



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Psychology

41802

(Specification 4180)

Unit 2: Understanding Other People

Report on the Examination

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Unit 2 Understanding Other People (41802)

General comments

This was the first Unit 2 examination under the new specification. Most candidates attempted every item and there were not many blank responses aside from a small number of items highlighted below. However, the sections that candidates found more difficult were Section D Aggression, as it contained a number of questions which required longer answers, and Section E Research methods. Nevertheless, the paper seemed to discriminate well and the percentage of candidates achieving each grade is comparable to Unit 1 and expectations for this unit.

It appears that many of the questions and skill requirements that posed candidates difficulty in Unit 1 last year had obviously been addressed by centres and candidate performance was good in many areas. In particular, although candidates still found questions relating to 'implications' of research studies very challenging, the statistics from this year show that there has been an improvement in performance in this area.

Answers to all multiple-choice type questions were good to excellent although on occasions when candidates changed their minds they used arrows or 'ticked' numerous answers. Candidates are reminded that due to the nature of the marking system, answers must be written in the correct place and any changes or crossing out should leave a clear indication of the answer.

Section E Research Methods appeared to flag up areas of misunderstanding or lack of knowledge in many students. For example, very few students were able to outline accurately what is meant by an opportunity sample. Centres are encouraged to regard research methods as a priority area when developing schemes of work and student activities now that coursework is no longer a requirement of the specification.

Comments relating to candidates' performance on specific sections can be found below. Areas of both strength and weakness are highlighted and each section has been broken down to each item to help with clarity. It is hoped that these comments will help to inform the teaching of this unit in future.

Section A Learning

Question 1

- (a) Candidates tended to do extremely well here, gaining the full marks. However, a few common errors were vague comments such as 'something that is learnt / taught' or answers that were muddled with memory information.
- (d) (i) Explanations of systematic desensitisation (SD) were clear from the majority of candidates, suggesting that the concepts were well understood. A small minority of students simply bullet pointed a hierarchy without reference to relaxation or other key factors of SD. Where candidates made no reference to relaxation or equivalent, they were unable to gain full marks.

- (d) (ii) Again candidates were able to gain most if not all marks here in the majority of cases with well expressed evaluation. However, some common errors included simply restating the processes involved in the treatment with no evaluative content. It was also apparent that a number of students mixed the treatment with flooding and simply evaluated that procedure.
- (e) This was not as well expressed as the evaluation of SD which is perhaps due to the question asking specifically for ethical implications. Few candidates achieved full marks due to a lack of explanation or elaboration but most understood the nature of ethical implications. Right to withdraw and protection from harm were the most common issues and were explained successfully. Some mentioned it may make James more scared or fearful for longer – although this is not creditworthy.

Section B Social influence

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates defined the term correctly and a variety of ways was used such as examples of specific situations or different reasons behind conforming behaviour. However, a few muddled this with obedience or bystander behaviour.
- (d) Candidates showed sound knowledge of a wide variety of studies although Milgram was the common choice, with Bickman and Hofling also popular. Many additional sheets were used here and this was due to nearly all students focussing heavily on the method above all else. Many students outlined the method in such detail that they had only covered that section in the allocated space which often meant that results, conclusions or evaluation suffered as they were sometimes missed out or rushed. It may be that candidates simply did not read the question in detail.
- Many candidates spent time outlining the aim which was not required and in some cases far more care was taken on this section than on results or conclusions which were creditworthy.
- Students should be advised not to use bullet points or headings when answering the 6-mark questions as these questions will assess candidates on their ability to use good English, organise information clearly and use specialist vocabulary where appropriate. If they do, they will not be able to enter the top band of marks and the maximum they could earn for their answers would be 4 marks.
- (e) Responses to this question were mixed. Many candidates confused the idea of application with implication. Others made a vague attempt and were awarded one mark. Examples were used but not explained particularly well, although those using the challenger space shuttle example typically did so effectively.
- Despite the improvement in the approaches taken by candidates to questions on implications, such questions still pose difficulties for candidates. As such, the mark scheme for this question contains a number of possible answers included.

Section C Sex and gender

Question 3

- (b) Most students were able to do this effectively and accurately. A minority of candidates defined the terms the wrong way round and could not gain marks or they missed one term out. Many candidates gave a much more detailed answer than required for the two marks. Again, the mark scheme gives a concise but full answer.
- (c) (i) Candidates showed sound knowledge of social learning theory (SLT) and gained full marks for some reasonable understanding. Marks were typically lost mainly when candidates muddled the SLT and psychodynamic theory.
- (c) (ii) Candidates struggled with this question and the evaluation was often poorly done. Many simply restated what SLT is or were confused and offered an outline of 'Freud's theory' with no element of comparison. Some candidates went on to outline what gender development itself actually means. There were a number of blank answers for this question.

Section D Aggression

In general, candidates found this whole section rather difficult and were not able to apply their knowledge and understanding effectively.

Question 4

- (b) (i) Description of the study was typically reasonably well done but there was evidence of some muddling of different studies and sometimes mixing different variations of Bandura's research. Also many candidates did not include anything about the different conditions within the study they were describing, limiting the credit that they could receive on this item. For example, in the Barker study they failed to mention the group who were not kept waiting. Studies from a number of other areas were sometimes used, eg social influence/obedience, with little, if any, relevance. Young's study on testosterone and monkeys was most effectively done.
- (b) (ii) Candidates tended to struggle with this; typically only gaining 1 or 2 marks. Many used very vague or generic comments such as 'The study lacks ecological validity' or 'It was unethical' and the lack of elaboration prevented them from gaining marks. The comments need to be supported or made specifically relevant to the study outlined. For example; 'The study lacks ecological validity because it was conducted in a lab so it is not the same as a real life experience' would be awarded 2 marks. Other irrelevant comments or simply repeating the conclusions of studies from 4(b)(i) were not creditworthy.

- (c) This 6-mark question was challenging and not answered as well as other questions. However the full range of marks was awarded. Significant numbers of candidates either left this item blank or described a different explanation of aggression. A similar issue to question 2(d) occurred with some candidates focusing heavily on description and writing above and beyond the requirements but at the expense of evaluation. When evaluation was attempted, it was often muddled with many presenting descriptive comments about alternative theories but with no element of evaluative comparison.

Section E Research methods

Candidates showed lots of weaknesses when answering questions about research methods. Some of the problems seemed to develop from candidates not paying close attention to the stem information. For example, many failed to acknowledge that the researcher observed alone and in 5(d)(ii) many suggested that 'her and her friends may get different results'.

- (a) As suggested earlier, a number of candidates were unable to outline accurately what the term meant with very few failing to mention the target population or 'those who fit the criteria'. A significant number simply said to choose randomly.
- (b) Again candidates appeared to confuse sampling methods. Many stated 'It is random so everyone has equal chance of being picked' or inaccurate comments such as 'Makes it a fair test' or 'Results are accurate'. Simply stating that 'it is a quick method' would gain the mark but a number of candidates went on to write two or three lines.
- (c) Most candidates were able to choose a suitable method, although again many produced a very detailed description which was not required.
- (d) (i) A large proportion of candidates struggled with this question, and it appeared that many were unsure of what categories of behaviour actually are, there were many blank spaces and/or zero marks. Many were extremely vague such as 'very aggressive, quite aggressive, not aggressive' or 'verbal / physical'. Many appeared to misunderstand the term and give irrelevant answers.
- (d) (ii) This was generally answered reasonably, although very few candidates achieved the full marks as many wrote 'unequal amount of girls and boys', 'lab experiments so lacks eco validity' or the same thing twice just in slightly different ways. It appeared that the key mistake was that candidates would give three problems with the study itself rather than the process of observation.
- (e) (i) This was generally well done although there were few succinct answers. Some would describe in detail the ethical issue although a significant number of candidates did not focus on ethics. Many put 'bias', 'uneven numbers' or 'sampling' etc. Others suggested 'making them aggressive' – but this is not creditworthy in the context of the study.

- (e) (ii) This question was answered fairly well, although the majority of candidates achieved one mark due to a lack of clarity or elaboration. When parental consent was chosen as the issue, this was well done.
- (f) This question was not particularly well done although most candidates were able to pick up two marks. There were some vague answers such as 'it is time consuming'. The disadvantage was tackled more effectively than the advantage.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website: <http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html>

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