



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2012**

**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 second Unit 2 examination under the new specification. Most students made an attempt to answer each item and so few blank responses were found, apart from a small number of items highlighted through this report. The sections that students found more difficult were Section D, Aggression and Section E, Research methods. Nevertheless, the paper seemed to discriminate well and the percentage of students achieving each grade is comparable to Unit 1 and to expectations for this unit. The mean mark has risen slightly but this is expected given that schools and colleges have access to reports and mark schemes from last year as well as further support offered by AQA. This was reflected in the students being more able to engage with the stimulus material throughout the paper, showing a development in both AO2 and AO3 skills. In particular, although they still found questions relating to ‘implications’ of research studies very challenging, the statistics from this year show that there has been a clear improvement in performance in this area.

Answers to multiple-choice type questions were good to excellent on the whole. However, question 3(e) posed difficulty for students, with many assuming that there must be an answer for each theory. The stronger students were able to answer purely on the merits of the scenarios presented.

Section E, as in Unit 1, is based on Research Methods and is worth 25% of the marks available for the paper. This section again appeared to highlight areas of misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of many students. For example, the question relating to sampling was typically poorly done, with students unable to identify the target population and/or the method of selection. It was most commonly muddled with random sampling and few students achieved full marks. This section carries the most marks and schools and colleges are encouraged to regard research methods as a priority area when developing schemes of work and student activities.

It may be helpful to reiterate a couple of general points about question and answer booklets. Firstly, some students still continued their answers in different places within their script without making it clear that they had done so. Students should understand that if they run out of space for an answer then they must continue on an additional sheet. Examiners can only view the clip which includes the question and its designated lines, so extra writing outside the allotted space may be missed. The second point relates to the use of additional sheets. Students should understand that the same sheet can be used for any number of extra responses and they do not need a sheet per response.

Comments relating to students’ performances on specific sections can be found below. Areas of both strengths and weakness are highlighted and it is hoped that these comments will help to inform the teaching of this unit in future examinations.

### ***Section A Learning***

#### **Question 1**

- (a) Students tended to be able to state that a phobia is a fear. However, many were unable to highlight the irrational/disproportional nature of the fear; ‘extreme fear’ is not the same as irrational fear. Sometimes students simply elaborated with comments such as: ‘for example spiders’ and as such did not gain full marks.

- (c) Most students were able to identify an advantage and a disadvantage which meant they achieved two of the marks with little difficulty. Many, however, were unable to gain full marks mainly because they struggled to elaborate effectively on the advantage thereby achieving 3 out of 4 marks.
- (f) Students had difficulty trying to distinguish between the two concepts and many got them the wrong way round. Punishment was frequently described in vague terms such as 'being punished for something' or 'having something taken away'. Negative reinforcement was confused with positive and vicarious reinforcement at times.

## **Section B Social Influence**

### **Question 2**

- (a) Most students were able to explain accurately the term obedience and with enough elaboration to gain full marks. One common mistake, however, was writing 'to obey orders' or providing no reference to an authority figure which limited the number of marks earned.
- (b) Students showed sound knowledge of a variety of studies, although Sherif and Asch were the common choices. As last year, there were a number of students who spent too much of their time outlining a very detailed method. This was a particular problem in descriptions of the work of Asch. Many students outlined the method in such detail that they had only covered that element in the allocated space, which often meant that results, conclusions or evaluation suffered – being rushed or, in some cases, missed out altogether. Evaluation was missing in fewer answers than last year but there was still a significant number who only described the study, limiting their answer to a maximum of 3 marks.

Many students spent time outlining the aim, which was not required, and in some cases far more care was taken reporting this element than on results or conclusions, which were creditworthy. The conclusion was typically the weakest part of the answer.

For evaluation, a number of students stated: 'they did not say the number/gender/age/culture of the participants, so we can't generalise.' In fact, these students simply have not read the published article and therefore are making assumptions that such detail is not available. This type of invented, evaluation point is not creditworthy. There were a number of students who did not attempt the question at all, or muddled it with bystander behaviour, social loafing or obedience.

Some did not answer in continuous prose, as required. Unless the response is in continuous prose, the maximum that can be earned for the answer is 4 marks.

- (d) The majority of answers did not gain full marks, with some students muddling social loafing with other areas such as bystander behaviour, obedience and conformity whilst others simply did not attempt an answer. Many achieved 1 mark for a simple or vague answer such as, 'We know people put less effort in groups' with no comparison, practical aspect or elaboration.
- (g) Most students achieved two marks as there is a broad range of possible answers. Some students went into far more detail than needed, as they simply had to identify the factors. Some produced 3-4 lines for each factor. Mistakes such as identifying factors affecting conformity were rare.

### **Section C *Sex and Gender***

#### **Question 3**

- (a) Most students were able to outline gender identity rather than sex identity. However, some were unable to elaborate effectively to gain the second mark. Some students were confused and outlined sex identity rather than gender identity but more muddled it with gender disturbance.

Stronger students included the idea of masculinity/femininity to elaborate their answers.

- (c) (i) Gender schema theory is often characterised as an abstract theory that is difficult to contextualise. As such, answers for this question exceeded expectations and were often accurate and demonstrated good grasp of the key points underlying the theory.

Many students were able to gain at least two marks. Most conveyed the concept of schemas as 'mental building blocks of knowledge' and also that these, 'change over time.' Most referred effectively to the letter in their answer too and this ability to engage with the stimulus material indicating an improvement in performance in comparison with last year.

The biggest issue was that a significant number of students focused solely on Kohlberg's stage theory of gender development presenting great detail and accuracy. However, these are not the same theory and students are expected to distinguish between these explanations. Those who related the gender constancy stage to the letter and Charlie did gain partial credit.

- (c) (ii) This question posed significant problems for students and many earned no marks at all for their answers.

Many did not focus on evaluation of the theory and muddled gender schema theory with psychodynamic saying it couldn't be tested as it was unconscious, regardless of their answer to 3(c)(i).

A key issue was that many students appeared to have misunderstood both the theory and the fact that the question required evaluation of the theory. Instead, they focused on saying why it was bad to have stereotypes or that society should be equal. Some students commented that 'it is not equal and it should be', 'it may cause people to discriminate', 'men can now do female jobs, which disproves the theory'. Others said that it is unrepresentative, or it discriminates against some children or that it was time consuming.

- (d) Typically very well done, the majority of students were able to outline the Oedipus complex clearly and with accuracy and show how it related to Jacob.

## **Section D Aggression**

### **Question 4**

- (a) Students showed sound knowledge of social learning theory and gained full marks. Students typically gained at least two marks, which was usually for reference to observation and imitation, with many able to gain the third mark for referring to the process of vicarious reinforcement or role models. Most were able to engage with the stimulus material effectively. Marks were lost mainly when students muddled Social Learning Theory (SLT) with psychodynamic theory.

- (b) (i) There were some excellent answers here, with many achieving full marks. Those who gave the best answers used Young et al's study of testosterone and monkeys or Raine's study of murderers and were able to outline each part of the study and pick out one distinct criticism. Barker's study of frustration was well done too, although there was sometimes confusion about the conditions or no acknowledgment of a second group who were not kept waiting. Typically, Bandura was the most poorly described study. This is possibly due to the numerous variations available. Students struggle to describe each section accurately, often spending far too long on the method and rushing description of the results/conclusion. Many muddled two or more variations of the study or simply missed out the essential conditions, so no comparison was evident in the description.

Studies from a number of other areas were sometimes used, eg social influence/obedience with little, if any, relevance.

- (b) (ii) Students tended to struggle with this question and some used very vague or generic comments such as, 'the study lacks ecological validity' or 'it was unethical' without elaboration to support their assertion. For Bandura, they often criticised the investigation by saying it was only conducted using children and couldn't be generalised to adults. However, as it is a study of

development and only attempted to explain children's development, this is not relevant as a criticism for the study.

- (c) There was a real mix of answers to this question with most students choosing psychodynamic or biological ways and describing these reasonably well. Some attempted SLT but appeared to muddle the answer with reference to development. Students often described more than one way, such as drugs and psychosurgery, so marks were awarded for the best one. This was also the case with students outlining ego defence mechanisms and catharsis. AO1 and AO3 skills were well matched showing that students had improved on performance in the 2011 exam series in this respect.

A few candidates missed earning marks as they outlined a study, eg Baron, rather than a method, for reducing aggression.

## **Section E Research Methods**

### **Question 5**

Students showed areas of weakness when answering questions about research methods. In particular, students were unable to explain sampling. Some of the problems here could be due to timing or tiredness as this is the final section in the paper. However, it should be noted that the performance in this section has slightly improved since 2011.

- (a) Many candidates were able to gain 3 marks for an advantage and disadvantage. However, many were unable to elaborate the advantage so the final mark eluded them. Many simply said that it was 'quick and easy' and no more. Students appeared more able to give an elaborated disadvantage.
- (b) Students were typically able to say what an open question is, but they were more likely to struggle with closed questions, with many students saying that closed questions are only Yes/No rather than being a fixed set of appropriate responses.
- (d) Systematic sampling was the most poorly answered question on the paper. Many earned no marks, as they muddled it with random, opportunity and sometimes stratified sampling. Many who did refer to systematic in their answers only achieved 1 mark as they did not relate this to the target population in the stem and simply stated 'you pick the nth person from a list' – the generic response.
- (e) (i) and (ii)

Many students were able to state, or explain, a legitimate issue and then a relevant way to deal with it. However, a large number muddled ethics and methodological problems such as sampling, research method, ecological validity and generalisability. Other students named one issue but then explained how to deal with another one.

Some said that 'they might not get the right result' or 'the children may not play video games' or 'there was not an equal number of boys and girls.' These were not creditworthy answers.

As last year, many produced more detail than needed for the issue itself; simple identification is all that was required in part (i).

**(f) and (g)** Correlations were well done with nearly all recognising that it was a positive correlation. Many were able to justify their answer too. However, some were too generic/vague eg 'the line goes up', 'it is a positive relationship' or 'IV and DV are linked' – which is an odd comment for an investigation that is not an experiment.

**(i)** This was reasonably done with students being able to outline the problems of correlations relating to cause and effect and variables other than the two studied.

Some candidates, however, wrote that there might be an anomaly or that it may not show a correlation. Others gave vague answers such as it is time consuming or it may not be representative.

**(j)** Typically well done and most answers focused on either natural behaviour if the participant is not aware or behaviour changing due to being watched. Most students were able to earn 2 marks.

Some students gave both an advantage and disadvantage, which was not required.

## Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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