

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback January 2011

GCE

GCE Health & Social Care (6938) Unit 1 - Human Growth and Development

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General comments

This paper allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding of life stages and aspects of human growth and development, factors affecting growth and development and promoting health and well-being. Examiners felt that the questions discriminated across the ability range using scenarios as central themes. Questions were tiered so that greater cognitive demands were made on some question parts and the whole paper time frame was one and a half hours.

The quality of written communication is still quite poor with spelling, punctuation and grammar requiring more attention. Candidates still occupy space and time by repeating the question before offering any credit-worthy statements. Handwriting is very unpractised and cancelled words and phrases occur regularly. Closely allied factors such as self esteem and self image are often confused. Repetition is common although it may be couched in different words.

Question 1

Candidates were required to explain adolescence and describe physical, social and emotional features of this life stage. Weak candidates often only gave the age range of the life stage and one or two characteristics such as breast growth. The features had to be characteristic of the life stage and getting taller, making new friends etc have certainly been happening since birth. Able candidates were able to score significantly although some confused social and emotional features. Self esteem was reasonably well done but there are far too many candidates who believe that self image is concerned with being pretty or otherwise and a significant number who state that both are how others perceive you. Some good responses discussed how a young man's self concept might be affected by unemployment while others made some useful points but did not progress to the effect on self concept. Too many candidates still state that there will be a change or effect but fail to say what the effect will be.

The final part asked candidates to consider the advantages and disadvantages of returning to full-time education. Some excellent responses were seen although there is a tendency to expect double credit for reverse answers such as "can make new friends" and "may not make new friends" which does not happen. Bullying because he was older was a frequent offering and liking or disliking the course without a reason is fairly superficial.

Question 2

Naming a life stage and providing three of its physical features were straightforward for able candidates. Those more borderline still insist on providing unacceptable responses concerned with hair, wrinkles and brittle bones for example resulting in relatively easy marks not being attributed. Candidates offering these responses tended also to stereotype the 68 year old male into widower-hood, idleness and isolation however, this question was usually well answered. A paid supervisor was experiencing a difficult divorce and the menopause and candidates were required to say how the former was affecting her advisory work and to define the latter. Many answers were quite insightful although not all remembered to continue through to the effect on her work. The definition of the menopause was both pleasing and but also badly done. A large number of candidates gained both marks here but there were too many left blank and others who could only mention "hot flushes" or stated that it was an illness or a disease.

Question 3

Promoting health once again provided the least credit with many candidates apparently having a superficial grasp of the principles. The previous year and indeed again this year had provided a real-life example of health promotion that all candidates had experienced, namely the H1N1 influenza outbreak more commonly known as “swine ‘flu”. This was an unusual type of influenza affecting certain groups of the population more than others. This was known by at least half the candidates. Reasons given for the health promotion campaign were muddled and often just repeated. Candidates were asked about the models/approaches used by the Government/Department of Health in the campaign. Most candidates gave all three and appeared to believe that the public could be forced to have vaccinations. Few understood about the anti-viral medication although this was widely publicised in educational environments but most could quote the slogan advertised on national TV. Weaker candidates lost marks by not linking the little information to any models. The Government is ultimately responsible for the health of the population and candidates were asked to give a critical analysis of the statement given and reach a conclusion. Candidates did not seem to have been prepared to answer this type of evaluative question and responses were very weak. More papers were left blank on this question than on the rest of the questions put together. Candidates did not seem prepared to think independently or use their initiative. The question could have been treated both narrowly and broadly; wider issues could have been used as examples or the response could have simply covered “swine ‘flu”. Only a few candidates mentioned that every home in the country had received leaflets raising awareness about the infection and daily newscasts gave up-to-date figures on infection statistics which was almost unprecedented. In every series and every question on promoting health and well-being, a significant number of candidates bring in the media usually without relevance, so the last question was intended to allow candidates to tell us more. Alas, very few knew any more than a list of different types of media and the slogan attributable to “swine ‘flu”; the message can reach a wide audience was about the only point made. A few “thinking” candidates were able to discuss how media often over-exaggerate or publish sensational headlines which can cause panic.

Overall, it is pleasing to see that the standard of work has improved but candidates do need practice in writing extended answers and critical thinking skills.

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