



Course report 2019

Subject	Childcare and Development
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

This was the fifth year of delivery for Higher Childcare and Development course, with 374 candidates presented. This year saw the introduction of a question paper component, worth 40 marks, 30% of the overall mark, to complement the project component of the course, now worth 90 marks, 70% of overall award.

Question paper

The question paper covered the three mandatory sections. The mark allocation was child development 15 marks, child development: theory 10 marks, and services for children and young people 15 marks. Questions used a balance of command words to allow candidates to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding of the mandatory content.

Questions that required evaluation in the question paper were challenging for some candidates. This type of question allows for differentiation between an A candidate who should be able to infer knowledge and support further discussion whilst a C candidate may demonstrate some of the skills of analysis and evaluation but might not be able to demonstrate a depth of knowledge and understanding.

Project

For the project, candidates are asked to respond to one of three briefs, designed to reflect changes in the early learning and childcare sector. The briefs are set by SQA, and allow candidates to demonstrate their breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding of the mandatory content of the Higher Childcare and Development course.

The mark allocation for some prompts in the project changed in session 2018–19 to reflect the revised allocation of marks in the project and overall course assessment. These changes also included reducing the allocation of marks for analysis prompts (B, revised to 15 marks and D, revised to 10 marks) and the introduction of a new prompt requiring candidates to evaluate (prompt H, 6 marks).

Centres should continue to ensure that candidates are specific in their description of aspects of development relating to the age of the identified child (prompt A). In session 2018–19 a requirement was introduced to explain the inter-relationship of the chosen aspects (A ii) which most, but not all candidates responded to. Identifying appropriate theories of development (prompt C) relevant to the case study, child and brief, required candidates to be more specific in their choice of theory and to effectively relate this to the child and brief. Similarly, many candidates performed well in discussion of services, strategies and professionals who support children and young people.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Generally, candidates performed well in section 1: child development. Most candidates identified appropriate methods for assessing children (question 1) and many were able to evaluate the effectiveness of this method. Question 2 was well answered by many candidates, clearly demonstrating knowledge and understanding of expected milestones.

Some candidates were able to effectively discuss theory (question 3), however, some candidates did not link the theory to the development of linguistic development. Many candidates were able to identify the appropriate cognitive theory and relate it to the age of the child in the question.

In section 3, many candidates identified and discussed an appropriate piece of legislation relevant to working with children and young people in Scotland today. Where candidates identified an appropriate regulatory body, they were then able to explain the necessary requirements of this body.

Project

Most candidates included a relevant case study, allowing them to effectively address prompts and in most cases, relate to the chosen brief.

Generally, candidates performed well in prompts that required them to explain or describe (prompt A, C, E, F and G). Candidates performed well in prompts A, E, F and G, where they were required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of course content and relate this to the identified target child and to the chosen brief.

For prompt C, some candidates identified the relevant theory in relation to the target child and chosen prompt.

Most candidates included a relevant reference page, with many making an attempt to include in-text referencing with a resulting reduction in referrals for plagiarism.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

In question 3, section 2, candidates were asked to describe a relevant play theory in relation to linguistic development. Many candidates chose to discuss a theorist of language development, therefore losing up to 4 marks. Where candidates provided an incorrect theory in question 4(a), this also meant they could not access the marks in question 4(b).

In section 3, question 6(a), incorrect identification of a regulatory body had an impact on the potential marks gained in question 6(b) (4 marks).

The evaluation of the effectiveness of partnership working was a challenging question for some candidates. As with the project, application and evaluation continues to prove challenging for some candidates.

Project

Prompt A(i) required candidates to explain two aspects of development and then, in (a)(ii) explain the inter-relationship of these aspects of development. Lack of discussion of the inter-relationship of aspects of development meant many candidates lost a potential 6 marks.

The evaluation and analysis aspect of the project prompts continues to be challenging for some candidates. This is reflected in the marks awarded for prompts B, D and H, with the average marks being less than 50% of the potential marks. Candidates who made connections between the child, brief and prompts, allowing effective triangulation of information, generally performed well.

Prompts B, D and H (15, 10 and 6 marks respectively) are still challenging for many candidates as they are required to analyse or evaluate their research findings. This had an impact on the potential distribution of marks.

Analysis of scripts showed some candidates lacked the knowledge and understanding to apply analysis and evaluation to their chosen brief. This was evident in prompt D where candidates were expected to analyse two theories of development identified in prompt C. These theories should be relevant to the age of the child in the case study and the chosen brief.

Many candidates chose the brief 'What are the benefits of play to the holistic development of children and young people' but did not discuss a relevant play theorist, therefore missing the opportunity to gain full marks. Similarly, there was a lack of appropriate discussion of government initiatives in relation to outdoor learning for the brief 'How do government initiatives support outdoor learning?'

The change in choice of briefs this session required candidates to be more specific in the discussion of theory and initiatives in relation to the target child and brief. Evidence suggests that some candidates found this difficult.

Where candidates were asked to analyse (prompt B and D) there was a lack of supporting data to allow for effective analysis of the findings or comparison of the findings. Similarly, some candidates experienced difficulty in expanding points of evaluation and relating this to the developmental age of the child identified in prompt A. Where some candidates evaluated the theory, there was a lack of balance between the strengths/weaknesses and advantages/disadvantages of the chosen theory in relation to their chosen brief. Some candidates had difficulty in making a value judgement about theory in regard to the identified child or young person.

Many candidates found it challenging to evaluate the effectiveness of partnership working (prompt H). Prompt H requires candidates to evaluate partnership working of two professionals identified in prompt G, in some cases, candidates chose to discuss alternative professionals, therefore losing marks.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

The question paper allows candidates to demonstrate the knowledge and understanding of the mandatory content not addressed in the project. Centres should ensure candidates have a sound understanding of all aspects of development and can effectively discuss and relate them to children.

In section 2: child development: theory, candidates should ensure they can effectively discuss theories of development, including relevant play theorists. Where candidates are asked to identify and explain a theory, they should consider the dependence of one part of the question on the other, for example, questions 4(a), 4(b), 6(a) and 6(b) and make sure they have related the discussion to the question. In some cases, this lack of inter-relationship in responses led to candidates losing marks.

Project

As in previous years, centres should ensure candidates include a relevant case study which allows candidates to contextualise their discussion in relation to the chosen brief. Centres should continue to encourage candidates to keep case studies brief, and relatively simple, introducing the identified child and some background information.

Case studies should be at the start of the project and not included as an appendix. Candidates should be discouraged from discussing children with complex family/home environments, as they may not have the knowledge and understanding to do this effectively.

When candidates are deciding on a brief for their project, centres should ensure candidates address the brief and include relevant theorists, strategies and initiatives, professionals and services in relation to the brief. In many cases, when candidates discussed the brief 'How do Government initiatives support outdoor learning?' there was little or no reference to relevant initiatives. Similarly, candidates should be directed to identify and discuss relevant theories and services for the identified child in the case study.

Candidates demonstrated a sound ability to discuss knowledge and understanding of childcare and development, but many have difficulty in applying analysis and evaluating findings of their research. This was a recurring issue throughout many of the projects presented, with a lack of evaluation and analysis resulting in candidates losing marks for prompts B, D and H. Centres should continue to encourage candidates to use data from applicable sources, for example relevant Scottish or British publications and websites, to support analysis and make measured, objective judgements with regard to their chosen child or young person.

Centres should direct candidates to ensure that strategies, initiatives and services identified and discussed are relevant to the child/young person in the response to the project brief. Identified strategies and initiatives should be from a Scottish perspective.

Centres should continue to ensure that professionals discussed are relevant to the child identified in the case study and the services they are discussing are appropriate to the child.

This is particularly relevant to prompt H, where candidates are required to evaluate the effectiveness of partnership working.

Effective research will aid candidates in their discussion of prompts that require analysis. Centres should support candidates to refine their research skills and apply their findings to their discussion. This research should be from a range of sources including books, online sources and academic journals.

There was a marked decrease in referrals for plagiarism and exceeding word counts from previous years, centres should continue to ensure this is standard practice.

Centres should direct candidates to ensure that their project responses address all the points of their chosen brief and that they continue to refer to the brief throughout the project.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	767
Number of resulted entries in 2019	393

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	14.2%	14.2%	56	91
B	19.3%	33.6%	76	78
C	31.6%	65.1%	124	65
D	23.4%	88.5%	92	52
No award	11.5%	-	45	-

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.