the material this year, and the use of separators or folders assisted markers to find relevant information thereby ensuring candidates gained the maximum possible marks. Some good practice was evident in the production of submission checklists for candidates, encouraging candidates to have ownership of the project right up to submission time.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

The candidates had a clear understanding of the project having three defined sections and all centres did submit plan, development and evaluation sections. Some centres showed good practice in that the plans and evaluations showed evidence of being carried out under invigilated/supervised conditions. There were fewer deductions for exceeding word count this year and many centres are making good use of the day activity appendix provided in the project guidelines.

The choice of activities this year, in general, were appropriate for the project and for the candidate's ability; there was a general feeling from the markers that placements were on the whole now familiar with the Course demands and were supporting students better with this aspect of their placement.

The development section was, in general terms, reasonably better than in previous years and most accounts submitted were authenticated and did convey an account of the activity in enough detail to allow markers to discern qualities and skills and in many cases the relationship between client and candidate, however many activity reports only talked of arrangements and tasks and gave no indication of the client's needs or role in the activity other than being there.

Many marks are gained from the logbook and evidence pages from the project guidelines and many centres structured the presentation of this evidence very well and allowed markers to access this very easily. Unfortunately, some centres had not completed the required sections and candidates lost marks simply because evidence of their preparation could not be verified as the teacher/lecturer had not signed their achievement sheet or the self-assessment sheet.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

This award requires a great deal from the candidates and at a time when they may well be experiencing a care environment for the first time. They need a great deal of guidance and support from the presenting centres and placement providers to ensure that they have the opportunity to achieve. In particular they need assistance in evaluation and reflection of their practice, support in the understanding and interpreting of clients' needs and how to meet those needs.

Planning

Planning stage for some candidates centred on the candidate's needs not the client's. In some cases candidates seemed to be planning for an activity they thought they could do and would identify the clients later. One or two centres seemed to be planning almost the day before the activity, which did not allow candidates to research anything except practical issues, although this is important it is not the main aim of the project. Theory was often mentioned but not related to practice and occasionally was incorrect. In general the aims and objectives section of the plan was poor, often simply task orientated not with clients' needs in mind. Some centres had submitted the plans with the tutor/lecturers marks written over them. Many students lost marks for failing to give time scales in the plans and some students submitted time scales for the activity down to the minute but failed to give time scale for the project. Centres might care to note that timescales were often given in the 200 word prep notes but not the actual plan itself and so candidates need some guidance here.

Development

All centres had submitted the development stage but some centres did not submit the 'Working in Teams' project, which is a requirement. This is worth marks to the candidate and the markers could not award marks where evidence had not been supplied. The standard of 'Working in Teams' for the centres that did submit was variable and marks were unable to be allocated for poor 'Working in Teams' project submission, particularly where it related to the candidate's role within their team and the candidate's contribution to the team.

Accounts of the activity were also variable. Most concern was raised when candidates had chosen brief one, ADLs, and only submitted an account of one activity not three as required. Also where candidates did submit three accounts, few gave indication of any change in their relationship with the client, development of their skills or even confidence/competence.

Supervision and authentication of accounts are still proving problematic for some candidates but on the whole it was better this year than in the past. One centre however brought authentication into question when two candidates at the same placement claimed the same activity at the same time, authenticated by the same supervisor. They even shopped for the same articles in preparation for the activity with the same clients.

The placement log book gives a great deal of marks for the development section and should indicate candidate's skills and qualities development, however few evaluate their practice, only the activity. Please note if the supervisor is not commenting and assisting the candidate to reflect on their practice the tutor/lecturer can.

Generally the section relating to identifying client groups needs is poor and many candidates fail to identify the client group in the space provided,

Evaluation

This remains the stage where candidates appear to need more support.

Many evaluations ended up as a re-write of the activity report with little or no evaluation of the candidate's practice or reference to the plan and few students identified any resources to assist in the evaluation. Some candidates were unable to relate theory to practice and some could not identify areas in which their project or practice could have been improved.

Estimates

A number of centres were very generous with their estimated marks particularly in the evaluation section. There were a large number of candidates given full marks for suggested improvements where the markers could find none. The centre's marking is important as previously stated, and it was hoped that the marking guidelines provided would go some way to providing concordance, however some centres' estimates were considerably higher than the marking team found during central marking.

Special arrangements.

A number of submissions appeared to be using a scribe yet no information as to why this was had been indicated and these were redirected to the special arrangements department of SQA. There were a few logbooks that had been typed, but again no special arrangements indicated and one log book even had supervisors' comments typed.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

1. Centres must ensure candidates understand the project briefs, in particular in relationship to the clients' needs and to the activity they plan to carry out.
2. The plan should be written with enough flexibility to enable the candidate to cope with some change, but if the activity has to be completely changed a revised plan can be submitted.
3. The plan should enable the candidate to identify areas of research, negotiation and set clear aims, objectives to be based firmly with clients needs in mind.
4. Centres must take account of the project requirements when placing candidates and placements should provide the opportunity for candidates to develop skills and qualities.
5. Centres must ensure full submission of assessable material.
6. Evaluation section of the project needs to be a review of the whole project; candidates need to review the plan, the development and their own potential for improved practice.
7. Application of theory throughout the project needs to be reviewed and theory should be linked either to the client/service user, candidates' activities and practice, and the project aims.
8. Where a special arrangement such as scribes or permission to use ICT has been agreed, centres should indicate prior agreement with SQA to avoid scripts being redirected to special arrangements section.