

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCE in Health &
Social Care (6938/01)

Unit 1: Human Growth and
Development

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General Introduction

The external assessment consisted of three questions matching the three areas of the specification. There were less unattempted questions this summer than in previous series indicating that the paper was accessible to candidates with a variety of skills and abilities, however the quality of the responses was a little weaker. Examiners reported that handwriting is a major problem and the quality of written communication has not improved. Practice in handwriting past papers may highlight these issues for learners who need to be aware that if the response cannot be read then it cannot be marked. Some centres still enter students who are not ready for external assessment due to a lack of knowledge, skills or understanding and who inevitably, will be disappointed with the outcome.

Candidates should be encouraged to use appropriate vocabulary when answering questions and avoid repetition just to fill a space. Repetition occurred often with different wording particularly in the extended questions; candidates should understand that points can only be credited once. The use of PIES to answer extended answer questions resulted in many candidates failing to answer the question due to going off track and many candidates insisted on giving the positive and negative viewpoints when the question stem clearly did not require them to do so.

The question stem does not need to be repeated and doing so takes precious examination time that many candidates cannot afford so tutors should discourage this practice when revising.

One emerging trend when asked for say 3 differences as in 1d, is to place "one half" of a difference as one item and the other half as another. This was sympathetically credited this year but will not be in future.

For example:

Gross motor skills are using large muscles.

Fine motor skills use small muscles.

Instead of:

Gross motor skills use large muscles whereas fine motor skills use small muscles.

Certain phrases were used repeatedly this year, "role strain" and "weakened immune system" were trotted out for a number of answers but only one or two were appropriate.

Candidates still seem to expect the same questions as last year and try to turn the question given into one they have practiced.

Candidates do not read questions thoroughly and produce very slapdash responses – more thinking is required; even those who construct mini-plans or highlight key words in the question stem omit commands such as compare and evaluate.

Question 1

1ai. Patric was over 2 years which put him firmly in Early Childhood (2-8years, page 10 of the specification). Only a minority were correct as most just wrote "childhood" which is not the name of the life stage.

1a.ii. A large number of candidates thought that this concerned social skills, however most candidates achieved full marks.

1b. This question was not answered well although some marks were achieved. Candidates did not answer the question asked and mainly defined bonding and attachment. Many thought just spending time was bonding and often related bonding to older children and adolescent friendships.

1c. Some marks were achieved but few candidates gained full marks. Foster carers (or care homes!) were mentioned but most did not follow this through and the same sex relationship or no father was often used incorrectly as the reason why bonding might be delayed.

1d. As mentioned previously, candidates tended to "split" a difference on two lines; this recent practice should be discouraged. Generally as a result of positive marking, candidates gained 5-6 marks.

1e Physical and emotional effects of the menopause are well known although the ubiquitous stress and loss of sex drive (can be increased for some) was not accepted.

1f Candidates used PIES to successfully respond to this question; candidates who insisted in discussing Ros's job and financial possibilities were less prosperous as they had failed to read the question accurately.

Question 2

2ai A large number of candidates transposed the correct answers to this question. When knowledge is superficial, candidates associate nature with the environment and nurture with caring and parents.

2aii This question provided an opportunity for candidates to choose a lifestyle factor and explain its effect on an individual's health. Overall, the result was disappointing and few candidates achieved full marks; several candidates could not provide the initial impetus of a lifestyle factor and offered social factors or physiological changes such as puberty. Smoking was a common choice but many effects provided were cosmetic such as yellow nails and bad breath.

2b A popular question with candidates achieving 3-4 marks through explaining the different ways that Kim's social development might be affected but very few could empathise with a change in job role.

2c Candidates generally were well aware of the effects of stress on Ros's health and well-being although some who did not read the question accurately insisted on writing about the reasons for her stress and what she could do about it.

2d Thankfully fewer candidates were applying PIES to each and every question and although perhaps a more difficult question to answer, candidates usually achieved level 2 with their examination. In the usual way, some candidates lost marks because they did not apply their understanding to Kim and Ros's relationship. It should be noted that neither the question nor the mark scheme forms any judgement regarding the identification of Kim or Ros with any of the background features although candidates tended to do this in their answers. No marks were lost or gained for doing so; the examiners were concerned only with possible effects on relationships.

Question 3

This question mainly concerned a government-sponsored health promotion campaign associated with a common childhood infection against which all children are immunised. Candidates did not recognise the childhood infection and did not either read the question accurately or reason logically.

3ai The fact that so many candidates would think that the UK government would give pregnant women an immunising injection if they were only raising awareness is quite shocking. Many answers were sloppy in referring to "people" or "them" and large numbers thought that the vaccine gave pregnant mothers whooping cough or caused the deaths of the infants under routine vaccination age. Most candidates did not absorb the significance of the dates given in the table and appreciate that the increase in the number of cases and the infant deaths had occurred **before** this new temporary programme. Quite clearly immunisation is not understood despite its importance in relation to the biomedical model.

3aii Terminology was again weak and candidates must use specialist vocabulary particularly when referring to life stages. The target group was the unborn infant or foetus as the pregnant mother should have had the routine childhood immunisation and therefore be protected. The particular period of the pregnancy was chosen as the foetus is fully formed at this stage and unlikely to be affected by the immunisation but crucially is capable of forming antibodies against the disease. These will protect the neonate until the age of routine immunisation is reached. In other words, it was closing the gap in protection which had led to the deaths of nine infants under routine immunisation age. The reasoning was required not the details. Despite personal experience for most candidates there was no appreciation that the pregnant mother would be having a small injection into her arm not abdomen.

3aiii Surprisingly relatively low numbers of candidates achieved the mark here as most candidates gave "weak immune system" without thinking logically that this is precisely the period when routine immunisations are given and this would be pointless if the system did not respond effectively. The correct answer was to provide another opportunity for anyone who missed their routine immunisation and was therefore still vulnerable.

3b Most candidates seem to think that whooping cough was a disease caused by pollution or dust in factories but had no understanding that if this was so there would not be immunisation against the disease. A lack of knowledge and understanding of immunisation prevented many marks being gained.

3c Candidates were directed to the information given by the stem of the question but few used or understood the data provided. Many candidates gave as a weakness the specific dates of pregnant women and the omission of service users in other life stages. They totally missed the points that the majority of the population would be protected by routine immunisation (even though this was mentioned) and that whooping cough was generally a disease of childhood and adolescence. Another weakness was the temporary nature of the programme although this was because the numbers of cases had increased rapidly and such infections tend to be irregular and seasonal. Many candidates stated that it was a biomedical model and proceeded to give advantages and disadvantages of the model ignoring any information given.

3d This was a reasonably standard question asking for a comparison between two health promotion models and not requiring advantages and disadvantages which candidates were anxious to provide. A minority of candidates made a very good attempt and were credited well as a result. However, the main body described one model and then the other reaching a maximum of 3 marks. Students do not seem to be aware that a comparison might be the societal model may be punishable due to contravening the laws but the biomedical model is not. A true comparison matches the subjects as like with like.

Overall, this year's cohort seemed to be about the same as the previous year in regard to levels of knowledge and understanding. Reading and understanding the question correctly remains a major issue. They exhibited a less than logical approach to formulating responses, often used careless terminology and lacked examination technique. However a minority of candidates produced excellent responses after carefully considering the questions asked and demonstrated a depth of knowledge and understanding of human growth and development.

Grade Boundaries

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