



Course Report 2017

Subject	Childcare and Development
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. 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 assessment documents and marking instructions.

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component: project

This was the third year of delivery for Higher Childcare and Development. This year, 716 candidates were presented, which is a significant increase from 2016. Candidates are asked to respond to one of three briefs, set by SQA, to demonstrate their breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding of the Higher Childcare and Development course. This course consists of three units: Child Development; Child Development: Theory; and Services for Children and Young People.

Generally, candidates were well prepared for the project. They demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of child development, theory and the services that support children and young people, and were able to discuss this competently.

Specific direction to identify and discuss an identified child allows candidates to explore the needs of their identified child or young person effectively. A small number of candidates did not include a relevant case study or identify a specific child to discuss which, unfortunately, disadvantaged them. Most candidates presented work within the specified word count, though it was evident that the management of word count still proves challenging for some candidates.

The evaluation and analysis aspect of the project still proves challenging for some candidates, which was reflected in the marks awarded for prompts B, D and E, with average marks being approximately 50% of potential marks.

Marking instructions allow for clear differentiation between A and C candidates. It was identified that candidates who triangulated information — making connections between the identified child, project brief and prompts — were more likely to be awarded an 'A'.

Generally, candidates performed as expected, with some strong examples of candidate work being presented by centres.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component: project

Candidates performed well in prompts that required them to explain, for example, aspects of development, and achieved good marks for these sections.

Many candidates addressed sections A, C and F well where they were asked to demonstrate knowledge and understanding and explanation of aspects of development, theories of development, and initiatives that support child development. Candidates could have gained more marks if they had related normative development in the discussion of the aspects of development for their identified child.

In section C (15 marks), candidates were asked to explain theories of child development. Most candidates identified and demonstrated a sound knowledge of relevant theory/theorists from a suitable range of appropriate theory, both classical and contemporary, and related this to children/young people of the age range identified in section A.

Section F (10 marks) asked candidates to explain current services that support children and young people. In general, most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the services, strategies and professionals who support children and young people. This was particularly strong where candidates chose services relevant to their geographical area and could discuss this in relation to local provision.

Candidates were asked to analyse the roles and responsibilities of professionals and others who support children in Section G (8 marks). Generally, many candidates were successful in describing the roles of these professionals and could relate the identified roles to the needs of children and young people.

There continues to be an improvement in candidates' referencing, with many making attempts to include referencing both within text and on a reference page.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component: project

Some candidates experienced difficulty with sections B, D and E (20, 15, 12 marks respectively) which required evaluation and analysis. This had an impact on the potential distribution of marks. It would be reasonable to suggest that these candidates may have presumed they met the brief, but closer scrutiny of their scripts showed a lack of knowledge and understanding of the key components of analysis and evaluation and their application to the chosen brief. Where candidates were asked to analyse (prompt B and E) there was a lack of supporting data to allow for effective analysis of findings or comparison of findings.

Similarly, some candidates experienced difficulty in expanding points of evaluation and relating to the aspect of development identified in Section A. Where candidates did evaluate theory, in some cases there was a lack of balance between strengths/weaknesses, advantages/disadvantages of the chosen theory in relation to their chosen brief. Some candidates had difficulty in making a value judgement about theory with regard to the identified child or young person.

In some cases, candidates chose to discuss young children diagnosed with, for example, ADHD or dyslexia, when in fact it would be extremely difficult to make this diagnosis in a young child. Similarly, some case studies used by candidates included material that made it difficult for the candidate to be objective in their discussion of the child or young person, and

in some instances caused concern as to the welfare of candidates. These were referred, as appropriate, to the Principal Assessor or SQA personnel.

Candidates gave some excellent descriptions of factors that influence development in Prompt B (20 marks), where in fact they were asked to analyse these factors therefore having an impact on the allocation of potential marks.

In some instances, in sections E (12 marks), F (10 marks) and G (8 marks), candidates lost potential marks for not being specific or making distinctions between services and professionals who care and support children and young people. This is an area that should continue to be reinforced with candidates, encouraging them to be precise in the difference between services, professionals and their roles. Similarly, strategies and initiatives should also be distinct from services and professionals who support children and young people. Candidates should be encouraged to make reference to government policy, guidance, initiatives and strategies from a Scottish perspective.

All candidates provided a conclusion (Section H), but many were brief and failed to give a reasoned opinion of their findings. This had an impact on the allocation of a potential 5 marks.

Many candidates have utilised effective reference pages for Section I (3 marks) in their project, but there is still a need to ensure candidates reference their work in the body of the text.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component: project

- ◆ The inclusion of a relevant case study allows candidates to contextualise their discussion in the brief. Practitioners should continue to encourage candidates to keep their case studies brief and relevant, introducing the identified child and some background information. If the case study is too long, it may use valuable word count.
- ◆ Similarly, centres should encourage candidates to keep their case study relatively simple. If the case study relates to a very complex home environment for a child, the candidate may struggle to analyse and evaluate the impact of a chaotic life on their identified child. Generally, it was found that if candidates chose to discuss a child with complex needs or home life, they disadvantaged themselves in relation to discussion of a child's normative development.
- ◆ Many candidates gave excellent descriptions of their chosen aspects of development, gaining high marks. When discussing aspects of development, candidates should be encouraged to be familiar with the normative development of children before investigating children and young people with identified additional support needs. Similarly, if candidates choose to investigate and discuss children with identified support needs, these should be applicable to the age of the child.

- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to consider the total word count then take account of how many words should be allowed per section/allocation of marks. Throughout marking, it became evident that some candidates used a large part of their word count at start of the project and then ran into challenges to complete the project within the allocated word count. If candidates are over the word count by more than 10%, this is referred for further examination and a penalty is applied.
- ◆ Throughout the project, many candidates demonstrated a sound ability to discuss knowledge and understanding of childcare and development, but had difficulty in analysing and evaluating findings from their research. This was a recurring issue throughout many of the projects presented, with a lack of evaluation and analysis resulting in poor allocation of marks for prompts B, D and E. Candidates should be encouraged to use data from relevant sources to support analysis and to make measured, objective judgements with regard to their chosen child or young person.
- ◆ Candidates who discussed strategies, initiatives and services relevant to their geographical location related these well to their identified child or young person. Centres should continue to direct candidates to ensure that any strategies/initiatives and services identified and discussed are relevant to the child/young person chosen in response to the Project Brief. Similarly, identified strategies and initiatives should be from a Scottish perspective. Candidates should also ensure that identified professionals are relevant to the child identified in the case study.
- ◆ Where possible, candidates should be encouraged to widen out research in preparation for the project. It is acknowledged that candidates will use the internet widely, but they could also be directed to look at other sources of information — for example, media, academic journals and reference books. Candidates should also be encouraged to use relevant data to support their discussion of findings.
- ◆ While many candidates produce original work for their project, there are still a few who plagiarise work from other sources. Candidates should continue to be advised against this, and centres should support candidates to research on their own effectively. Similarly, candidates should be discouraged from using material that has previously been used for unit assessment.
- ◆ The majority of candidates provided a conclusion to their work, but in some cases, failed to give a reasoned opinion of their findings in relation to the child and the brief discussed. Candidates should be encouraged to ensure that they allow for this in their word count, as there is the potential to gain 5 marks for a good conclusion.
- ◆ There continues to be an improvement in the use of references by candidates and this should be encouraged and reinforced as good academic practice. Some candidates still find it challenging to reference in the body of the text, and may benefit from research activity that supports them to reference effectively.

Whilst it was pleasing to see that the conditions of assessment for coursework were adhered to in the majority of centres, there were a small number of examples where this may not have been the case. Following feedback from teachers, we have strengthened the conditions of assessment criteria for National 5 subjects and will do so for Higher and Advanced Higher. The criteria are published clearly on our website and in course materials and must be adhered to. SQA takes very seriously its obligation to ensure fairness and equity for all candidates in all qualifications through consistent application of assessment conditions and investigates all cases alerted to us where conditions may not have been met.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	524
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Number of resulted entries in 2017	714
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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 -				
A	20.7%	20.7%	148	71
B	25.8%	46.5%	184	61
C	30.5%	77.0%	218	51
D	8.1%	85.2%	58	46
No award	14.8%	-	106	-

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.