Course Report 2016

Subject	Childcare and Development
Level	Higher

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component: Project

This was the second year of delivery for Higher Childcare and Development, with 524 candidates 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 awareness 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.

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

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. However, re-distribution of the allocation of marks from first cohort had a positive impact on candidate achievement. This allowed candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key concepts/principles of knowledge gained in coursework.

Specific direction to identify and discuss an identified child allowed candidates to effectively explore the needs of an 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. This lack of inclusion of a case study or discussion of target child had a significant impact on allocation of marks for these candidates.

Most candidates presented work within word count. However, it was evident that the management of word count in some cases proved challenging.

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

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component: Project

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. Candidates could have gained more marks if they had referred to normative development in the discussion of the aspects of development for the identified child.

In section C, 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 and related this to children/young people of the age range identified in section A. It should be noted that the majority of candidates still use theorists associated with classical theory and have not embraced contemporary theory as hoped.

Section F, (10 marks) asked candidates to explain the ways that current services 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. Similarly, many candidates performed well in discussion of services, strategies and professionals who support children and young people.

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

There was marked improvement with regard to referencing by candidates, with many candidates making attempts to include referencing in both text and bibliography.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component: Project

Some candidates had difficulty with sections B, D and E which required evaluation and analysis. 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. 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 had difficulty in making a value judgement about theory in regard to their identified child or young person.

In some cases, candidates chose to discuss young children diagnosed with, for example, ADHD or Dyslexia, when in fact this would be extremely difficult to make this diagnosis in a young child.

Candidates gave some excellent description of factors that influence development in Prompt B, but in fact they were asked to *analyse* these factors. This had an impact on potential marks.

Candidates included relevant research in their project, but there was little use of data to enable effective analysis of findings/comparison of findings.

In some instances, candidates lost potential marks in Section E, F and G for not being specific or making distinctions between services and professionals who care for 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 included a conclusion (Section H), but many were brief and failed to give a reasoned opinion on findings. This meant they could lose up to five marks.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component: Project

The inclusion of a case study had a significant impact on candidates achieving good marks. Candidates should be encouraged to keep case studies brief and relevant, introducing the identified child and some background information. If the case study is too long, it may use up valuable word count.

Candidates should be encouraged to consider total word count then take into account how many words should be allowed per section/allocation of marks. It was evident that many candidates used a large part of the word count at the start of the project and then ran into challenges to complete the project within word count.

Throughout the project, many of the candidates demonstrated a sound ability to discuss knowledge and understanding of childcare and development, but had difficulty in applying analysis and evaluating the findings of their research. This was a recurring issue throughout many of the projects. Lack of evaluation and analysis resulted in poorer marks for some candidates.

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 specific in their description of aspects of development and relating to the age of the identified child.

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. 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.

There was a marked improvement of the use of references by candidates, this should continue to be encouraged and reinforced as good academic practice. Similarly, candidates would benefit from research activity that supports them to reference effectively.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	45

Number of resulted entries in 2016	524

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	20.4%	20.4%	107	70
B	25.4%	45.8%	133	60
C	30.5%	76.3%	160	50
D	5.0%	81.3%	26	45
No award	18.7%	-	98	0

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.