

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

Physical Education

Qualification area

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

Physical Education — Advanced Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2003	75
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Number of entries in 2004	72
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General comments re entry numbers

The figure of 72 candidates is a slight decrease from last year. Thirty-two centres presented candidates. Twelve centres were presenting for the first time, this was 27 candidates. This is encouraging and is due in some way to a successful in-service held in Glasgow in August of 2003. Sixteen of the 18 new centres from 2003 had presented candidates again, which is pleasing.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Upper A	1.4	1.4	1	190
Lower A	8.3	9.7	6	170
B	19.4	29.2	14	148
C	16.7	45.8	12	126
No award	54.2	100.0	39	

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

There was a decrease in the number of candidates achieving an upper A however there was an increase from 9.3% to 9.7% in the number of candidates achieving an overall 'A'.

There was a major increase in the number of B grades from 10.7% to 19.4%.

There was a decrease from 18.7% to 16.7% achieving 'C' grade. Overall there was an increase in the percentage pass rate from 38.7% to 45.8%.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	9.7	9.7	7	190
B	19.4	29.2	14	148
C	16.7	45.8	12	126
D	12.5	58.3	9	115
No award	41.7	100.0	30	0

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 syllabuses evolve and change

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

The grade boundaries were exactly the same as the previous years for Advanced Higher.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

In terms of overall passes it was pleasing to report an increase in overall pass percentages to 45.8. There was also an increase in the number of candidates gaining A and B grades. Candidate's dissertations were well presented across a range of topics. Recommendations in terms of layout and presentation which had previously been given as support materials were followed by most centres. There are however still many candidates who have still failed to achieve the standard required at Advanced Higher.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

The pattern of high performance marks was again evident in the fourth year of Advanced Higher. The mean mark was 67.2 out of 70 marks which is a very slight decrease of 0.1 from last year. Marks were generated across a wide range of activities.

In the dissertation the mean mark was 60.4 marks out of 140 available which was an improvement from 53 marks in 2003. There was evidence in the A and B grades of a better overall standard of candidate's work across all areas of the dissertation.

There was evidence that most centres had now followed a recognised process identifying concepts and features being addressed within their dissertation.

Candidates who achieved A and B grades accessed decent marks across all areas of the dissertation.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

In the dissertations of candidates who scored poorly there was still evidence of a lack of specificity of major issues to be addressed.

Candidates still found it difficult to access good marks in the research and interpretation and discussion sections. Often there was a lack of clarity and the focus of the dissertation was not maintained. Many candidates produced a narrative and descriptive interpretation and discussion of the issues to be addressed.

In the evaluation section again candidates presented a descriptive account of their findings. Some candidates failed to address future planning and training.

Most candidates find it difficult to keep their work within the word allocation.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Candidates should be clear about the perspective(s), key concept(s) and features they are using. They should highlight this clearly in the rationale of their dissertation.

Centres/candidates should continue to follow the process as per NAB material previously issued.

Centres/candidates must address the depth of research that is necessary. Without depth candidates will struggle to have detailed critical thinking and discussion.

Throughout the dissertation candidates must keep their focus on key concepts and features identified and discuss the importance with relevance to personal performance.

The majority of candidates who pursue Advanced Higher are still high scoring practical performers. Centres should continue to look closely at the areas of analysis and investigation in Higher Physical Education before discussing the suitability of these candidates.