Course report 2019

Subject	Care
Level	Higher

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. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Session 2018–19 saw the introduction of a question paper, as well as a revised project. Candidates have responded well to the changes. The Higher Care course assessment performed as expected. The grade boundary decision was to set at notional.

Question paper

Feedback from the question paper marking team, and statistical analysis, indicates that this provided an appropriate and fair challenge to candidates. All of the questions were accessible, providing candidates with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, and to apply their understanding to a variety of care contexts.

For each question, the full range of marks was attainable for candidates. The range of different question types, and care contexts, allowed for discrimination between candidates of differing ability. In general, candidates had prepared sufficiently to answer the questions.

Project

Similar to previous years, the majority of candidates demonstrated research skills, and had taken the opportunity to personalise their work. There was evidence of a wide variety of care services and individuals in receipt of care services, within candidate responses overall.

Many candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the revised project requirements, and these were of a good standard. Candidate performance was as expected.

In terms of the briefs chosen, a similar pattern emerged to previous years. The majority of candidates selected brief 1 — 'Is it always better for people requiring care to be cared for at home?' Many candidates provided a good interpretation of the brief, relating each project prompt item appropriately as directed.

Many who chose to tackle brief 2 — 'Choose a current initiative, strategy or campaign relating to care. Why is the initiative, strategy or campaign required?' attempted it well. There was some improvement on previous years, with fewer candidates submitting work based on existing long-established care services. Once again, it is essential that candidates are advised to select a current initiative, strategy or campaign, rather than a well-established service.

As in previous years, many candidates who chose brief 3 — 'Why is it important for people to have choices about the care they receive?' discussed generic repeated issues regarding personal choice, rather than the importance of choices in the care received.

Similar to last year, this year saw further improvement in adherence to the word count limit. Some candidates attempted to avoid the 10% penalty by placing additional information in the appendices. Additional information provided in the appendices does not attract additional marks. If the word count exceeds 10%, a penalty is applied. Centres should continue to offer guidance based on the information contained in the *Higher Care Project Coursework Assessment Task* to ensure that candidates are not penalised in this regard.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Candidates who performed well responded to the requirements of the command words in each question. They used the command word to answer the question being asked, and structured their responses accordingly. In general, candidates tended to perform better in short answer questions, with less demanding command words. In particular, candidates performed particularly well in questions 1, 3, and 4.

Project

Item A: Candidate performance was strong in analysing two aspects of human development in relation to an individual(s) requiring a care service. Average marks for this item were high.

Item B: Performance was strong in explaining the needs of care service users in relation to the brief. Average marks for this item were high.

Item D: Performance was stronger than average in this Item. Candidates were able to analyse social influences in relation to their chosen individual(s) in receipt of a care service.

Item G: Performance was stronger than average in this item, with candidates able to reach conclusions in relation to their chosen brief.

Item H: The vast majority of candidates presented references appropriately. Average marks were very high for this item.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

In question 2(b), many candidates did not respond to the command word. They simply provided further description of the key features. They did not answer the actual question set, by offering an explanation of understanding an individual's behaviour.

Question 5(b) was demanding for many candidates. They were unable to use symbolic interactionism to explain the possible influence of peer groups on Melissa. Some candidates simply described the concept of peer groups. Some candidates offered explanations of the possible influence of peer groups on Melissa, but did not make any link to symbolic interactionism. These candidates were unable to access the available marks.

In question 6, many candidates did not respond to the command word. They simply listed key features of the theories. They did not offer an explanation of whether there was a difference or similarity between them.

Many candidates found it difficult to access all available marks in question 8(b). In general in these instances, explanations were either very brief and/or not developed fully.

Many candidates found question 9 demanding. There were many purely descriptive answers to this question. A common occurrence was that many candidates simply described a piece of legislation. Many candidates did not offer any evaluation and therefore could not access the available marks.

Project

Item C: This prompt requires the candidates to provide evaluation, not simple description. As in previous years, many candidates continue to find this item demanding. Once again, this was because they did not respond appropriately to the item prompt. Features of positive care practice must relate to appropriate legislations, Codes of Practice, Care Standards and/or Nursing and Midwifery (NMC) guidelines. These features must be evaluated within the actual care service accessed by the chosen individual(s) receiving care. No marks are available for a description of services that a care service simply provides. No marks are available for a generic description of the positive care practice approach unrelated to a specific care service. Marks are only available for evaluation within a care service. No additional marks are available for basic repetition of common features across the three care services.

Item E: As in previous years, the majority of candidates demonstrated an understanding of sociological theories and were able to make an appropriate explanation in relation to their brief. However, some candidates provided overly descriptive responses. These candidates were unable to attract high marks, as their responses did not explain the relevance of theory in relation to the brief.

Item F: In a similar fashion to item E, some candidates provided overly descriptive responses regarding psychological theories. These candidates were unable to attract high marks, as their responses did not evaluate the relevance of theory in relation to the brief.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Changes to assessment in Higher courses came into effect from session 2018–19. The Higher materials are available on the [Higher Care subject page](#) of SQA's website.

Centres should continue to ensure that candidates are presented at the appropriate level.

Question paper

Centres should continue to prepare candidates to respond to the command word in each question. Candidates should answer the question asked. For example, if the question requires the candidate to evaluate, a descriptive answer will not allow them to access all of the available marks.

Centres should ensure they refer to the specimen question paper and marking instructions on the [Higher Care subject page](#) of SQA's website.

Project

Teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates are clear about the requirements of the project from the outset. Centres should ensure that the current project guidelines are being followed by referring to the *Higher Care Coursework Assessment Task* available on the [Higher Care subject page](#) of SQA's website.

Teachers and lecturers should have a discussion with candidates to clarify their understanding of their chosen brief before they start the project.

Wherever possible, the use of anti-plagiarism software is recommended. This addresses plagiarism and promotes good practice for candidates. Centres should also assist candidates in adhering to word count limits.

Candidates are expected to use appropriate language in their projects. Projects should not include discriminatory language, which conflicts with care values and principles.

Candidates should be given opportunities for the development of their own individual research skills whilst being guided to fully understand the project requirements.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	1285

Number of resulted entries in 2019	838

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	10.3%	10.3%	86	91
B	19.3%	29.6%	162	78
C	25.9%	55.5%	217	65
D	22.7%	78.2%	190	52
No award	21.8%	-	183	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
♦ 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.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
♦ Where standards 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 to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.