

GCSE PSYCHOLOGY

41801 – Making Sense of Other People
Report on the Examination

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Unit 1: Making Sense of Other People

General comments

The purpose of this report is to draw the attention of teachers to any issues of common concern that have arisen with students' answers in Unit 1 in 2013 and, where possible, to give advice on how students' performances could be improved.

The main objective of this report is to give teachers a further insight into the knowledge and skills which the question paper was designed to test.

This was the fourth Unit 1 examination under this specification and students seemed to find it slightly more challenging than the 2012 paper. Schools/colleges have responded well to lessons learned from previous years to prepare students for this examination. The paper seemed to discriminate well, providing a good spread of marks.

Answers to all multiple-choice type questions were good to excellent.

Despite reminders in previous examiners' reports, some students still persisted in answering questions outside the spaces provided in the question paper and did not indicate where the rest of their answers could be found if they did run out of space. Students must be instructed to give a clear indication of where the rest of their answer can be found. The only place where answers should be continued is on the additional sheets provided and not at the bottom of pages in the booklet itself. Examiners have reported seeing arrows disappearing off the page to parts of the booklet where the answers should not be written. Often, sentences finished abruptly, with no indication of where the rest of the answer was written. Asterisks were used in some cases, but these are not helpful without a written indication of where to look.

Once again this year, students' knowledge of Research Methods provided serious cause for concern. Section E carries 25% of the marks available for this unit as well as for the whole GCSE qualification. Therefore, schools are encouraged to provide as much opportunity as possible for students to develop their research methods skills in each topic area.

Another specific issue that has arisen from this paper as a whole is that of 'focused evaluation'. This is an area for development in schemes of work. Students must avoid falling into the 'generic only' trap. Some of the following comments address this issue.

Comments relating to students' performances on specific sections can be found below. It is hoped that these comments will help to inform schemes of work for this unit.

Section A Memory**Question 01 (b)**

Many students did understand how recall might be affected by interference. However, a large number confused interference with other explanations of memory. Some referred to the capacity of short-term memory and this did not gain marks.

Question 01 (c) (i)

A large number of students were able to describe levels of processing study very well, but many gave answers that were judged as unclear. The most common problem was the way that results were reported. Although figures need not be given here, the direction of the outcome must be clear and certainly the answer must contain an indication of what was being measured. Conclusions were sometimes weak.

Question 01 (c) (ii)

Students often included the term 'lacks ecological validity' in their answers, hoping to gain a mark. This will not earn marks unless it is made clear what is meant by this term. In this item, students were asked to define 'lack of ecological validity'.

It was interesting to see that over one third of students could not define the term correctly. However students who could answer the question, struggled to explain how it might be an issue with the study described and went on to provide a totally generic response.

This limited the number of marks that could be awarded. The answer must point to some feature of the study previously described to receive full credit.

Section B Non-verbal communication**Question 02 (a)**

This was well answered by the majority of students, although some simply defined the terms rather than explaining the difference between them. Students should be advised to avoid using the word 'communicate' when explaining communication.

Question 02 (b) (ii)

This was very well answered. The majority of students understood the NVC issues raised by the study described.

Question 02 (c)

This was the first of the two 6 mark QWC items in the unit and many students answered it well. A cue was provided in the question '(for example, tone of voice)' which seemed to help with the choice of study. It must be noted though, that this is not an indication that cues like this will always be provided in future. There were variations in the accuracy of the studies described and it appeared that some descriptions were of classroom activities based on studies. A significant

number referred to participants working in pairs, saying things to each other in different tones of voice. Many of these descriptions received some credit but it should be noted that full marks can only be awarded for accurate descriptions of studies, most of which have involved face-to-face conversations. If the study described clearly matched what we know to be true of studies of paralinguistics, then full credit was given. Students who resorted to generic only evaluations were limited in the number of AO3 marks that they could earn. For full credit here, a direct unambiguous reference to the study described must be part of the evaluation.

Section C: Development of personality

Question 03 (b)

Many students knew that temperament is the genetic component of personality. Sometimes however, the reference to the article was not sufficient to earn the second mark. The important issue here was that Ruth's Dad said she was demanding, 'just like my Mum'. This was the inherited characteristic suggestion that needed to be included in the reference to the article for the second mark. A number of students simply said that Ruth was demanding, which was not sufficient to earn the mark.

Question 03 (c) (ii)

Despite being asked for criticisms other than lack of ecological validity, a significant number of students wrote about this anyway, thereby earning no marks. The problem of generic only criticisms occurred here too. Students must point to something that appeared in their description of the study as a basis for their criticism(s).

Section D Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination

Question 04 (a)

This was by far the best answered item in Unit 1. Students could clearly identify three ways in which the advertisement showed discrimination.

Question 04 (c)

This was the second six mark QWC item and students found it more challenging than the first. Although the question required description and evaluation of an 'explanation' of prejudice, the majority of students described and evaluated a 'study' of prejudice. This severely limited the number of marks that could be earned. If students referred to a study as evidence for their explanation, one mark was available for this. A conclusion to the study can form part of the explanation and an additional mark could be earned for this too. However, an evaluation focused totally on the study described could only be awarded one mark. This is why the vast majority of students earned three or fewer marks for their answers to this item. Students must not assume that the 6 mark questions will always require the description and evaluation of a study. The mark scheme provides useful guidance for teachers in relation to Adorno's explanation of prejudice and should help to inform schemes of work about this content.

Question 04 (d)

A very large number of students experienced similar problems with this item as they did with 4(c) above. Instead of evaluating 'ways' of reducing prejudice, which is what the question required, they evaluated 'studies' of prejudice. This seriously reduced the number of marks that could be earned. The specification for this part of the course specifically requires evaluation of 'ways' of reducing prejudice and discrimination. More evidence of 'generic only' evaluations appeared here too.

Section E Research methods**Question 05 (a)**

The process of randomisation clearly confused many students. Many wrote about random allocation of participants. Others made vague reference to random number generators, without going into any detail about how this could be achieved with the list of words. Still others suggested alternative ways of producing a word order, such as alphabetical.

Question 5 (b) (i)

It was worrying to see that one third of students could not recognise the correct sampling method used in the study that was described.

Question 05 (b) (ii)

With only one third of students correctly identifying an advantage and a limitation of sampling methods, this is clearly an area for further development. Answers tended to be very brief and vague. Even though only one mark was available for each element, the answer had to be clear to gain credit.

Question 05 (c)

Hypothesis wording continues to be poor. The biggest problem again this year was the lack of an operational term, limiting the marks available to a maximum of 1. The most common error in this respect was the use of the term 'better'. Whilst this term can appear in the aim, it must be operationalised for the hypothesis statement.

Question 05 (e) (ii)

The majority of students could not identify the dependent variable. There seems to be a clear link between this weakness and their inability to operationalise the hypothesis. These are closely related issues.

Question 05 (f)

Here, a large number of students confused standardised procedures with standardised instructions. These are two separate terms in the specification. Others wrote about being 'fair', which is a vague term that is not creditworthy.

Question 05 (g) (iii)

The vast majority of students correctly stated that the anomalous scores made the totals for the two conditions look the same. However, many then drifted away from this idea and wrote about mean scores, ranges and the hypothesis, earning only one mark in the process. The question clearly asked how the anomalous scores affected the totals and this is where the answer should have been focused for full marks

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

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Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion