



External Assessment Report 2012

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. We concluded that both course elements revealed an increase in the overall pass rate compared to last year.

Pleasingly, there was an increased uptake (121 entries compared to 112 in 2011) and the awards attained indicate a respectable improvement — in particular, in the upper award categories.

In the 'A' award category, 5 candidates achieved an upper award (Band 1), and 19 candidates achieved a lower award (Band 2).

In the 'B' award category, 11 candidates achieved an upper award (Band 3) and 10 candidates achieved a lower award (Band 4).

In the 'C' award category, 10 candidates achieved an upper award (Band 5) and 18 candidates achieved a lower award (Band 6).

In the 'D' award category, 10 candidates, were recorded at this status with all other candidates (38) recorded as 'No award'.

In summary, 60.3% achieved A–C Grade, compared to 52.3% in 2011. Grade D and No Award were 39.7%, compared to 47.7% (2011).

Candidates in the upper range level 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.

Candidates in the lower range level included limited reliable data methods, which impacted on meaningful interpretation and analysis of results. Discussion of training priorities and performance development was, on the whole, deemed to be too narrative.

Other candidates failed to recognise the standards necessary to achieve a pass at Advanced Higher. This may be due to:

- ◆ the number of new centres presenting for the first time (nine in total)

- ◆ 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 24 candidates who had achieved 'A' band marks — two of these 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.

21 other candidates achieved 60 or more of the 70 marks available, with a further 26 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.

Areas which candidates found demanding

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

- ◆ For some candidates, wordage presented quite an issue. Some reports submitted were in excess of 25,000 words. 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. Also, multiple pages of research were included which failed to support the enquiry.
- ◆ For other candidates, the difficulties in the main 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 issue most recurring related to the quality of the research undertaken. The range of methodologies was limited, which prevented meaningful debate about the selected performance issue. In this respect, the quality of research carried out by many of the candidates was restricted to integrating primary sources only. The candidates were then 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' worth 12 marks. Here many candidates missed the opportunity to appraise, compare and contrast authors' work 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 presenting 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, substantiating claims through valid findings referenced in pertinent data collection and research methodologies.

Candidates should also be encouraged to appraise their work critically and ensure word allocation is not exceeded.

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, which include three Project Reports from Diet 2011.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	112
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	121
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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	19.8%	19.8%	24	70
B	17.4%	37.2%	21	60
C	23.1%	60.3%	28	50
D	8.3%	68.6%	10	45
No award	31.4%	100.0%	38	-

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.