



Course report 2023

Higher Care

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative, and to promote better understanding. You should read the report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022: 375

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 369

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	31	Percentage	8.4	Cumulative percentage	8.4	Minimum mark required	90
B	Number of candidates	73	Percentage	19.8	Cumulative percentage	28.2	Minimum mark required	75
C	Number of candidates	118	Percentage	32	Cumulative percentage	60.2	Minimum mark required	61
D	Number of candidates	91	Percentage	24.7	Cumulative percentage	84.8	Minimum mark required	46
No award	Number of candidates	56	Percentage	15.2	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

Please note that rounding has not been applied to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the [statistics and information](#) page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

Overall, the question paper performed as expected with questions covering a range of course content. The question paper was fair and accessible for all, providing opportunity for candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding across all aspects of the course content.

Project

All candidates in 2022–2023 were presented with one project brief. The project performed as expected and in line with previous years. There were candidates who performed between A and D grades across all centres.

Candidates continue to confidently present a good level of knowledge and understanding in response to each item. However, the evaluation sections remain more challenging for many candidates.

Candidates were able to adhere to the word count and a few candidates provided additional research in the form of appendices. Most candidates provided academic and relevant references.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper

Question 1(b) — although many candidates demonstrated understanding of the phases of grief in part (a), they lacked knowledge of the different determinants of grief, with many candidates discussing the impact of grief on the individual in the case study.

Question 2 in Human development and behaviour section — Rogers core conditions was a particular area of weakness this year. 41 candidates did not attempt this question, with a low average mark out of a possible 6 marks. There appeared to be a lack of knowledge in candidate answers with very few candidates being awarded full marks for this question.

Question 3 — most candidates attempted to answer the key features of conflict theory question. Those who did answer were able to demonstrate knowledge. Candidates accessing full marks gave answers which provided detailed description, rather than rote learning of the features.

Question 4 — most candidates answered particularly well by giving a good analysis of education as a social influence. Most candidates provided a few different key points throughout their analysis, such as the impact of poverty, experiences of bullying and peer pressure and the impact of racism and discrimination within education and the long-term impact on life chances.

Question 5 — candidates were able to show good knowledge and understanding of the impact of the individual being labelled neurodiverse. Many candidates discussed both the positives and negatives of the impact of the label. A good level of knowledge around neurodiversity was demonstrated.

Question 6(a) — candidates provided a good level of description of different stages of the care planning process.

Question 7 — only a few candidates produced a low mark out of a possible 4. Many candidates provided a discussion of care services being well organised, rather than organisational features. Those who did discuss organisational features were able to link this well to its contribution to positive care environments.

Question 8 — rather than a discussion of a professional value base, many candidates discussed two values or principles here. Although some marks could be awarded for accurate knowledge of values or principles, without a link made to care workers, candidates were unable to access the full 4 marks for this question.

Project

Item A: As with previous years this prompt was well responded to, with most candidates able to access all the available marks. All candidates attempted this section. Candidates who scored high in these sections were able to make specific links between human development and different developmental conditions.

- Item B: Candidates were able to demonstrate a good level of knowledge with regards to human needs. The majority of candidates did provide an explanation in relation to the brief, and this demonstrated a good level of understanding. Many candidates choose three different needs and different individuals to discuss in this section which afforded candidates the opportunity to provide less repetitive answers. The majority of candidates were awarded 7 marks and above for this item, with a few candidates able to access full marks.
- Item C: Some candidates did not present understanding of two different care services in this section and were therefore unable to gain full marks in response to this prompt. Although candidates did demonstrate knowledge of the different aspects of positive care practice, no marks are available for a generic description of positive care practice unless this is evaluated within a care service. Markers found that candidates presented answers which were descriptive, but not evaluative and therefore unable to award marks. Candidates who performed well in response to this prompt were able to provide an evaluation of each feature of positive care practice in relation to the delivery of care within different settings. Some candidates were able to discuss the benefits of this positive care practice in relation to their own experiences.
- Item D: Some candidates found it challenging to discuss the chosen three social influences as an influence on individuals accessing care services. Some candidates were describing the social influence, for example, many explained the functions of the family, rather than analysing the family's influence on an individual accessing care services. Candidates who choose to analyse religion as a social influence tended to focus on dietary requirements with little focus on religious norms, values or culture. Few candidates were able to present a detailed analysis of each social influence. Some did provide relevant statistics but were not always able to analyse the meaning of the statistics in relation to individuals accessing care services.
- Item E: Knowledge of sociological theory was demonstrated well in response to this prompt, but candidates were less able to clearly make the link to the brief. For example, candidates were able to discuss features of feminist theory, but unable to link the discussion of inequality to women's experiences of care services.
- Item F: For some candidates, rather than evaluating the relevance of the theory in understanding the project brief, they used the different psychological theories to explain behaviours of different individuals accessing care services or evaluated the theories. Many candidates provided descriptive answers rather than using evaluative writing, in relation to the brief, as required in the prompt.
- Item G: The majority of candidates were able to give a well-balanced conclusion responding to the brief.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates should be aware of how to respond to command words, for example describe, explain and analyse. Candidates should consider the amount of discussion which is required for each allocated mark. Most questions require a point to be made and then developed.

Candidates are expected to have full knowledge from the course content for each section of the question paper and should be able to link theoretical understanding to individuals accessing care services.

Centres should continue to focus on positive care practice, different care environments and the role of legislation, using case studies where relevant to support development of candidates' understanding of individuals accessing care services.

Centres should direct candidates to the Higher Care course specification on the Care subject page of SQA's website. Candidates should be encouraged to review past papers and detailed marking instructions as a part of their exam preparation.

Project

Centres should ensure that candidates are aware of the requirements of the project from the outset. Guidelines are provided on the Higher Care subject page of SQA's website.

Candidates should try to avoid using one case study for the whole project. This leads to application of theories and concepts to a specific individual rather than answering the item prompts, particularly in the sociological and psychological theories sections of the project. Candidates who focus on one case study throughout also tend to present answers which are more repetitive and focused on 'the story' of the case study, in comparison to candidates using multiple individuals accessing care services throughout the project.

Candidates should be supported to develop their academic writing, particularly when providing answers which are analytical or evaluative.

As much as possible, centres should encourage work experience or guest speakers from care practice, providing an opportunity for candidates to develop insight into different service user groups. This would support their discussion and explanations of individuals using care services, it could also avoid candidates using stereotypical ideas of service users.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures was developed to support learners and centres. This included modifications to course assessment, retained from the 2021–22 session. This support was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic while recognising a lessening of the impact of disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic. The revision support that was available for the 2021–22 session was not offered to learners in 2022–23.

In addition, SQA adopted a sensitive approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining

standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams continue to do so in different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019 and 2022.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2023 and the ongoing impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on learners. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and the removal of revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2023 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2023 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).