



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Early Education and Childcare
Level(s)	Higher

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers 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 question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

This was the final year of this question paper.

Generally candidates performed well, demonstrating sound knowledge of child development, theories of language development and how to meet children's health needs. As in previous years, candidates generally performed better in questions demonstrating their knowledge and understanding.

A small number of candidates had significant difficulties with their level of literacy skills. At times this made it difficult for them to give extended detailed answers and to evaluate and apply their knowledge. Internal assessment procedures should ensure that candidates are well prepared in exam techniques and are answering questions at Higher level.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Question 2 (a) (i): Most candidates could explain a theory of language development and apply this knowledge to an early learning and childcare worker in the workplace.

Question 2 (b): Most candidates were able to give a sound description of naturalistic observation methods, with a few candidates able to give a focused evaluation.

Question 3 (a): Knowledge around theorists relating to children's health needs was good and enabled some candidates to relate this to the children in the case study and their specific circumstances.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Question 1 (a): Many candidates struggled to describe four reflexes, with some only naming these, or a significant number describing babies' development and not specifying the reflexes relevant to this stage.

Question 1 (b): This was challenging for some candidates where they had stereotypical views of travelling families. This sometimes meant they included information that was wrong or irrelevant. When exploring culture and its influence on children's development, centres should support candidates to challenge and extend their thinking.

Question 4 (b): Knowledge of research methods was generally at a satisfactory level. However, some candidates did not focus their answers on the question and did not access full marks.

Question 4 (e): Whilst knowledge of the principles of development was generally good, a number of candidates struggled to relate these to the child in the case study. This may have been due to not reading the question carefully, or perhaps to lack of experience of applying these principles to a child at a particular stage of development.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

This was the final year of candidates being presented for the external assessment in this format. When preparing candidates for the new Course, centres will have to support candidates to be able to apply and evaluate knowledge related to a specific child.

In order to promote equalities, centres should ensure that when exploring the factors impacting on children's development, such as culture, that they extend and challenge candidates' knowledge and attitudes around children and families with protected characteristics.

Centres should support candidates to develop their levels of literacy. At this level candidates must be able to explain and evaluate complex factors which influence child development in a clear and coherent way.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	746
Number of resulted entries in 2015	538

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	17.5%	17.5%	94	69
B	26.2%	43.7%	141	58
C	26.6%	70.3%	143	48
D	12.3%	82.5%	66	43
No award	17.5%	-	94	-

Overall the course assessment proved to be more difficult than intended. The C grade boundary was lowered by 2 marks and the A and upper A grade boundaries were lowered by 1 mark.

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.