



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Physical Education
Level(s)	Advanced Higher

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

A comparative analysis of pass rate with previous years' awards was considered a reliable indicator of performance, as the degree of difficulty for course elements remained consistent.

Both course elements revealed an increase in the overall pass rate compared to last year.

Pleasingly, there was an increased uptake (144 entries compared to 121 in 2012), and awards attained indicate a respectable improvement across all award boundaries.

- ◆ In the 'A' award category, 12 candidates achieved an upper award (Band 1), and 38 candidates achieved a lower award (Band 2).
- ◆ In the 'B' award category, 9 candidates achieved an upper award (Band 3), and 13 candidates achieved a lower award (Band 4).
- ◆ In the 'C' award category, 19 candidates achieved an upper award (Band 5), and 15 candidates achieved a lower award (Band 6).
- ◆ In the 'D' award category, 19 candidates were recorded at this status with all other candidates (17) recorded as 'No award'.

In The 'A' grade summary this represented a 35.2% success rate, in the 'B' grade summary this represented a 15.5% success rate, and in the C grade summary this represented a 24.1% success rate.

The overall A–C Grade results were 75.2%, compared to 60.3% in 2012. At Grade D results were 13.5% compared to 8.3% in 2012, and No Award = 12.3%, compared to 31.4% in 2012.

Centres and candidates are to be congratulated on this improvement in performance. A very successful Understanding Standards event was held earlier this year, and this may have made some contribution to candidates' success.

In relation to the success attained by those candidates in the upper range level, the evidence suggests that these candidates demonstrated exceptionally high levels of enquiry. The introduction of their performance focus was relevant and concise. The quality of relevant research methodologies was wide ranging and supported critical appraisal about the processes and changes to performance development. The works of various authors were cited and debated critically to demonstrate informed thinking. Whilst most candidates substantiated justifiable claims for performance improvement, some candidates knowledgeably debated the limitations of significant developments.

In relation to the success attained by those candidates in the lower range level, evidence suggests that these candidates included limited reliable research and data methods, which subsequently impacted meaningful interpretation and analysis of results. Discussion of training priorities and performance development was on the whole deemed to be too narrative.

In respect of the other candidates, the evidence highlights a failure to recognise the standards required necessary to achieve a pass at Advanced Higher.

This may be due to:

- ◆ centre management of candidate progress where more than seven candidates were presented
- ◆ lack of appreciation of the content demand of specific sections of the Project Report
- ◆ poor candidate commitment to independent study

Areas in which candidates performed well

The practical performance standards remained fairly consistent with previous years and there is strong evidence that candidates are doing well. Impressively, some candidates referenced their District and National representation in selected sports.

In the Project Report, there were excellent examples of candidates performing well. Particularly impressive was the work submitted by the 50 candidates who had achieved 'A' band marks — two of these candidates attaining 70 out of 70. The quality of the work submitted was excellent. The data methods and training considerations were clearly adhered to, and the work was well referenced, with appendices and extensive bibliographies. A high level of critical thinking was evident in the discursive sections of these reports.

22 other candidates achieved 60 or more of the maximum 70 marks available, with a further 34 candidates achieving 50. Across most sections of the report these candidates demonstrated sound levels of logical, analytical and critical thinking when presenting and debating their arguments. The range of research methods included substantiated their claims for improved performance.

Pleasingly the A–C success rate has shown consistent and significant improvement compared to previous years. This would suggest an improvement in centres' approaches to course management and learning and teaching issues.

There was also a significant improvement in the quality of the submitted reports. Many candidates presented their work in a more acceptable format by concisely adhering to word allocation limits. This demonstrated their abilities to critically appraise, substantiate or refute Project hypotheses.

Areas which candidates found demanding

The work submitted by some candidates highlighted that there were still problems with the management of the report. The difficulties were twofold:

- ◆ For some candidates, word counts presented quite an issue. Some reports submitted were excessively long. In these situations candidates lacked the ability to define their performance focus and present a coherent hypothesis. As a result, much of their work was very repetitive and narrative, specifically in the rationale section. Multiple pages of research which failed to support the enquiry were included.

- ◆ For other candidates, the difficulties stemmed from not appropriately citing work in relevant Key Concepts and Key Features, and so the performance focus was lost or became unmanageable.

In these situations, the most frequently recurring issue related to the quality of the research undertaken. The range of methodologies was limited, which prohibited meaningful debate about the selected performance issue. In this respect, the research carried out by many of the candidates was restricted to integrating primary sources only. Consequently, the candidates were unable to progress their argument, justify claims for improved development, or consolidate how acquired knowledge had been applied.

When attempting to interpret and discuss findings, many responses were repetitive points raised about the process, with many candidates presenting their discussion as a narrative account. Disappointingly, the candidates were unable to fully access the 17 marks available.

This trend of offering a narrative repetitive account continued in section 4, 'Application to Performance', which is worth 12 marks. Here, many candidates missed the opportunity to appraise, compare and contrast authors' works to strengthen their debate, and to demonstrate how 'new' acquired knowledge had been applied to improve performance development.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

- ◆ All new centres should be familiar with the Course Arrangements. Centres are advised to examine the content demand, and importantly, the specific demands of each section of the report.
- ◆ Centres are encouraged to take cognisance of the independent approach and rigorous research demands that candidates must meet.
- ◆ Centre staff should also encourage candidates to offer more qualitative discussion exhibiting critical thinking by substantiating claims through valid findings referenced in the collection of pertinent data and research methodologies. Candidates should also be encouraged to appraise work critically to ensure word allocations are not exceeded.
- ◆ Centres are reminded that candidates are not penalised for submitting reports exceeding the recommended word limit in their Project Report. However, to allow for a focused and relevant response, we strongly advise that submissions are no greater than 7000 words. Candidates should be encouraged to focus on the quality, rather than the quantity, of the response. Excessively long submissions tend to be self-penalising as the work may become repetitive and irrelevant.
- ◆ It is also important for centres to take into account the grade award achieved by candidates at Higher before encouraging them to embark on the Advanced Higher course.

- ◆ It is recommended that centres make use of the exemplification materials that are available on the Advanced Higher Physical Education page of SQA's secure website. SQA Co-ordinators will be able to access these materials.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	121
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	144
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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	34.7%	34.7%	50	70
B	15.3%	50.0%	22	60
C	23.6%	73.6%	34	50
D	13.2%	86.8%	19	45
No award	13.2%	100.0%	19	-

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.