



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **Health and Social Care 8626/8629**

**HC21      Research Methods and  
Perspectives**

# **Report on the Examination**

*June 2009*

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*Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.*

## **HC21: Research Methods and Perspectives**

This unit continues to be a popular choice and there was an improvement in the quality of the work submitted.

The focus of this unit is to evidence formal report writing skills, not to provide an account of how to write a report and centres were more successful than in previous years in directing candidates to this end.

A major improvement noted is that centres are becoming more familiar with the requirements of formal scientific report writing and this was evidenced by a reduction in word count and tighter more formalised writing by the more able candidates.

On the whole, reports generated by candidates were both practical and applied. It was pleasing to note that fewer centres used children as participants. Participants under sixteen, even with parental consent, should not be used.

Topic choices were mostly sensible and more tightly linked to health and social care issues. It was frustrating to see that some centres once again used the topics more suited to the A-level psychology specification. An example here is the cognitive psychological topic of 'memory'. It is difficult to argue that peoples' ability to recall a list of words is strongly linked to health or social care issues. Research of this nature should be avoided, as it has a different focus and is likely to prevent access to the higher mark bands.

The transfer of knowledge and skills between subject areas is permissible (and should be encouraged where relevant) but candidates should be monitored and guided carefully as judgment is required. Synoptic input from other units was excellent and becoming more common; a few candidates used their experience of HC13 to generate a suitable research topic. Structurally the reports were excellent.

The sections and subsections outlined in the specification were followed and competence was evidenced in the use of technical language.

Data collection was performed in a professional and expedient fashion by many of candidates. Centres have responded to the request not to forward all of the questionnaires for moderation. A single copy and a raw data table is sufficient. Design decisions were justified and there was some improvement in the type and level of analysis performed on the raw data. However, attention to detail still needs to be improved.

A reoccurring problem is that graphs are still not given suitable titles and axes not labelled accurately. Many candidates did include graphs and charts but they were not always supported by appropriate commentary. Measures of central tendency should only be used where applicable. Providing the mean or modal value of the data collected for use in a correlation study is not meaningful. Analysis must take place within context, it must have a purpose. Percentages were accurately calculated.

The use of background research is an area for consideration as it could be improved. Where possible, empirical studies should be cited and their relevance made explicit. There was a pleasing reduction in the amount of anecdotes or personal opinions included.

Please encourage candidates to use Harvard referencing and to fully reference all support materials.

The reporting of the limitation of the studies has improved but there is still a tendency to bullet point lists of problems. The problems identified are often generic or over simplified.

Candidates should be encouraged to consider the theoretical limitations or issues linked to their study as well as methodological problems. Many candidates did not discuss the wider implications of their research or its suitability in the context of the demands of research reliability and validity.

Intelligent and insightful remarks were made, conclusions were drawn and this year's submissions continued a trend of improvement.

**Grade boundaries**

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