Course Report 2015

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 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 assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Summary of the Course assessment

This was the first year of delivery for Higher Childcare and Development, and a small number of candidates were presented. Candidates are asked to respond to SQA set briefs to demonstrate their breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding of the Higher Childcare and Development Course, which consists of three Units: Child Development; Child Development: Theory; and Services for Children and Young People.

Generally, candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the 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. The evaluation and analysis components of the project proved challenging for many candidates which was reflected in the marks awarded.

Candidates were given instructions in the assessment task to 'investigate the needs of a child or young person'. Unfortunately, many candidates did not identify the age range of an identified child or relate to a specific child throughout the project. This had an impact on candidates' ability to skilfully analyse and evaluate findings of research and the eventual allocation of marks for certain sections of the project.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Many candidates addressed sections A, C and F well, where they were asked to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in explanation of aspects of development, theories of development, and initiatives that support child development.

Some candidates had difficulty with sections B, D, E and G, which required evaluation, analysis and application. This impacted on the allocation of marks. It would be reasonable to suggest that these candidates may have presumed they met the brief, but closer analysis of their scripts showed a lack of knowledge and understanding of the key components of analysis and evaluation and applying these to their chosen brief. This is a key aspect of demonstrating the skills, knowledge and understanding at SCQF level 6.

A recurring theme was the lack of appropriate referencing and acknowledgment of sources, with many candidates not using recognised forms of referencing.

The most effective discussion of Services and Support for Children and Young People was discussion from a local (ie geographically-specific) perspective. Although this is not a pre-requisite of the project, some candidates did not demonstrate an awareness of initiatives, strategies, services and professionals from a Scottish perspective.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Generally, most candidates were able to discuss and explain aspects of development as directed in section A, (12 marks) and chose appropriate aspects for this discussion. Similarly, most candidates were able to identify and describe factors that influence child development in Section B, (20 marks) choosing from a wide range of possible choices.

In section C and D, (30 marks), candidates were asked to identify, explain and evaluate theories of child development. Most candidates identified and demonstrated a sound knowledge of relevant theory/theorists from a suitable range of appropriate theory and related this to children/young people of the age range identified in section A.

Candidates chose from a wide range of relevant, current strategies and initiatives as directed in Section E, (10 marks). This was particularly effective when candidates identified and discussed strategies and initiatives, and were able to expand this to involve discussion of the impact on the child/young person in their project.

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 that support children and young people. This was particularly strong where candidates related services relevant to their particular 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, candidates successfully described the roles of these professionals and could relate the identified roles to the needs of children and young people.

The majority of candidates provided a conclusion in Section H, (5 marks), although some limited, giving a reasoned opinion to the chosen brief.

In Section I, (5 marks), candidates presented some appropriate referencing in relation to their research. In most cases this was from internet sources.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Section B asked candidates to analyse influences that impact on development. Nearly all candidates identified appropriate factors, but found it difficult to analyse and apply this analysis to the child in their chosen brief.

Where candidates were asked to evaluate theory in section D, many experienced difficulty in doing this successfully, partly due to not identifying the age of the child/young person in their project. 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, advantage/disadvantage of the chosen theory in relation to their chosen brief.

Some candidates did not identify appropriate or relevant strategies in Section E directly related to their chosen brief. This impacted on their ability to explore the strategies effectively in relation to the child/young person. Similarly, some of the strategies identified were not relevant to the age of their chosen child/young person in section A.

In Section F, some candidates had difficulty in distinguishing between services and initiatives that support children, confusing one with the other. Where possible, candidates were awarded marks to signify recognition of research and analysis.

Although, generally, Section G was well answered, some candidates were discussing professionals that were not relevant to their chosen child — for example, discussing roles and responsibilities of a health visitor in relation to an 8 or 9 year-old child. Conversely, where candidates did identify relevant professionals, they were able to describe their roles. Unfortunately, many of the candidates were not adept at applying and analysing findings of research in regards to professionals in a proficient manner.

Section H requires candidates to provide a conclusion to their work. While this was done by most candidates, some omitted a conclusion, or introduced new information and statistics at this point that did not support the general findings of the project. There was little evidence of candidates drawing conclusions to findings throughout the body of the project.

Section I requires candidates to present an appropriate range of references to support their work. In many cases, this was not done. There was extensive evidence of candidates 'cutting and pasting' from websites and not giving due recognition to the source of the information. There was little evidence of any desk research other than internet research in the majority of projects. The lack of referencing is a cause for concern as in some cases candidates could be in danger of plagiarising others research and findings.

Where candidates include appendices, they should be encouraged to only include relevant appendices to their project and not download and print whole documents.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Throughout the Project, the majority of candidates demonstrated a sound ability to discuss knowledge and understanding of childcare and development, but had difficulty in applying analysis and evaluating findings of their research. This was a recurring issue throughout the project, with candidates not gaining marks because they were not effectively analysing and evaluating findings of research or applying findings to their project.

It was evident that many candidates had not identified a child or young person, or the age of the child or young person, in relation to the brief. This made it difficult for them to discuss and relate the findings of their research to a specific child effectively. It also made it difficult for candidates to gain the full mark allocation in some cases. Teachers/lecturers should ensure candidates keep this in focus, without affecting the integrity of the candidates' work.

Where candidates are discussing aspects of development, they should be encouraged to be familiar with the normative development of children before investigating children and young people with identified additional support needs.

Candidates should be directed to ensure that any strategies/initiatives and services identified and discussed should be relevant to the child/young person in the response to the Project Brief.

When discussing professionals who work with children and young people, candidates should ensure that the identified professionals are indeed relevant to the child in the Project.

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.

With regard to referencing, it is imperative that candidates understand the importance of acknowledging sources in their work and research. Some of the evidence that was submitted included a Plagiarism statement, signed by candidates. This should be seen as good practice.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	0

Number of resulted entries in 2015	45

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 100				
A	8.9%	8.9%	4	58
B	33.3%	42.2%	15	48
C	26.7%	68.9%	12	38
D	17.8%	86.7%	8	33
No award	13.3%	-	6	0

While the assessment was valid, and set at the appropriate level of demand, the Course Assessment Task document and Assessment Briefs were not sufficiently clear in stipulating the requirement to link the project to a specific child or young person. The grade boundaries for C, A and Upper A were lowered accordingly.

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.