



**June 2018**

**Level 3 National in Health and Social  
Care Unit 4: Enquiries into Current  
Research in Health and Social Care  
(31494)**

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### What is a grade boundary?

A grade boundary is where we set the level of achievement required to obtain a certain grade for the externally assessed unit. We set grade boundaries for each grade, at Distinction, Merit and Pass.

### Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the external assessment. When we can see the full picture of performance, our experts are then able to decide where best to place the grade boundaries – this means that they decide what the lowest possible mark is for a particular grade.

When our experts set the grade boundaries, they make sure that learners receive grades which reflect their ability. Awarding grade boundaries is conducted to ensure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

### Variations in external assessments

Each external assessment we set asks different questions and may assess different parts of the unit content outlined in the specification. It would be unfair to learners if we set the same grade boundaries for each assessment, because then it would not take accessibility into account.

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## Enquiries into Current Research in Health and Social Care (31494)

Grade	Unclassified	Level 3			
		N	P	M	D
Boundary Mark	0	8	17	31	45

# Introduction

This is the first examination series for this task based assessment which has generated varying levels of knowledge and understanding of enquiries into current research in health and social care. It is pleasing to see that some centres have used the various resources provided in support and preparation for this examination series. Responses from some centres demonstrated that Sample Assessment Materials and Sample Marked Learner Work had been used in preparation for learners taking this assessment.

Preparation for this assessment was evidently varied from centres. Where centres had delivered the unit and supported learners in application of their knowledge and understanding of research in health and social care and relevant contemporary issues, responses were clear and linked consistently to the issues provided in the pre-release material. It appears that some centres had not taken the time and resources to support learners in their preparation for this assessment. It is imperative that centres use the pre-release material for the allocated times, supporting learners to understand how to undertake literature searches using different source materials and avoiding websites such as Wikipedia. The specification for this unit directs centres to consider professional journals, textbooks, research organisations, academic search engines, and so on; this is vital in supporting learners to be able to include relevant and reliable secondary sources of evidence in their responses. Some centres did not appear to have guided learners effectively in this area, with many not including relevant secondary research.

## Introduction to the Overall Performance of the Unit

Many centres chose to complete the Health section of the paper, it is recommended that learners have free choice over the article that they choose to research for this assessment. Their choice should relate to their interests and chosen career progression. It did appear that not all centres had given learners a choice in the article researched, with many candidates including the same evidence from secondary sources and in some cases, very similar responses in terms of points raised and discussed throughout the paper. Learners should be completing notes independently and it would therefore be expected that different sources of evidence would be included.

## Individual Questions

### **Question one**

The assessment focus for this question requires learners to consider research methods, validity and reliability of results of research in relation to their chosen article. It is expected that learners are able to explain the research methods referred to in the article, with understanding of data usage and the ability to provide evaluative judgments on suitability of the research methods used in the article and in secondary sources. Learners are also expected to demonstrate understanding of validity and reliability in relation to the research methods included in their responses.

### **Health article**

Many responses demonstrated a basic understanding of research methods in the context of the article. Learners were able to identify research methods with varying levels of explanation. It is important to note that within the article provided a randomised controlled trial was used; this included a double-blind placebo - it is not a separate research method but part of this experimental method. There were many candidates who made this mistake and it would be advised that centres ensure that learners are able to understand the whole of a research method, as well as explanations and evaluations in detail. Where centres have spent time delivering research methods, learners showed clear and relevant knowledge and understanding of this methodology and judgements on suitability were evident. It was pleasing to see where relevant secondary research had been undertaken, learners were able to include a range of research methods, demonstrate understanding and application to the research in question.

### **Social Care article**

Many learners completing this article demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the research methods used for this article and other similar research articles. Explanations of questionnaires for this research appeared to be well thought out and logical responses, with a range of evidence presented overall. It appears that learners completing this article have often understood research methods in a more practical and applied way, generating good evaluations on the suitability of the research methods.

## **Overall**

For both articles, there tended to be errors and gaps in knowledge and understanding of primary research methods. Quantitative and qualitative data are not stand alone research methods; they are ways of collecting data when using a particular research method. For example, a randomised controlled trial would predominantly collect quantitative data, a questionnaire could use both quantitative and qualitative data depending on the types of questions asked. There were some centres that appear to have taught these as methodologies, with learners not actually including a method in their responses to this question, which limited the awarding of marks due to inaccuracies in knowledge. It is advised that centres refer to the content in the specification for a list of research methods for future teaching of this unit.

Sampling methods were included in very few responses from learners. Where included, there was varied levels of understanding. Centres need to be aware of the importance of understanding target groups and samples for research - this supports learners in their ability to evaluate the research methods used in articles, as well as their ability to make good recommendations throughout the assessment.

Reliability and validity in this question refers to the research methods used. Many learners discussed the reliability of the sources included, which did not gain credit because it was not in relation to the question. Learners are expected to consider the reliability of the research methods used in the article, and other secondary sources which was rarely evident in responses.

## **Question two**

The assessment focus for this question requires learners to understand the relationship between own secondary research and the article, as well as how this relationship reinforces the importance of the issue. It is expected that learners demonstrate the ability to explain the importance of the issue presented in the article with relevant examples of how the research has affected individuals and / or wider society. There should be secondary research presented in responses that directly link to the issue presented in the pre-release material.

## **Health article**

Responses were varied with many learners being able to identify the importance of the health issue and providing good, albeit basic, examples of the effects of the research on individuals and / or wider society. Overall there was limited analysis seen in responses to this question with little supporting evidence of the points raised in responses. The majority of responses focused on the effect for individuals taking part in the research, rarely going beyond this to consider the importance of this issue for wider society. It is important to note that many learners regurgitated the article for this response, perhaps being unsure of the expectations in relation to the importance of the issue. The response required learners to consider why it is important for research to lead to a more targeted treatment of asthma - not the importance of general research, application is essential in responses to this question.

## **Social Care article**

The same issues were evident within social care responses; where learners had understood the importance of the issue, they were able to provide responses that demonstrated why this issue was important for the care of dementia patients with good examples included. There was evidence of secondary research being included, with relevance to the issue, and responses showing embedded evaluations of the research article.

## **Overall**

For both the health and social care articles, there appears to be a mix of good and poor responses. Where learners have not evidenced secondary research, they were limited on marks awarded - this was an imperative part of the response stated in the question. There was a lack of analysis in the responses seen and it would be advised that centres use the assessment outcomes from the specification to support learners in their acquisition of higher order thinking skills in preparation for this assessment. Many learners were limited due to their poor choice of secondary research in response to this question; limited evidence of preparation was evident with many learners using only the prerelease material in the response.

## **Question three**

The assessment focus for this question requires learners to consider planning and ethical considerations for further research. Learners are expected to offer rationalised suggestions of research methods that could be used to continue the investigation of their chosen article and justify the reasons behind these choices. The planning considerations, ethical issues, research skills and practical problems associated with research, should be included in learner responses.

## **Health article**

Responses to this question were weak in general. Some learners included descriptions of research methods that could be used to explore the issue further, however these were basic and did not always offer justification in relation to suitability or effectiveness. There appeared to be generic links to ethical problems with research, rather than these being focused on the research into targeted treatment of asthma, appearing rote learned in some responses. Within the health research, many learners had used research involving mice - although there are undoubtedly ethical considerations of using animals in research, this did not reflect the nature of the question, with many learners suggesting that this phase should be skipped and drugs tested directly on humans, this in itself is an ethical concern. Practical problems of undertaking research in this area was weak, if not missing from many responses. It has also been noted that many learners made the suggestion of including a larger sample size in their research, with the suggestion that the number of participants was not large enough in terms of reliability. Although there is justification in larger sample sizes to reduce bias in results, it is recommended that centres take time to consider relevant sample sizes and sampling methods for target populations in terms of the research being suggested. Practically, sampling 2000 participants in research may not be economical, needed, or indeed useful for research findings in this area. Another change that was often suggested by learners was the need to tell participants about a placebo being used/using another drug in place of a placebo; the whole point of a placebo being used in research is to allow researchers to assess the actual changes in an individual in response to a drug being given. By using a placebo, the experimenters are able to consider the response of participants to the drug with a baseline comparison. This suggests that learners do not fully understand the implications of placebos in medical research.

## **Social Care article**

There was a lack of understanding in relation to what was expected in responses to this question. Many learners explained the research article presented with a lack of further research methods that could be used to further investigate this issue. As with the health research article, learners often provided some alternative research methods but very few offered justified reasons for this. There was a lack of explanation as to why alternate methods would and could be used for care of dementia patients. There was evidence of secondary research to support further research into this issue but again, evidence was described rather than justifications being provided. Some good ethical considerations were included in the responses, with knowledge and understanding of this area of research evident. However, these were at time generic and not specifically in relation to the article. Very few learners were able to consider the problems of conducting research in the wider context, with limited supported conclusions being drawn.



## **Overall**

When considering both the health and social care issues presented, learners appear to have struggled with this question. Much of the focus was based on the pre-release articles and the research already undertaken rather than considering what could be done to further investigate the issues presented. Where learners offered alternate research methods, they did not always explain the rationale for this method - with some learners providing generic evaluations of methods. It is evident that learners have an understanding of ethical considerations but more applied evidence of this knowledge needs to be seen in order for higher bands to be achieved. In some responses, learners focused on the misuse of results with much of their response relating to Andrew Wakefield and the MMR research; where this was done it was taken out of context and did not refer to results of this particular research. It is advised that when delivering ethical considerations, centres use a wide range of evidence to avoid fixation on something that is not always relevant in the context of the question or research.

## **Question four**

The assessment focus for this question is in relation to research implications for future provision and / or practice. It is expected that learners provide implications of the research for future provision and / or practice with an analysis of these implications. Learners should show understanding of the issue and the implications both in the context of the article and wider society. Recommendations for change should be in relation to changes of provision and / or practice with justification and supporting evidence.

## **Health article**

There were varied responses to this question, overall learners appeared to struggle with the term 'implications', not always understanding that this refers to conclusions that can be drawn from the research/the effect that the research has on provision and practice. For example, if the drug was to be prescribed by the NHS, how would it change provision or practice? Where learners were able to do this, they provided both positive and negative implications which demonstrated understanding of the issue in a wider context. Where implications were included in responses, it was few and far between that learners provided rationale for these implications with little or no supporting evidence to justify responses. There was limited elaboration of responses which in turn limited the marks awarded for this response. In terms of recommendations, many learners either did not include these or, where included, they did not relate to recommendations for change, instead focusing on how the initial research could be changed.

## **Social Care article**

As in the health article, learners appeared to struggle with the term 'implications', often referring to limitations of the pre-release research rather than considering the effects of the research on the provision and practice in caring for individuals with dementia. Many learners showed little elaboration in responses, demonstrating only basic knowledge and understanding of this question. Many responses were superficial and not always linked to the article or other research in this area. Some learners were able to draw on knowledge and understanding of demographic data and the impact that this research would have on future provision in this sector.

## **Overall**

In general, the responses to this question were weak, many learners did not refer to recommendations or confused recommendations for change in provision and / or practice with changes to the research. Much of the focus in responses was in relation to the pre-release material, with limited evidence of supporting secondary research. Where learners have understood the question, they have produced good responses but few learners were able to attain the higher bands for this question

# Summary

Overall, the outcomes for the first series of this assessment have been good. There is evidence of good practice and delivery occurring in centres, particularly evident where delivery has clearly been undertaken by teachers with social science backgrounds. Where inaccuracies in knowledge and understanding are evident, centres need to ensure that they are using the specification along with other resources provided, to support delivery and avoid learners missing out on higher bands during assessment.

The following is recommended for future examination series:

- Make use of the resources and specification provided for this unit.
- Avoid re-writing the articles in responses.
- Learners should be supported with how much time they spend on each question to avoid running out of time towards the end of the assessment period.
- Knowledge and understanding of reliability and validity needs to be improved.
- Health and Social Care terminology is essential - some centres referred to 'gatekeepers' rather than advocates.
- Teachers should support learners to understand how to prepare notes for this assessment.
- Learner notes should be individual and not prepared in groups.
- A range of secondary sources should be included throughout the assessment.
- Teachers should support preparation for the assessment using Sample Assessment Materials and a range of academic articles.
- Learners should choose their own article, it should not be centre specific.
- Using additional paper does not always benefit the learner - use the space provided as guidance to how much the learner is expected to write.

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