

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2012

GCE Health & Social Care (6949) Paper 01
Unit 12 - Understanding Human Behaviour

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General comments

The paper was similar in format to previous series. It allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of the specification well. The questions discriminated well, with a wide range of marks being seen in each question. Overall, the standard of the responses seen was higher than in the previous series last January. Centres are to be congratulated and for taking on board some of the comments in the previous reports. However, there are a number of candidates entered who do not appear to be well prepared. Some candidates show a lack of knowledge and understanding of the basic approaches to understanding human behaviour, despite some similar questions having been asked in the past. There are still some candidates who do not appear to pay enough attention to the case studies and to the command verbs, such as describe, explain, discuss and evaluate. Performance would be greatly enhanced if these issues were addressed.

Candidates are reminded that for explain questions they should be giving reasons for their answers and for discuss questions they should be giving both advantages and disadvantages. In addition, evaluation questions require a conclusion.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

This question was based on a four old child who has started misbehaving at nursery. It allowed the candidates to demonstrate skills in comprehension. It also enabled them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of a behavioural approach and also of family therapy in managing behaviour.

Part (a) tested candidates' comprehension and their ability to extract information from text. It was accurately answered by most candidates, the majority of whom gained the two marks.

Part (b) saw most candidates able to give two principles of a behavioural approach and thus gain the two marks. However, some did not appear to understand the question and gave examples of how the approach would be carried out.

In part (c) most candidates gained at least two or three marks in this question where they had to explain the need for an initial assessment. However, some appeared to disregard the word initial and simply gave vague answers relating to assessment. The point of the initial assessment is to provide a base line against which changes and thus progress can be measured. Only the more able candidates appeared to understand this idea.

The first part of (d) was answered well with most candidates scoring at least three marks. Where a mark was lost it tended to be because the idea of repeating the good behaviour was not made clear or because candidates did not indicate that a reward was given for good behaviour. There are still a few candidates who do not appear to understand the meaning of positive reinforcement despite it being a basic feature of a behavioural approach. The second part of this question discriminated well between good and less able candidates. The most able gained at least five or six marks and gave

advantages of a timeout approach, relating their answers well to the case study. However, numerous candidates only considered the advantages and some wrote in a very generic way, not relating their answer to the case study or even to a child.

In part (e) candidates were asked to evaluate the use of family-centred therapy with someone like Billy. It was answered reasonably well, with some candidates correctly giving advantages and disadvantages and then finishing off their answer with a conclusion. However, some candidates provided a list of advantages and disadvantages, some of which were rather generic and could have applied to any approach or any case study. A minority of candidates were only awarded three marks, the maximum in mark band one, as they only considered advantages provided no disadvantages.

Question 2

This question was based on factors contributing to mental health problems. It tested candidates' knowledge and understanding of various aspects of a cognitive approach to modifying behaviour. It also tested their ability to draw conclusions from data.

The first part of (a) asked candidates to draw conclusions from data about the relationship between poverty and the mental health of men and women. It was generally answered well, better than similar types of questions asked previously. Candidates are beginning to use quantitative data in their answers, thus enabling them to gain more marks. In the second part of the question, candidates were asked to explain how other factors might account for depression. Many did this well and scored at least five marks or more. However, a significant number of candidates talked about poverty, despite being asked for factors other than poverty. Other candidates did not go into enough depth and provided a list of factors.

In the first part of (b), many candidates gained at least three marks, showing a good understanding of dysfunctional beliefs. Some lost marks as they did not relate their answer clearly enough to Andrea in the case study. Others did not show a full understanding often forgetting to mention the idea that dysfunctional beliefs are based on limited evidence or not evidence at all.

In the second part of this question candidates had to describe features of a cognitive approach. Some answered well and three or four marks. Others gave rather generic answers and did not relate their answer clearly enough to the actual approach of managing behaviour. They did not realise that marks could be gained from mentioning that a counsellor would be involved or that homework may be involved.

The third part of Q2 required candidates to evaluate the use of a cognitive approach with someone who has mental health problems. This discriminated well and produced a variety of marks. Most candidates scored within mark band two as they gave some appropriate advantages of the approach and also some disadvantages. Those candidates also showed a good understanding of the approach itself. Unfortunately, there are still some candidates who provide advantages of the approach and therefore limit

their answer to mark band one. It should be noted that to gain more marks than this there should be both advantages and disadvantages given.

Question 3

This question was based on a 77 year old woman living in residential care. It tested candidates' knowledge and understanding of a humanistic person centred approach and a psychodynamic approach.

Part (a) asked the candidates to explain why effective communication is important in a residential home. It was answered well by many candidates, the majority of whom gained at least three marks. A few candidates did not relate their answer clearly enough to someone in a residential home and some answers were rather generic.

Part (b) caused many candidates some problems. It asked them to discuss the extent to which the care home manager had followed the correct course of action by talking only to the doctor. A significant number of candidates only gave one side of the argument, thus limiting themselves to mark band one.

Most candidates answered part (c) well and gained at least one mark. The most common answers related to the fact that we are influenced by unconscious thoughts and that we have three states of mind - the id, ego and superego.

Part (d) required candidates to explain terms used in humanistic therapy, such as unconditional positive regard, genuineness and importance. Candidates were asked to choose two of the three terms and most chose empathy and unconditional regard. Some candidates did not give enough detail to gain the full six marks.

Part (d) required candidates to evaluate the relative advantages of a psychodynamic approach and a humanistic approach in helping someone like Maria who has compulsive behaviour. It elicited the full range of answers, with some candidates giving in depth advantage of both approaches. Other candidates demonstrated a lack of understanding of the advantages of the approaches and others gave advantages and disadvantages of each. Candidates should take care to read the questions carefully in future. Only a very small minority of candidates gave a conclusion, despite previous reports indicating that they should be present in question with the command word 'evaluate'.

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