



## External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Physical Education
Level(s)	Advanced 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

There was a slight decrease in uptake (152 entries compared to 162 in 2014), with 17.2% being new centres and 11.9% from returning centres. This was an increase in both percentages compared to the previous year.

There was a slight decrease in the performance element from 28.5 down to 27.8, but a good increase in the report element from 26.4 to 30.4 compared to last year

In the 'A' award category, 15 candidates achieved an upper award (Band 1), and 20 achieved a lower award (Band 2), which was a pleasing improvement compared to the previous year. In the 'B' award category there were 23 candidates, which was a slight decrease from the previous year. In the 'C' award category there were 43 candidates, again a very slight decrease from the previous year.

Fewer candidates achieved no award compared to the previous year.

In The 'A' grade summary this represented a 23.2 % success rate, which was significantly higher than the 11.8% in the previous year. In the 'B' grade summary this represented a 15.2 % success rate, down from 20.5%. In the 'C' grade summary this represented a 28.5% success rate, slightly down from 29.8% the previous year.

The overall A–C Grade results were 66.9% compared to 62.1% in 2014. At Grade 'D' results were 11.3% compared to 15.5% in 2014; and 21.9% gained no award compared to 22.4

Whilst there was a significant increase in the number of 'A' Grades, there was a decrease in the number of 'B' and 'C' Grades, but nevertheless an improvement in the overall pass rate.

Other candidates failed to meet the standards necessary to achieve a pass at Advanced Higher. This may be due to:

- ◆ centre management of candidate progress where more than seven candidates were presented
- ◆ lack of appreciation of the content demand of specific sections of the Project Report
- ◆ poor candidate commitment to independent study

## Areas in which candidates performed well

The practical performance standard remains high with many candidates performing at a district or National level in their selected activities.

In the Project Report, there were excellent examples of candidates performing well.

Particularly impressive was the work submitted by the 35 candidates who achieved 'A' band marks — one of these attaining 70 out of 70. The quality of the work submitted was excellent.

Candidates in the upper range level demonstrated exceptionally high levels of enquiry. The introduction of their performance focus was relevant and concise.

The quality of relevant research methodologies was wide-ranging, and supported critical appraisal about the processes and changes to performance development.

The works of various authors were cited and debated critically to demonstrate informed thinking. Whilst most candidates substantiated justifiable claims for performance improvement, some candidates knowledgeably debated the limitations of significant developments.

The data methods and training considerations were clearly adhered to, and the work was well referenced, with appendices and extensive bibliographies. A high level of critical thinking was evident in the discursive sections of these reports.

There was also a significant improvement in the quality of the submitted reports. Many candidates presented their work in a more acceptable format. This demonstrated their abilities to critically appraise, substantiate or refute hypotheses.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

The work submitted by some candidates highlighted that there were still problems with the management of the report. The difficulties were twofold:

- ◆ For some candidates, word counts presented quite an issue — some reports were excessively long. In these situations candidates lacked the ability to define their performance focus and present a coherent hypothesis. As a result, much of their work was very repetitive and narrative, specifically in the rationale section.
- ◆ Candidates in the lower range level included limited reliable data methods, which impacted on meaningful interpretation and analysis of results.

In many situations, the issue most recurring related to the quality of the research undertaken. The range of methodologies was limited, which prevented meaningful debate about the selected performance issue. In this respect, the quality of research carried out by many of the candidates was restricted to integrating primary sources only. The candidates were then unable to progress their argument, justify claims for improved development, or consolidate how acquired knowledge had been applied.

When attempting to interpret and discuss findings, many responses were narrative and descriptive in nature, and lacked interpretation and depth of discussion, which resulted in candidates getting low marks in this section of the report.

This trend of offering a narrative repetitive account continued in Section 4, 'Application to Performance' worth 12 marks. Here, many candidates missed the opportunity to appraise,

compare and contrast authors' work to strengthen their debate, and to demonstrate how 'new' acquired knowledge had been applied to improve performance development.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

It is important for centres to take into account the grade award achieved by candidates at Higher before encouraging them to embark on the Advanced Higher course. There was evidence this year of many candidates who were very good practical performers, and had achieved a good grade at Higher mainly due to this part of the course, but who obviously lacked the level of knowledge and understanding in the analysis element, which is a necessity for candidates who wish to undertake the new Advanced Higher in the future.

Centres are encouraged to take cognisance of the independent approach and rigorous research demands that candidates must meet.

Centre staff should also encourage candidates to offer more qualitative discussion, exhibiting critical thinking by substantiating claims through valid findings that are referenced in the collection of pertinent data and research methodologies. Candidates should also be encouraged to appraise work critically to ensure word allocations are not exceeded.

Centres are reminded that candidates in the future must try and stay within the maximum word allocation for the report to avoid being penalised.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	162
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	152
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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 - 100				
A	23.0%	23.0%	35	70
B	31.2%	38.2%	23	60
C	28.3%	66.4%	43	50
D	11.2%	77.6%	17	45
No award	22.4%	-	34	-

The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

## 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.