



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Physical Education
Level(s)	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.

Markers felt that there seemed to be an improvement in the quality of candidates' work in the lower and middle ranges. The number of very low scoring scripts was considerably down in comparison to previous years. There appeared, however, to be fewer very high scoring candidates than in previous years.

Candidates appeared to be writing much more when answering questions. Concern was expressed by Markers over the standard of writing in many scripts. This led to scripts being referred for further scrutiny to ensure that candidates were not being disadvantaged.

There was evidence of candidates writing extensive answers, displaying knowledge surrounding the question topic, but not really reading and answering specifically what the question was asking.

Candidates were accessing marks in all parts of the questions.

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

Areas in which candidates performed well

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

- ◆ Question 7(a), where candidates were able to describe in detail a structure, strategy or composition they had used in an activity which they had covered in class.
- ◆ Question 8(b), where candidates were able to describe the role they carried out in a structure, strategy or composition they had used in class.
- ◆ Question 6(b), where candidates were able to describe the methods they had used to gather information on a particular chosen skill or technique.

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

- ◆ Question 4(d), where candidates had to explain the importance of fitness assessment before and on completion of a training programme.
- ◆ Question 8(c) (i) and (ii), where candidates were asked to identify one strength and one weakness in their chosen structure, strategy or composition, and then explain the effect these had on their performance.

Areas which candidates found demanding

At Higher level, candidates are required to demonstrate both width 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 5(a), where candidates were asked to show knowledge of open and closed skills. Many candidates displayed limited knowledge in this area, and answers were lacking in depth and detail.

There is still evidence of candidates' responses lacking depth when they are asked to 'discuss' or 'justify' their answer. Many candidates still tend to 'describe' and or 'explain' than show critical thinking in their answers.

This was evident in:

- ◆ Question 4(a), where many candidates described or explained one type of fitness for their chosen activity, rather than actually discuss the importance.
- ◆ Question 5(d), where candidates explained the importance of monitoring progress rather than discussing why.
- ◆ Question 6(a), where many candidates described the actual practices they used at each stage of learning instead of justifying why the methods used at each stage were appropriate.
- ◆ Question 8(a), where candidates were asked to show knowledge of the factors they would consider when selecting structures, strategies or compositions. Many candidates identified factors but failed to discuss how they considered them when selecting a structures, strategies or compositions.

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 more focused questions that require them to give a depth of relevant information.

Markers highlighted many instances where candidates are attempting to apply pre-planned answers to examination questions. This restricts the depth of response given, and often candidates do not answer the question being addressed, and so achieve very low marks. This has an effect of disadvantaging all candidates in achieving the best possible mark for the whole 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 'discuss'.

Staff should try to give candidates advice on exam technique in preparation for the exam. There is increasing evidence of candidates not reading questions carefully and not fully answering the actual question being asked.

It still appears to be the case that the work of some candidates being presented is below the standard required for Higher level.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	5874
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	6432
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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	16.6%	16.6%	1068	70
B	34.3%	50.9%	2209	60
C	34.4%	85.3%	2211	50
D	8.6%	94.0%	555	45
No award	6.0%	100.0%	389	-

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.