Course report 2024

Higher Care

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 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

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023:   369

Number of resulted entries in 2024:   329

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	9	Percentage	2.7	Cumulative percentage	2.7	Minimum mark required	91
B	Number of candidates	36	Percentage	10.9	Cumulative percentage	13.7	Minimum mark required	78
C	Number of candidates	79	Percentage	24.0	Cumulative percentage	37.7	Minimum mark required	65
D	Number of candidates	115	Percentage	35.0	Cumulative percentage	72.6	Minimum mark required	52
No award	Number of candidates	90	Percentage	27.4	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.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

Generally, the question paper performed slightly poorer than expected. The question paper was considered a fair and accessible paper for all candidates, covering a range of content sampled from the course specification. It provided opportunity for candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding across all aspects of the course content.

Project

Candidates in 2024 were given three project brief options. The project performed as expected and in line with previous years. There was a range of candidates performing between A and D grades across all centres.

Candidates continue to present a good level of knowledge and understanding in response to each prompt. The evaluation prompts still remain more challenging for most candidates.

Candidates were able to adhere to the word count and a few candidates provided additional research in the form of appendices. Many candidates provided relevant and academic references.

Some centres included a Turnitin plagiarism score to support the authenticity of candidates' work.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Question paper

Question 1

Many candidates were able to provide knowledge of the concepts of nature and nurture. Few candidates were able to fully explain why the debate is important when working in care and the impact this understanding of the debate can have when delivering care to different individuals. Most candidates were able to show some analysis relevant to the role of the care worker in understanding the importance of this debate and provided different examples to illustrate this understanding.

Question 2

For candidates to access the full marks for a) and b) they were required to use the same key feature of Rogers theory throughout the answer. Most candidates were able to respond to this prompt and present understanding of the features of Rogers theory and then apply this theory to helping care workers understand individuals with an eating disorder. Many candidates were awarded full marks for their knowledge of Rogers theory.

Question 3

Many candidates did not manage to access full marks in this question. Some candidates did not discuss the theory of transition in this section. Few candidates provided an explanation of the process of transitioning out of care and the support which they might require, rather than explaining how the model of transition can be used to provide an understanding.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of socialisation which largely focused on describing primary and secondary socialisation, with a discussion of the sociological concepts of values, norms and roles. Candidates struggled to identify that socialisation is a process of lifelong learning. Many candidates defined the different agents of socialisation, but few candidates then linked this to the process of socialisation.

Question 5

Most candidates chose the family as the social influence to discuss in this question. There was some repetition from question 4 where candidates focused the discussion on primary socialisation. Few candidates were able to provide examples of positive or negative impacts of the social influence chosen. Many explained the functions of family or work, rather than the impacts of the social influence.

Question 6

Candidates were able to show a good level of understanding of the impact of being labelled and were able to present examples relating to specific service users, such as autistic people and those with a mental health condition. Very few candidates incorporated other aspects of the Symbolic Interactionist theory into this answer. For example, some candidates gave situations of individuals being labelled and this labelling affecting them, but not going on to link this to the underpinning theoretical knowledge of self-fulfilling prophecy. This limited the

amount of discussion that could be had around ideas such as self-fulfilling prophecy, symbolic communications and interactions, role taking, and society influencing self-concept and produced repetitive responses.

Question 7

Most candidates were able to provide a general description of the needs in this section. Some candidates made reference to the case study information and some candidates were able to provide a discussion around the benefits of care planning.

Question 8

Some candidates described care principles here rather than features of a positive care environment.

Question 9

Some candidates provided good examples of underpinning knowledge of accountability and actions within care practice. Some candidates were able to provide developed points showing good insight and understanding of the importance of self-awareness and the effects of behaviour and actions on care practice.

Question 10

Candidates who chose to discuss the Equality Act (2010) tended to focus their answer on an explanation of equality and being treated fairly, without providing the link to protection. Some candidates were able to explain how anti discriminative practice provided protection for individuals accessing services and how the protected characteristic enabled individuals to feel protected against discrimination. Candidates who chose to discuss Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 or Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 were more able to make the connection between key features of legislation and a care service user feeling protected.

Some candidates chose to explain Data Protection legislation and regulations and identified that individual's data should be managed and kept confidential. Some candidates have then been unable to provide an explanation of how this level of confidentiality and data management ensures protection of individuals accessing care services.

Project

All assessment prompts were responded to by candidates. Candidates who understood the assessment task tended to achieve higher marks, being able to demonstrate use of underpinning knowledge, application, analysis and evaluation skills. A significant number of candidates demonstrated good academic writing skills, for example using academic referencing.

Candidates were able to provide knowledge of the different sociological and psychological theories. They were able to show depth of understanding of each theory chosen.

For both Prompt A and Prompt B many candidates were able to access almost full marks. Candidates demonstrated a good level of knowledge with regards to aspects of human development and needs.

As with previous years, many candidates experienced challenges in providing evaluative descriptions responding to Prompt C and F and many candidates presented answers which were descriptive rather than evaluative.

Some candidates found Prompt E and F challenging and some candidates were unable to provide a discussion which was relevant to the chosen brief. Many candidates this year provided a case study as part of the project. These answers tended to provide a description of the case study and less explanation in relation to the brief.

Prompt A

Most candidates were able to respond well to this prompt. A variety of aspects of human development were selected for analysis by candidates. Many candidates provided well researched and analytical answers. Some candidates were only able to provide descriptions of the different aspects of human development without analysis in relation to individuals accessing care services. Overall, candidates were able to make analytical links between aspects of human development and different health and social care concerns.

Prompt B

Generally, candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge of three different needs and link these to individuals requiring care services. Most candidates were able to apply this discussion to their chosen brief. Candidates who selected brief 3 — 'Why is it important for people to have choices about the care they receive?' — tended to repeat the link to the brief for each need, therefore limiting the marks which could be awarded in this section.

Where candidates chose Brief 1 — 'Is it always better for people requiring care to be cared for at home?' — their link to the brief was less repetitive and provided candidates with an opportunity to show understanding of different care services and how they can meet the needs of service users.

Prompt C

Most candidates were able to describe positive care practice within two different care services. Few candidates went on to provide an evaluative discussion of these features of positive care practice. Many candidates applied the features of positive care practice to a case study or specific individual — these candidates were unable to access the evaluation marks.

Candidates who performed well in response to this prompt were able to provide an evaluation of each feature of positive care practice in relation to the delivery of care within different settings. Some candidates were able to discuss the benefits of this positive care practice in relation to their own experiences, with some discussing their own practice within a work setting.

Prompt D

Most candidates selected suitable social influences to analyse in response to this prompt. Many candidates provided detailed analysis of the different social influences in relation to individuals accessing care services. Some candidates who chose to discuss one specific case study for all three social influences tended to present repeated information which sometimes limited marks that could be awarded.

Prompt E

Most candidates provided accurate explanations of the different sociological theories and were able to access marks for knowledge of theory. Few candidates were able to discuss the relevance of this theory and many candidates used the theory to understand the behaviours and actions of an individual or a case study. For example, candidates explaining conflict theory were able to show knowledge of the main features of the theory but were unable to explain the relevance of these features in relation to their chosen brief, rather the answers focused on applying the theory to a person. Candidates who gave responses focused on the application of the theory to a person were unable to access full marks in this section.

Prompt F

Most candidates provided accurate knowledge of three different psychological theories of personality and behaviour or transition and loss. As above, few candidates were able to evaluate the relevance of these theories in relation to the brief. Many candidates provided an understanding of individuals using the psychological theory or model, with limited evaluation in relation to the brief.

Some candidates provided an evaluation of the key features of the theory with no link to its relevance to the brief.

Prompt G

The majority of candidates were able to present a well-balanced conclusion responding to the brief.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates should be aware of how to respond to command words, for example describe, explain and analyse. Candidates should consider the amount of discussion required for each allocated mark, with most questions requiring a point of knowledge to be made and then fully developed.

Centres should prepare candidates to respond to questions on all theories included within the course specification. Candidates are required to understand the main features, strengths, weaknesses and differences between theories and their relevance to contemporary care issues and current care contexts.

Models of transition and loss should be explored in order to develop an understanding of the effects of life experiences on individuals. Candidates should be provided with opportunities to evaluate a range of psychological theories and their relevance to care practice.

Project

Centres should ensure candidates are aware of the requirements of the project from the outset. Guidelines are provided on the [Higher Care subject page](#) of SQA's website.

When considering the psychological and sociological theories, candidates should be provided with opportunities to consider the relevance of each theory in relation to the chosen brief. The emphasis should be on the brief and less on an individual. Candidates could choose not to discuss specific individuals in this section if this supports their focus on the brief.

Centres could support development of candidates' skills of analysis by exploring the ways in which social influences can impact life chances, such as housing, health and employment. Centres should provide opportunities to develop underpinning knowledge of sociological concepts to explore what is meant by society and understand different aspects of society that influence the way people think and behave.

Candidates who choose one person to discuss throughout the whole project sometimes limited their opportunity to fully show their knowledge and understanding. These answers were very focused on telling a 'story' of a person, rather than responding to the brief.

Evaluative writing should be a focal point of delivery of Prompt C and Prompt F — candidates should be supported to explore ideas of strengths and weaknesses of the relevance of the theory in relation to the brief and not an evaluation of the key features of different theories.

For candidates to access higher marks for Prompt C and Prompt F, they must provide evaluative writing. Candidates should avoid presenting only descriptive answers in these sections.

As much as possible, centres should encourage work experience or guest speakers from care practice, proving an opportunity for candidates to develop insight into different service user groups. This would support the discussion and explanations of individuals using care services, it could also avoid candidates using stereotypical ideas of service users.

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

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](.).