



General Certificate of Education

Health and Social Care 8621/8623

HC10 Psychological Perspectives

Report on the Examination

June 2009

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HC10: Psychological Perspectives

This year saw an improvement in the quality of the work submitted with most candidates choosing suitable and contemporary topics as their focus for study. Examples included both mental illnesses and social problems. The first, and probably the most important task in this unit, is for candidates to identify a suitable problem behaviour that can be explained using traditional psychological perspectives. The more astute candidates chose topic areas where sufficient research evidence and/or academic debate already exists, enabling them to produce well-informed and interesting portfolios. Weaker candidates continued to choose less manageable topics, often presented in the form of a question such as, 'why do females smoke more than males'? Teachers are advised to offer early guidance as to the suitability of the topic the candidate is attempting to explain as this is the cornerstone of the portfolio. Many centres neglected to follow the specification in using the requisite sections and subsections to structure their written work. This unit should be presented in report format; it is not an extended essay.

The information presented in the perspective section was less muddled and more accurate than in the past. Weaker candidates, however, persisted in presenting generic explanations for behaviour. Explanatory perspectives need to be applied to the identified problem behaviour using everyday examples or scenarios. If a perspective is introduced its purpose must be to explain the aetiology or persistence of a problem behaviour. It is not sufficient to discuss an area such as behaviourism in the abstract, application is critical. Another problem in this section of the portfolio was that perspectives were introduced but then there was little elaboration or justification for their inclusion.

This year's portfolios revealed an increase in the volume and pertinence of supporting research evidence. Candidates generally displayed stronger research skills and some discernment in the selection of material for inclusion. The stronger candidates included both quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence which was then discussed, analysed and related to their chosen problem behaviour. In short there was evidence of critical, intelligent analysis of the application of a perspective to the identified problem topic or behaviour. Unfortunately for some centres the implications of the results were not always discussed fully in the light of the problem behaviour and a few candidates came to conclusions that were fully justified.

The discussion sections of many of the reports submitted lacked insightful criticisms of the evidence described earlier in the report. A persistent problem is that without a comprehensive description of a study, it is very difficult to draw conclusions about the implications of the study in relation to the relevant perspective or indeed to even attempt to apply a critical evaluation in an effective or meaningful way.

Approximately half of the marks available are for Sections C and D, yet most candidates devoted considerably less time to these sections than to Section B. Teachers should take note and do their best to rectify this imbalance.

Section E of the report should include a list of full references in the conventional form. This section is often neglected and incomplete or inaccurate referencing is not uncommon.

Grade boundaries

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