



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Play in early Education and Childcare
Level(s)	Higher

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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

Once again candidates were generally well prepared to complete the project, and a variety of case studies were used, reflecting a range of placement opportunities for candidates. It was also noted that the planned activities in the case study reports were varied and not stereotypical. On the whole, candidates kept within the recommended word-counts and appendices were not used inappropriately.

Centre estimates varied from those of the markers at central marking. Those marking in centres should ensure that they are familiar with the Project Specification document — particularly the grade boundaries. Candidates should not be given a pass mark within a section if they do not meet the minimum evidence requirements. For example, candidates should not be given more than 3 marks if they do not discuss more than one theorist in the Research Report — the minimum evidence requirement states that they have to research *current theoretical perspectives/approaches relevant to the type of play chosen*. Rigorous standardisation should be applied where centres are submitting from more than one campus.

Areas in which candidates performed well

As last year, the Research Report and the Case Study were well done, and candidates continue to draw on their own placement experience supported by appropriate research to complete them. This reflective practice should be encouraged. Many candidates are able to evaluate the role of the adult in the planned play experience across all aspects of the planning cycle, but again it should be noted that this should relate explicitly to the planned play experience to gain high marks.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Candidates find the Planning Stage most demanding — this often just repeats the candidate's brief rather than saying what they would hope to achieve for themselves and at each stage. Candidates should relate the plan to their own placement experience and to the case study. Centres should consider advising candidates to set their plan once they have some appropriate placement experience. Candidates often reflect upon this in the Evaluation stage.

It was noted that some of the examples of 'good practice' cited by candidates did not appear to be so, and centres should ensure that candidates are aware of what is age-appropriate best practice, and what is not. They should also be very clear of their role when citing examples of their own involvement in the type of play, and should be appropriately actively involved rather than just observing. They could consider their role across the play planning cycle.

The final section of the Evaluation Report, worth 4 marks, was not completed well and candidates often lose these marks at the end of the project. Some time could be spent with

candidates allowing them to reflect on the effectiveness of the content and the method of research, which could then be related back to the corresponding section in the plan.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Please refer to the previous external report for general guidance, particularly in relation to the presentation of projects.

- ◆ Centres should ensure that that assessment condition for each section are adhered to.
- ◆ Centres should apply rigorous standardisation where they are presenting from more than one campus and internal assessment procedures should be used to support this.
- ◆ Centres should ensure that candidates should have appropriate research skills and that they should have appropriate research materials.
- ◆ Candidates should give a clear indication of 'word count' at the end of each section.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	119
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	98
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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 200				
A	13.3%	13.3%	13	140
B	44.9%	58.2%	44	120
C	25.5%	83.7%	25	100
D	5.1%	88.8%	5	90
No award	11.2%	-	11	-

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.