

## Principal Assessor Report 2004

**Assessment Panel:**

Care

**Qualification area**

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

Early Years Care and Education Higher

### **Statistical information: update**

<b>Number of entries in 2003 (pre appeal)</b>	317
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<b>Number of entries in 2004 (pre appeal)</b>	361
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### **General comments re entry numbers**

Again there was an increase in entry numbers this year. Individual centres that had entered candidates last year presented more candidates this year. There were also entries from schools for the first time. As before, colleges with previous experience seemed to have gained confidence in the Higher examination.

## Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of awards and grade boundaries

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	12.2	12.2	44	72
B	19.9	32.1	72	62
C	29.9	62.0	108	52
D	11.1	73.1	40	47
No award	26.9	100	97	

There were fewer candidates achieving high marks this year. Overall, candidates did not perform as well as last year. There was an increase in the number of candidates achieving at C grade and an increase in the number of candidates who did not gain the award.

### Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

The wider range of marks awarded with the greater number of candidates achieving a low mark or no award may reflect the larger number of candidates entered this year with no prior selection. The level of difficulty of the examination paper was felt by markers to be consistent with previous years. However, two questions were considered more challenging than in previous years.

### General commentary on passmarks and grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create mark schemes which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum 50% of the available marks (notional passmark) and a very well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70%, it is almost impossible to get the standard absolutely on target every year, in every subject and level
- Each year we therefore hold a passmark meeting for each subject at each level where we bring together all the information available (statistical and judgmental). 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 senior management team at SQA
- We adjust the passmark downwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly more demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- We adjust the passmark upwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly less demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- Where the standard appears to be very similar to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries
- 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 are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. And just because SQA has altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry 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
- Our main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

## Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Candidates who achieved less than 52/100 marks had not shown an acceptable level of knowledge and understanding of the subject and/or had not completed the question paper.

Grades C and B performed at an increasingly competent level.

The smaller number of candidates who achieved grade A gave some very good answers to the questions.

The grade boundaries were adjusted minimally this year to reflect the two more challenging questions. One required candidates to discuss the nature/nurture debate which few candidates achieved although the majority showed knowledge and understanding of the difference between nature and nurture. The other question asked candidates to evaluate a developmental theory which the majority could not do.

## **Comments on candidate performance**

### **General comments**

Some candidates performed extremely well and gave very good answers to the questions. Some candidates showed they had been well prepared in examination technique. Other candidates showed the opposite, giving long detailed responses to questions where there were few marks to be gained and providing minimal responses to questions offering considerably more marks.

The candidates who performed well ensured they answered questions in full. Too many candidates did not answer the question presented and gave inappropriate, irrelevant responses.

Candidates entered from schools were, on the whole, less-well prepared for the Higher examination than candidates from colleges. They did not appear to have been taught developmental theories or children's developmental progress. They also lacked understanding of theories of child health.

### **Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well**

Candidates again showed very good knowledge and understanding of the application of theories of basic health needs to those of children. They also showed good knowledge and understanding of factors affecting the health of children.

This year, on the whole, candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of professionals involved in promoting the health and wellbeing of children and described the roles of the professionals well.

### **Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty**

As in previous years, candidates had difficulty in describing fine and gross motor skills in children of different ages. Some showed an alarming lack of knowledge of physical development in children from birth to 18 months. Equally, some candidates showed considerable lack of knowledge of the development of fine motor skills in children of nursery and primary school age.

Candidates found difficulty in describing how knowledge of a theory of emotional development would influence the practice in an Early Years Care and Education setting. Few candidates could relate theory to practice.

Most candidates knew the difference between nature and nurture in relation to child development but few were able to give a balanced discussion of the debate.

The majority of candidates were unable to provide an evaluation of a developmental theory they had described. This is a matter for concern as it is a requirement of one of the Performance Criteria in the Unit Child Development and Behaviour.

A few candidates gained no marks for question 6a as they described a theory of emotional development although the question specifically excluded this.

Some candidates had difficulty in differentiating between environmental factors and social trends when explaining or evaluating their effects on children's health.

## **Recommendations**

### **Feedback to centres**

Candidates need more knowledge of examination technique, particularly when deciding the order in which to answer questions, the time to allocate to questions and reading questions carefully, especially when they are required to relate their knowledge to specific points in the question. There is a guide to preparing for the Early Years Care and Education Higher for teachers and candidates, available from SFEU.

Candidates must ensure that they have in-depth knowledge of child development and behaviour across the age range covered by the Question Paper and that they can identify significant developmental stages.

Candidates should be encouraged to relate their knowledge of child development and behaviour to practice in Early Years Care and Education settings.

Candidates should be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the differences between factors affecting children's health. Many candidates lost marks because they wrongly identified social trends as environmental factors and vice versa.