



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Physical Education
Level	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

As in previous years, there was an increase in the number of candidates being presented at Higher level. It is expected that this trend will continue in the future.

Most Markers felt that there was an improvement in the quality of candidates' work in the lower and middle ranges. The number of very low scoring scripts was considerably lower than in previous years.

There appeared to be a slight increase in the number of centres attempting Performance Appreciation, and the responses in this area showed an improvement on previous years.

Candidates were accessing marks in all parts of the questions.

A range of activities were apparent from the answers written by candidates.

Candidates appeared to be writing much more than in previous years.

Areas in which candidates performed well

When answering questions where the competence was 'describe', candidates tended to respond well. This was highlighted in:

- ◆ Question 4(b), where candidates displayed good knowledge of physical and skill-related aspects of fitness in relation to a selected activity. Answers were often in-depth and resulted in candidates scoring high marks in this question.
- ◆ Question 8(a), where candidates were able to describe two different Structures/Strategies and Compositions. Candidates were able to give a detailed description in both Structures/Strategies or Compositions selected, accessing the upper range of marks available.

When answering questions where the competence was 'explain', candidates tended to respond better than in previous years. This was highlighted in:

- ◆ Question 6(a), where candidates were able to show good explanations as to the importance of a model performance, and were able to access the upper range of marks.
- ◆ Question 8(b), where candidates were asked to explain the advantages of their selected Structures/Strategies and Compositions. Most candidates were able to give a detailed explanation in their answers.

There seemed to be a slight improvement in the quality of responses from candidates who answered in Performance Appreciation.

Areas which candidates found demanding

At Higher level, candidates are required to demonstrate both breadth and depth of key concept knowledge if they are to access the upper range of marks available. Many candidates are still having difficulty in achieving this.

This was highlighted in Question 3 part (b) where candidates were asked to explain what they knew about 'phases of training'. Most responses lacked the specific knowledge to answer this part of the question. Candidates then found part (c) difficult to answer.

There is still evidence of candidates' responses lacking depth when they are asked to 'discuss' or 'justify'. Many candidates still tend to describe and sometimes explain rather than show critical thinking in their answers. This was evident in Question 4 part (c), where candidates tended to describe the principles of training rather than discuss how they were considered when planning a fitness programme.

This was also the case in Question 5 (c) and Question 7 (d), where candidates again tended to describe the course of action and decisions taken rather than give any justification as to what they had carried out to improve and develop their performance.

In question 6 part (c), candidates often confused key concept knowledge of 'principles of effective practice' with 'stages of learning', despite this being two discrete bodies of knowledge.

There still appear to be instances where candidates are attempting to apply pre-planned answers to examination questions. This restricts the depth of response, and candidates do not answer the question being addressed, which results in candidates achieving very low marks.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres must ensure that all aspects of content that are outlined in the key concepts of each area of analysis have been covered. This will allow candidates to answer questions that ask for a broad knowledge and also more focused questions that require them to give a depth of relevant information.

Candidates should be encouraged to try and fully understand and relate their responses to what is being asked in the question. Staff should try to discourage candidates from trying to fit a prepared answer into a question.

Staff in centres should try and give candidates as much practice as possible in answering questions involving the three competences of 'describe', 'explain' and 'describe'. This will ensure that candidates understand the depth of response required for each competence.

Centres should ensure that candidates have the required breadth and depth of key concept knowledge to answer questions during the examination. It still appears to be the case that the work of some candidates is below the standard required for Higher.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	5814
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	5874
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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	21.0%	21.0%	1233	70
B	33.4%	54.4%	1961	60
C	32.9%	87.3%	1932	50
D	7.4%	94.7%	435	45
No award	5.3%	100.0%	313	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.