



General Certificate of Education

**Health and Social Care
8621/8623/8626/8627/8629**

HC02 Effective Communication

Report on the Examination

June 2010

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HC02 Effective Communication

There was an improvement in the work produced this year. Some centres had clearly guided candidates in the requirements of the specification, and it was pleasing to see that most centres that had adopted the AQA tick lists and, therefore, fully met the requirements for this unit. Some centres' marking was still out of tolerance, but the extent of over marking and under marking was greatly reduced. There were some very interesting talks this year and some candidates achieved some very high marks, which is very pleasing to see.

The main requirements of the report are:

- A brief introduction to the talk stating the client type and the intended audience. (The client must have particular requirements in communication.) There is a comprehensive list of clients and care settings in the specification.
- The text (transcript) of a talk focussed on communication skills for use by a practitioner/informal carer when working with the specified client type. Candidates should be encouraged to indicate where PowerPoint slides were displayed if used.
- A blank copy of a questionnaire designed to measure the effectiveness of the talk – especially the candidate's own use of communication skills.
- Presentation of processed data from the questionnaire.
- An evaluation section including the justification of design decisions, evaluation of own skills – based on feedback and suggested improvements.
- An appendix including all completed questionnaires, sources used and evidence of teacher feedback.

Section A

It is pleasing to see that the majority of candidates are now giving the required brief introduction to the client, setting and audience and producing some very informative talks.

There were some excellent talks which included a range of relevant communication skills related to their actual application with a specified client type, and usually illustrated by realistic concrete examples. Evidently, research for these talks combined some practical experience or observation (perhaps on a work-experience placement or visit) with thorough research of published sources. These talks did not follow any one pattern. For example, some used visual aids, while others did not, some featured audience participation, while others did not. Some candidates introduced quizzes and/or simulation tests to be carried out by the audience and then sometimes lost the focus of the talk. It is likely that candidates whose talks worked best designed their talks in ways that played to their own individual strengths, which should be encouraged, rather than adopting a uniform style or pattern. To assess a good talk the question should be asked. *'After hearing the talk, has the audience been given enough information to go and communicate effectively with that client?'*

Some candidates are still including talks that were not about, or not mostly about communication skills, i.e. concentrating on the medical condition of the client rather than how to communicate with him/her.

Some candidates chose to give a talk on subjects such as obesity, smoking, anorexia, etc., which does not fit in with the requirements of the specification and, therefore, greatly restricts access to the appropriate assessment criteria. Centres that checked with the portfolio advisor about the suitability of the client/group benefitted their candidates, by choosing appropriate clients/groups.

Some candidates are still ignoring the requirement to refer to communication barriers in the talk.

A common weakness in talks that did focus on communication was a tendency to give generic descriptions of communication skills, which might be applicable to almost any type of client, rather than relating the skills to the client. Also evident was a tendency to rely too much on just one source of data, such as a visit or placement.

Section B

Questionnaire design

The standard of the questionnaires was greatly improved this year, but some candidates used items only about the design decisions, rather than their own skills as a presenter. Most candidates produced questionnaires that were clearly of their own devising. It is essential to include a blank copy of the questionnaire at the start of Section B.

The most successful questionnaires were those that featured clear, unambiguous items, clear instructions for the audience on how to complete them, e.g. values on rating scales and informative feedback.

Most candidates wrote questionnaires that used a variety of item types. However, there was a common tendency to write items which restricted the choice of responses. For example, a candidate might ask whether the speed of their speech was 'right' and give the options of Yes or No for respondents. Candidates also had difficulty in designing effective open question items. These were sometimes used to follow up previous closed questions, e.g. "If NO, why not?" It would be useful for candidates to bear in mind that the purpose of designing the questionnaire is not merely to produce a questionnaire for assessment purposes, but also to collect the data that they will need to write an effective evaluation.

It should be noted that questionnaires completed by members of the audience should be anonymous, apart from the feedback provided by the teacher, which should be signed and dated. Some teachers provided useful and legitimate help for their candidates by giving feedback additional to the questionnaire. This is particularly helpful for candidates whose questionnaires fail to provide much useful information.

Data analysis

Data processing and presentation highlighted a range of problems for candidates. Many appeared to lose sight of the need to produce a clear and accurate summary of the data from the questionnaire. Lack of clarity resulted from a number of errors. One was to present graphs separately from the other information, another was the failure to indicate what the item reported was about. The best way to do this is to state the item and then give the summarised responses. There is a fine line between reporting on a set of results and analysing what they actually mean. Some candidates still need help with analysis.

Another omission was the failure to give collated data (the actual number of respondents who gave each particular response). Raw data, for example, tally charts and verbatim lists of all responses to open items and calculations should be put in an appendix.

Candidates should understand that unanimous responses do not require graphical illustration. Many candidates are still unable to manage the software they use, omitting to alter the default setting and, as a result, they produced poorly-labelled graphs that have no meaning. It would be better to hand-draw graphs rather than produce poorly-labelled printed graphs. Some candidates are still failing to label the axes which makes the graph impossible to read. Some candidates used a range of different graphical styles, when the consistent use of one style would have been clearer for the reader. Graphs that cannot be read for this type of information should not be used.

There was a tendency for many centres to over-credit the content of Section B, which might have been because of unfamiliarity with the skills required. A03 was over marked by some centres when there was no evidence of appropriate quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Section C

A positive feature of candidates' work for Section C was a tendency to be frank and open when evaluating their own communication skills.

Most candidates attempted to say something about design decisions, own communication skills and suggested improvements. Candidates that seem to produce the best evaluations are the one that use sub-headings to focus the work. After gathering data from their feedback, some candidates fail to refer to it in the evaluation, thus reducing the marks available for A04.

The need to justify design decisions tended to be done well. Candidates made conscious decisions such as whether or not to use visual aids, how much to involve the audience, how to engage attention and how to make the talk interesting.

There is no requirement to evaluate the questionnaire.

Section D

Most candidates included all completed feedback forms. These are essential for assessors and moderators to check the accuracy of data analysis. Failure to include all feedback forms has an impact on A03 as there is no authentication of the data the candidate has presented.

When giving references to sources used, it is helpful if candidates give brief statements of what information they obtained from each one. This is not a specification requirement, but rather just an example of good practice.

Grade boundaries

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the AQA website at www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html