OCR
RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT

GCE

Psychology

Advanced GCE **A2 H568**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H168**

Report on the Units

June 2009

HX68/MS/R/09

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Advanced GCE Psychology (H568)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Psychology (H168)

REPORTS ON THE UNITS

G541 Psychological Investigations

General Comments

In general, it seems candidates have performed well, with those having been prepared more fully and having conducted their own practical work as practice in advance doing the best.

The biggest problem preventing candidates achieving higher marks was a failure to respond in the context of the research outlined in the question where required. Of the total of 14 questions (including sub-part questions), eleven required the answer to be contextualized in some way. Only questions 3(a), 5 and 10 were completely 'context-free'.

More generally, some candidates were less well prepared and could not answer questions that required definitions of basic aspects of research methodology directly stated in the specification. For example, question 5, which asked about the difference between independent and repeated measures designs in experimental research.

A lack of detail, rather than knowledge per se, also prevented some candidates from achieving higher marks where there was a failure to elaborate where necessary.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1(a) - Most candidates where able to suggest suitable and appropriate open and closed questions. Occasionally candidates cited questions with no explicit predetermined response options as 'closed' questions (eg 'Do you like studying why people behave the way that they do?')

Question 1(b) - Few candidates achieved the maximum 4 marks on this question because responses were not presented in the context of research outlined in the question (ie an investigation of why students chose to study psychology). Many responses were simply too superficial (eg 'it is valid because it assesses what it set out to do') and only demonstrated a very basic understanding of the concept of validity.

Question 2(a) - A surprising number of candidates did not seem to know what was involved in random sampling, with many describing techniques related to other sampling frames, such as systematic sampling (eg stating ... 'select every 5th person from a list'). Those that did know what was involved found it very easy to secure full marks.

Question 2(b) - Candidates struggled to obtain maximum marks here because of the failure to make evaluation comments related specifically to the use of random sampling in the research outlined. For example, comments about it being problematic and time-consuming were not really relevant as access to the target population was straightforward and manageable in this case.

Question 3(a) - Most candidates clearly understood what quantitative data is and many provided spontaneous examples to illustrate their comments (many of which were related to the research outlined, although on this occasion it did not need to be).

Question 3(b) - It was disappointing here that given that most candidates clearly knew what quantitative and qualitative data involve that so few discussed the strengths and weaknesses in the context of the research outlined in the question.

Question 4 - This question proved to be a real discriminator. In order to achieve high marks candidates needed to do two things: (i) describe a way that memory could be measured, and (ii) evaluate the suggested way to measure memory. The first part was handled better than the

second, but still required enough detail to allow replication and unfortunately few candidates provided fully operational details of the dependent variable (DV) to enable this. When it came to the evaluation, a lot of candidates wrote at length about things not directly related to the operational details of the DV. For example, sample size, sampling method and ethical considerations (eg consent from the childrens' parents) etc. The net effect of this was that few candidates scored highly overall.

Question 5 - The majority of candidates clearly knew the difference between independent measures and repeated measures experimental designs. However, a few mixed the two up and some had clearly not revised this basic piece of research methodology. For example, claiming that a repeated measures design is . 'where the experiment is conducted again several times'.

Question 6 - Once again, given the majority were clearly aware of what was involved in a repeated measures design (evident in the response to the previous question), it was disappointing that few outlined strengths and weaknesses related to the theme of the research presented in the question.

Question 7 - Most candidates knew what a null hypothesis was and were able to cite one clearly for the research outlined referring to both the independent (IV) and dependent variable (DV). A few candidates, however cited an alternative hypothesis in error.

Question 8(a) - Many candidates failed to label the axes on the scattergraphs clearly and fully. A common oversight was not to include details explaining the extremes of the 1-10 scale for self-rating of the importance of appearance.

Question 8(b) - Many candidates were able to outline two conclusions from the scattergraph drawn. However, this sometimes lacked the necessary amplification (eg simply stating that there was ... 'a positive correlation') with reference to the specific variables measured. However, some candidates reported that the higher the self-rated importance of appearance the more money spent on cloths! Sometimes candidates cited conclusions that could not be made from the actual scattergraph presented, mainly due to inadequate labelling of axes.

Question 9 - Weaker candidates struggled to secure high marks on this question because their comments related exclusively to general issues related to assessing the importance of appearance, rather than those concerned with the specific way that the variable had been operationalized (the use of a numeric scale 1-10 with just two verbal indicators at either extreme of the continuum).

Question 10 - Most candidates were aware of what a negative correlation refers to, and often used an example from the study about self-rating of importance of appearance and money spent each month on clothes as an example (although not necessary for full marks). Only occasionally did candidates confuse a negative with a positive correlation.

G542 Core Studies

General Comment

Overall, performance by this cohort was as expected, providing an anticipated distribution curve similar to that produced by the legacy specification Core Studies 1 and Core Studies 2 papers.

This was a challenging paper, designed specifically to show clear differentiation between the highly able and weaker candidates. Teachers are advised to read the current specification and note the allocation of Assessment Objectives for this paper. They should also appreciate that the paper aims to be accessible to all candidates. However, to ensure differentiation, whilst most questions are targeted at the majority of candidates, some must be targeted towards potential grade A, and some towards potential grade E candidates.

Many centres had obviously prepared their candidates well and had either read the relevant information and guidance on the OCR website (eg Frequently Asked Questions and Candidate Style Answers), and/or read the January Report to Centres (also available on the OCR website), which gave clear indications of the requirements, content, time and mark allocation for all sections of this paper. Although the majority of candidates managed to complete all sections of the paper, Sections A and B were answered, in general, better than Section C. This may have been because candidates had: run out of time, not been adequately prepared or simply could not answer the questions.

Some candidates seemed to be hindered by poor literacy skills. Occasionally this appeared to result in questions not being read carefully and written responses lacking structure and not specifically addressing the question. Teachers should be advised to train candidates in examination technique, encouraging them to express themselves coherently, explicitly and concisely.

Candidates need to be made more aware of the common injunctions used in this paper eg identify, outline, describe. This may avoid a common problem found in this paper: candidates not writing answers proportional to the marks available. In similar strain, many candidates demonstrated a lack of psychological knowledge and understanding by failing to use psychological terminology appropriately eg confusing ecological validity with demand characteristics, not knowing what a quasi experiment is, not knowing the difference between participants, models, confederates. Furthermore, some candidates continue to use psychological terms without showing any understanding. For example, terms such as ecological validity, validity, reliability, demand characteristics and social desirability were used by some candidates throughout this paper with little or no evidence that they actually understood the meaning of the terms.

To conclude: there were very few misapplications of the rubric – a vast improvement on previous sessions. Examiners felt this paper definitely exposed candidates who had not revised adequately, challenged those who had worked hard, and allowed top-class candidates to score well. Examiners overall felt this was a fair and appropriate paper for Advanced Subsidiary Level.

Comment on Individual Questions

Section A

To reiterate what was said in the January Report to Centres, Section A consisted of 15 short answers (as in the legacy old Core Studies 1 paper) – 1 on each study. Each question was marked out of 4 or 2+2. All questions should have been attempted giving candidates the opportunity to score a total of 60 marks for this section. Each answer should have been linked to the study named in the question. Failure to do so will have been considered a partial answer so will not therefore have scored full marks.

Q1 (a)   Generally well answered.
Q1 (b)   full marks were rarely awarded for this question as few candidates explained their answer in relation to any of the tests relating to Theory of Mind.
Q2   generally well answered.
Q3 (a)   generally poorly answered. Most candidates who did offer an appropriate answer referred to the inability of chimps to speak (human language).
Q3 (b)   poorly answered with few candidates being able to outline either way symbol acquisition was recorded.
Q4 (a)   generally well answered though many candidates only gave partial answers. Many answered with reference to age and/or gender rather than aggression and many did not refer to the concept of 'pre-tested'.
Q4(b)   generally well answered by candidates who scored well in part (a), even though the question parts were not inter-dependent.
Q5 (a) + (b) generally well answered.
Q6 (a)   many candidates showed little knowledge of Little Hans' dreams or fantasies and gave answers referring to such things as Hans' fear of horses, Hans fear of the bath etc.
Q6 (b)   for most candidates, if they did not respond or their response was inappropriate for part (a), then they did not achieve any marks for part (b). There were some very interesting explanations of the Giraffe daydream – none of which could be found in the original article.
Q7 (a)   generally poorly answered in relation to the abilities of split-brain patients to identify objects by touch alone, with many candidates referring to visual fields. In addition, many candidates failed to compare the abilities of split-brain patients with 'normal' people, therefore only scoring partial marks.
Q7 (b)   generally well answered though many candidates failed to develop their answer so only scored partial marks.
Q8 (a) + (b) generally well answered.
Q9   this question was often inappropriately answered in terms of eye movements so the question served as a good discriminator.
Q10   generally well answered though many candidates did not fully explain their answer in relation to either why prisoners were given uniforms or the significance of the characteristics of the uniforms.
Q11 (a)   generally well answered though some candidates referred to 'putting up posters around Yale University'.
Q11 (b)   generally well answered.
Q12 (a)   poorly answered. Many candidates wrote about 'model conditions' as the drunk/ill victim, showing confusion between the terms 'model' and 'victim'.
Q12 (b)   generally poorly answered due to misunderstanding of part (a).
Q13 (a)   generally well answered though often candidates referred to hypnosis, EEG results, and analysis of handwriting as psychological tests.
Q13 (b)   again generally well answered though some candidates referred to the findings from non-psychological tests ie The ones mentioned in Q13 (a).
Q14   few, if any candidates scored maximum marks for this question. Many did not know what a quasi experiment was, often thinking it was an experiment conducted in a natural environment. However, those who did know the term were then able to identify

the IV and explain that it could not be manipulated/occurred naturally. Few were able to then go on and extend their answer to include the point that because the IV occurred naturally, Griffiths was unable to randomly allocate the participants to the experimental groups.

Q15 (a) + (b) generally well answered.

Section B

There was little to choose between the popularity of the three studies offered. Although superficially this was a very straightforward question, it was generally poorly answered. Candidates rarely referred to their chosen study when answering any of parts (b), (c), (d) or (e), giving generic answers throughout. This resulted in some candidates who had given extensive responses achieving low marks. Teachers would be advised to look at the FAQs and CSAs, together with the Principal Examiner's report for this module in the January report to Centres, available via the OCR website for guidance on how this question should be approached.

Q16 (a) most candidates gave a superficial aim and did not develop it adequately to gain the full 2 marks.

Q16 (b) although most candidates were able to identify the research method used in their chosen study, few really expanded their answer by explaining how the method was utilised in their chosen study, with many merely writing extensively about the procedure followed, thus gaining only 1 mark. Likewise, most candidates could give a generic advantage of the method but were then unable to link this to their chosen study, therefore again scoring only partial marks.

Q16 (c) rarely did candidates clearly identify two ethical issues and try to describe how they were raised by their chosen study. Problems arose throughout this question with (i) Rosenhan: candidates were confused over who the participants really were, many believing the pseudopatients were the participants; (ii) Bandura: candidates thought parents had given their consent for their child to participate (there is no mention of this in the original study), though presumably the nursery staff gave their consent on behalf of the children; (ii) Piliavin: candidates thought the participants had no right to withdraw – this was not exactly true as they could remove themselves from the situation by either leaving the critical area or the carriage itself. However they had no opportunity to withdraw their responses from the data gathered.

Q16 (d) some confused answers were given here as candidates rarely identified the ethical guidelines that were broken and then explained why they needed to be broken/should not have been broken. Many candidates failed to link their suggestions specifically to their chosen study: they merely mentioned such things as 'this reduced demand characteristics' without explaining how these applied in their chosen study.

Q16 (e) this question part required candidates to firstly identify ethical issues raised by their chosen study eg Piliavin: no consent, no debrief, possible psychological harm, fear of physical harm, deception. They then needed to explain how each of the identified issues could be improved eg Piliavin: participants could be debriefed via announcements on the train/station tannoy system/giving out leaflets to passengers as they dismounted the train/putting up posters in relevant stations once the experiment had been completed giving details and results of the study. This question part was generally poorly answered and rarely linked to the chosen study as candidates gave generic answers which therefore gained a maximum of 3 marks.

Q16 (f) this part of the question required candidates to consider what might happen if they effected the suggestions they had made in part (e). Again many candidates gave generic answers eg gaining consent would increase demand characteristics and the chance of socially desirable behaviour; so could only score a maximum of 3 marks.

Section C

As in Section B, there was little to choose between Q17 and Q18 in terms of popularity. Many answers were notably brief and therefore scored few marks. This may have been due to poor time management and/or lack of knowledge and understanding. In many cases there appeared to be little understanding of strengths and weaknesses of the selected approach and many candidates referred to strengths and weaknesses of specific studies rather than the actual approach. Furthermore, there were many instances in inappropriate studies being used in both approaches.

Q17+18(a) many candidates did not develop their identified assumption adequately to gain 2 marks. Some candidates described the approach rather than giving an assumption of the approach. Teachers would be advised to make sure their candidates are aware of the meanings of/differences between these two terms.

Q17 (b) many candidates either referred to the cost-benefit analysis but failed to link it to the social approach or gave generic explanations. They therefore only gained 1 mark.

Q18 (b) although many candidates gave good descriptions of how memory can be affected by leading questions and how information gained at the time of the event can be influenced by information gathered after the event, few actually explained how these factors could account for the inaccuracy of eyewitness testimony. Like in Q17(b) many candidates gave generic explanations so gained only 1 mark.

Q17+18(c) frequently candidates merely identified a similarity/difference between two appropriate studies without any expansion/details, therefore scoring only 1 mark for the similarity and 1 mark for the difference.

Q17+18(d) as previously mentioned, many answers were either study-specific and so gained few, if any, marks; or were generic strengths/weaknesses not specifically related to their chosen approach. On many occasions supporting evidence was either poor or lacking. This question part was disappointingly answered as the banding format for gaining marks was specifically designed to make marks more accessible to candidates. Again, teachers would be advised to look at the FAQs and CSAs on the OCR website, together with the Principal Examiner's report for this module in the January report to Centres, also available via the OCR website to gain advice on how these questions should be approached.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Psychology H168 H568
June 2009 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
G541	Raw	60	45	41	37	33	29	0
	UMS	60	48	42	36	30	24	0
G542	Raw	120	81	72	63	54	46	0
	UMS	140	112	98	84	70	56	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
H168	200	160	140	120	100	80	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
H168	11.3	25.8	44.5	63.6	79.0	0	17222

17222 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.