Course report 2024

Physical Education Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative, and to promote better understanding. You should read the report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2024 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

[To be completed by SQA]

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023:   11,485

Number of resulted entries in 2024:   11,664

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	3,168	Percentage	27.2	Cumulative percentage	27.2	Minimum mark required	69
B	Number of candidates	3,733	Percentage	32.0	Cumulative percentage	59.2	Minimum mark required	59
C	Number of candidates	3,206	Percentage	27.5	Cumulative percentage	86.7	Minimum mark required	49
D	Number of candidates	1,252	Percentage	10.7	Cumulative percentage	97.4	Minimum mark required	39
No award	Number of candidates	305	Percentage	2.6	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

In this report:

♦ 'most' means greater than 70%
♦ 'many' means 50% to 69%
♦ 'some' means 25% to 49%
♦ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find statistical reports on the statistics and information page of our website.

2

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper performed as expected.

Feedback gathered from both team leaders and markers indicated that the overall paper was accessible for all candidates. Some areas of the question paper were more demanding; however, overall candidates were able to access marks when they attempted to answer the questions.

As in previous years, the questions which required candidates to demonstrate higher order thinking skills, proved difficult.

Evidence gathered through item analysis confirmed that a few questions were especially difficult, and many candidates failed to pick up any marks in these questions. This led to the average mark of the paper decreasing.

Performance

From all the centres sampled, the performance component performed as expected. A range of activities were observed by verifiers and information from centres showed that an even wider range of activities was assessed in centres. Candidates had to be assessed in two activities with a significantly different range of movement and performance skills.

Some centres were outwith tolerance in their judgements and were required to revisit the marks for the entire cohort and adjust the marks where necessary. Each centre in this situation received feedback and support to ensure they marked to the national standard.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper

Section 1 of the question paper sampled from all four factors impacting performance and included a wide range of questions relating to the course mandatory content. Candidate performance varied across each question and each factor.

In section 2, there were opportunities for candidates to reflect on work they would have carried out as part of the performance development process in the course. Candidates were asked to describe performance priorities and an approach they used to develop their priorities. Candidates were then asked to evaluate the approach described. Candidates performed better when providing descriptive points, as opposed to evaluation.

Section 3 provided data that required analysis. This was in the form of a circle or wheel, replicating the cycle of analysis, and contextualised the use of a model performer or performance within that cycle. Most candidates attempted this section and feedback from team leaders and markers was that this section was answered poorly. Most candidate attempts to analyse the impact of the use of a model performer or performance, or lack thereof, failed to meet the analytical depth required to access any marks.

Areas that candidates performed well in

In section 1, candidates performed well in most of the description questions. Answers were well structured and provided a breadth of descriptive features and characteristics. In particular, most candidates were confident in describing methods for collecting information in question 1a(i) and question 1a(ii).

In section 2, question 6b, candidates provided descriptive characteristics and features of an approach they had previously used within their Personal Development Plan. It was evident that the experience gained from carrying out these approaches led to a greater understanding of the features of the approach.

In section 3, question 7, some candidates were able to describe how a model performer or performance may have been used effectively within the cycle of analysis. This was particularly clear when referencing stage 1 (gathering data), and stage 3 (implementing the performance development plan).

Areas that candidates found demanding

It was evident that many candidates continue to struggle to provide the required depth of knowledge required to gain high marks in questions which require higher order thinking skills.

In section 1, question 1b, candidates were required to describe one strength and one development need identified from the information collected in question 1a. However, some candidates instead described the suitability of the data collection methods described in question 1a, and consequently were not able to access marks.

In question 2b, many candidates failed to see the change in context from team or group performance in question 2a, to the performance development process and therefore achieved no marks.

In section 1, many candidates failed to demonstrate knowledge of the process of recording in question 3b. Many candidates failed to explain how the social factors could have a negative impact on the accurate recording of progress within a Personal Development Plan.

Again, in section 1, some candidates identified the characteristics of feedback in question 5a, rather than the types of feedback which are outlined in the mandatory content.

In section 2, question 6c, many candidates failed to provide sufficient evidence to support their evaluation of the approach described in question 6b. Weak evaluations lacked substance and did not demonstrate impact on the performance development process or the overall performance.

In section 3, a significant number for candidates did not attempt questions 8 and 9. In the case of question 8, many of those candidates that did attempt to answer the question failed to clearly link their response to the data outlined in the scenario. Most responses provided a narrative of the cycle of analysis but lacked the possible impact that the apparent use of a model performer or performance may have had on this performer.

Performance

Areas that candidates performed well in
Candidates performed very well, and many candidates achieved full marks. A mixture of team and individual activities were observed on verification visits. Verifiers commented on how well candidates performed and also on the high degree of motivation shown by the candidates.

It was clear that centres knew their candidates' capabilities and, on the whole, were able to provide suitable contexts for assessment. Personalisation and choice led to strong performances in this component of the course. Centres had put in great effort to ensure that as many candidates as possible could be assessed in their chosen activities.

Many candidates were able to explain clearly what their tactics or plans were before taking part in the verification exercise. This aided the marking of the assessment item, 'using and applying well established composition, tactics and roles safely and effectively'.

Areas that candidates found demanding
There was some feedback to suggest that some candidates had difficulty accessing marks from a particular area of the marking instructions.

A few centres reported that some candidates had to be encouraged to plan ahead before choosing the Higher Physical Education course because they had difficulty in finding a second activity with significantly different movement and performance skills, in which they could be assessed.

5

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Centres should ensure candidates are exposed to all areas of mandatory content. It is clear that when a candidate has experienced these areas in a practical context, their responses are enhanced.

In light of performance in this question paper, candidates should review their understanding of:

♦ how factors can have a negative impact on the recording of progress within a Personal Development Plan
♦ considerations around feedback and its use within performance development
♦ prioritisation of development needs
♦ the use of model performers and performances within the performance development process
♦ evaluating approaches and providing evidence which substantiates the impact of the use of the approach when developing performance or on performance itself

Performance

A key aim of the course is to enable candidates to develop and demonstrate a broad and comprehensive range of complex movement and performance skills through a range of activities. Centres should ensure that candidates are fully prepared for assessment across two single performances.

Centres are reminded that candidates must choose two activities which allow them the opportunity to display a significantly different range of movement and performance skills. The assessment of these performances must take place in a context which is suitably challenging for a Higher Physical Education candidate to set it apart from normal learning and teaching activities.

Updated guidance can be found on the Physical Education subject page of SQA's website to help teachers and assessors decide which activities are acceptable for assessment.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

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

For most National Courses, SQA aims 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 is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject, at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA 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.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.

♦ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

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.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in March 2024 and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

7

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report.