

Course report 2026

Higher Care, SCQF level 6

We've written this report for teachers and lecturers. We recommend you read this with the published course assessment documents and marking instructions.

The report:

- provides a summary of how each course component performed
- highlights areas of the question paper and coursework where candidates performed well and areas where they did not perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

We collect and prepare the statistics in course reports before we complete the appeals process.

Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 110

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 106

Distribution of course awards (including minimum mark to achieve each grade)

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	19	17.9	17.9	91
B	22	20.8	38.7	78
C	26	24.5	63.2	65
D	22	20.8	84.0	52
No award	17	16.0	100	Not applicable

We've not applied rounding to these statistics.

In this report:

- 'Most' means greater than or equal to 70%.
- 'Many' means 50% to 69%.
- 'Some' means 25% to 49%.
- 'Few' or 'a few' means less than 25%.

You can find [statistical reports](#) on our website.

General commentary on grade boundaries

Our main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels, and to maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, we aim to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It's very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, we hold a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Senior Qualifications Scotland staff normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors use their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. We can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- We can adjust the grade boundaries downwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- We can adjust the grade boundaries upwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- If levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do

this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).

How the course assessment performed

Question paper

The question paper performed as intended and was consistent with previous years. It provided appropriate differentiation across the range of candidate performance and enabled candidates to demonstrate the knowledge, understanding and application of skills required by the course assessment.

The question paper sampled content appropriately across the course and functioned as intended.

Project

The project performed as intended and was consistent with performance in previous years. The assessment provided appropriate differentiation across the range of candidate performance.

Candidates had a choice of three project briefs. Briefs 1 and 3 were the most popular choices, and more candidates chose Brief 3 compared with previous years. The range of project briefs provided candidates with opportunities for personalisation and choice while meeting the assessment requirements.

All assessment prompts functioned as intended and enabled candidates to demonstrate their required knowledge, understanding and skills across the project.

How the candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper

Question 1 — Most candidates demonstrated a secure understanding of the concepts of nature and nurture. Their responses clearly explained the importance of both influences when working in care and showed their understanding of how they can affect individuals accessing health and social care services. Many candidates supported their explanations with relevant examples, while some candidates extended their responses by applying their knowledge in greater depth.

Question 5 — Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of feminist theory. Many candidates supported their responses with relevant examples of gender role socialisation. Some candidates extended their responses by explaining how gender role socialisation can influence an individual's life chances, demonstrating a more developed understanding of the theory.

Question 7 — Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of education as a social influence. Many candidates explained how educational experiences can affect an individual's life chances and supported their responses with relevant examples. Some candidates extended their responses by considering a wider range of factors that can influence educational experiences and longer-term life chances.

Question 11 — Most candidates accurately described observation as a method of needs assessment. Many candidates also explained the benefits of observation for both service users and care workers. Some candidates extended their responses by demonstrating a more detailed understanding of the role of observation in the needs assessment process.

Question 12 — Most candidates clearly explained the process of goal setting in care planning. Many candidates demonstrated an understanding of the purpose of goal setting in meeting individual needs. Some candidates extended their responses by making clear links between goal setting and the wider care planning process, demonstrating a broader understanding of person-centred care planning process.

Project

Candidates responded to all assessment prompts. Candidate responses that addressed the requirements of each prompt directly and maintained a clear focus on the chosen project brief were generally able to access marks across the assessment.

Most candidates demonstrated a good level of knowledge and understanding throughout the project. Relevant knowledge was generally presented accurately by candidates and applied appropriately to the chosen project brief. In particular, most candidates demonstrated a secure understanding of the psychological and sociological theories assessed in Prompts E and F, with many candidates accessing a high proportion of the available marks for knowledge and understanding.

There was evidence of improved standards of academic writing, with many candidates presenting well-structured responses that demonstrated clear application of course content. Many candidates also demonstrated stronger evaluative skills in Prompts C and F, with responses including developed evaluation and evidence-based conclusions.

Prompt A — Most candidates selected a range of aspects of human development and showed a good understanding of the developmental stages they had chosen to explore. Many candidates strengthened their responses by including relevant research and statistical evidence. Stronger responses applied knowledge of human development effectively to individuals accessing care services, making clear links between theory and practice.

Prompt B — Most candidates clearly identified the needs of the individual and linked these effectively to the chosen project brief, particularly Brief 1. Many candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of how care provision can influence an individual's health and wellbeing. Stronger candidate responses supported their discussion with relevant research or appropriately drew on personal or practice-based experience.

Prompt D — Most candidates identified and described three relevant social influences and linked these appropriately to individuals accessing care services. Stronger candidate responses applied relevant research to explain how social

influences can affect individuals' experiences and outcomes in health and social care settings.

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper

Question 2 — Some candidates described changes in behaviour using evidence from the case study but did not make clear links to Carl Rogers' theory. As a result, some responses did not fully address the requirements of the question.

Question 4 — Many candidates focused their responses on the concepts of norms and values rather than the concepts of norms and roles required by the question. As a result, these responses did not fully address the assessment requirements. Many candidates did not answer this question.

Question 6 — Many candidates did not accurately describe a key feature of functionalist theory. Some candidate responses referred to a different sociological theory rather than functionalism. A few candidates did not attempt this question.

Question 9 — Many candidates did not fully explain why codes of practice should be followed by care workers. Their responses often identified codes of practice but included limited explanation of their purpose in supporting professional practice and the delivery of safe, effective care. A few candidates did not attempt this question.

Question 10 — Many candidates did not fully describe the role of legislation in health and social care. Some candidate responses made links to equality and diversity but included limited explanation of the wider role of legislation in protecting individuals and informing care practice. A few candidates did not attempt this question.

Project

Some candidates based their project on a single case study or scenario. While this provided a clear context for discussion, it sometimes limited their opportunities to apply knowledge and understanding across the range of assessment prompts. In these responses, discussion occasionally became repetitive or descriptive, with limited application of relevant theories and concepts. Candidates who drew on a

range of case studies or examples were often able to demonstrate broader application of knowledge and provide more comprehensive responses.

Prompt C — Some candidates focused their evaluation on the organisation or care service rather than the positive care practice being delivered in that service. Their responses often described the provision or operation of the organisation without making explicit links to the quality or effectiveness of the care practices experienced by the individual. This limited their opportunities to demonstrate evaluation of positive care practice, as required by the prompt. Candidate responses that maintained a clear focus on the care practices delivered in the service and supported their evaluation with relevant evidence were able to access the available marks.

Prompts C and F — Many candidates presented detailed descriptions of positive care practice or psychological theory but included limited evaluation. Candidate responses that moved beyond description to provide clear evaluation, supported by relevant evidence, were able to access the higher-mark bands.

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper

You should use past papers and specimen question papers to develop candidates' examination technique and familiarity with the style of questions. You should use the marking instructions to help candidates understand the correct breadth and depth of response required. You can find the past papers, specimen question paper and marking instructions on the Higher [Care subject page](#) of our website.

You should provide regular opportunities for candidates to practise responding to the command words used in the question paper. Candidates would benefit from developing strategies to identify the key focus of each question before planning their response, ensuring that they address the full requirements of the question. Activities that develop candidates' ability to interpret questions accurately can help to prevent candidates from addressing only part of the question or focusing on related concepts rather than the specific requirements of the question.

You should remind candidates to pay particular attention to extended-response questions, especially those worth four or more marks. Candidates would benefit from regular opportunities to practise structuring detailed responses that apply their relevant knowledge accurately, include appropriate examples where relevant, and provide sufficient explanation to meet the requirements of the question.

You could also provide opportunities for candidates to develop their confidence in answering questions across the full range of the question paper. Using past papers and specimen question papers, together with activities that develop examination technique and response-writing skills, can help candidates feel more prepared to attempt all questions.

Project

You should develop candidates' evaluative writing skills throughout the course by providing opportunities to compare and analyse different theoretical perspectives relating to human development and behaviour. You can support candidates to produce evidence-based judgements that are clearly linked to the project brief and

the needs of the individual. Evidence may also be drawn appropriately from candidates' own practice-based experience.

Embedding examples from each project brief throughout learning and teaching is considered good practice, particularly when introducing psychological and sociological theories. Although there is no prescribed sequence for delivering course content, you may want to introduce sociological theories early in the course, focusing initially on the key features and concepts of each perspective. Establishing a secure understanding of these concepts can support candidates in explaining and analysing the impact of social influences on individuals accessing care services.

You should also encourage candidates to make links across the three areas of the course — Values and Principles, Human Development and Behaviour, and Social Influences — and apply this knowledge to the project brief rather than describing each area in isolation. Candidates with successful projects demonstrate their integrated understanding of the course content.

Candidates benefit from exploring the roles and responsibilities of care workers across a range of health and social care settings. Using case studies and realistic care scenarios can strengthen their understanding of how Scottish legislation and policy; the care value base; Scotland's Health and Social Care Standards; and professional codes influence the delivery of care and outcomes for individuals. While individual case studies can provide valuable context, you should use a range of case studies and scenarios throughout learning and teaching. This helps candidates apply their knowledge and analysis across a variety of circumstances and demonstrates a broader understanding of the different reasons individuals may access care services.

Candidates should also be given opportunities to develop the skills of selecting, gathering, interpreting, analysing, and presenting information from a range of reliable sources. You should encourage candidates to evaluate the credibility of sources, synthesise information from a range of evidence, and use this to support their well-reasoned conclusions.

For Prompts C and F, you should encourage candidates to present a justified recommendation or clear rationale where appropriate. There is no requirement to provide a balanced discussion of strengths and weaknesses or to include both

advantages and disadvantages. Responses should focus on reaching a well-supported evaluation based on the evidence presented.

Project research should focus on Scottish health and social care services and reference Scottish legislation only. If education-related topics are selected, you should encourage candidates to focus on specialist provision and the care and support needs of the individual. Their project research should also be based on appropriate secondary sources in a health and social care context. Confidentiality and anonymity must be maintained if real individuals are referenced.

Understanding Standards materials are intended to support learning and teaching and should not be used as templates for assessment responses. Each project should reflect the candidate's own understanding, interests and analysis and be an authentic representation of their own knowledge and understanding.

You should remind candidates that the project must remain within the prescribed word count and that they should integrate all relevant evidence into the body of the project rather than present it as additional material in appendices. You should also encourage candidates to reference a range of appropriate and reliable sources consistently throughout their work.