

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 2014 and, where possible, to give advice on how students' performances could be improved.

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

This was the fifth Unit 1 examination under this specification. 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.

Some students still persist in answering questions outside the lined space provided in the question paper. There were several instances where students wrote part or complete answers in blank spaces below other items. Examples of this were found on page 9 where students outlined a criticism of Eysenck's type theory [3 (c)] below item 3 (d). Occasionally arrows were drawn, pointing to their answer. This does not help the marking process. The only place where answers should be continued is on the additional sheets provided and not in blank spaces in the booklet itself.

This year examiners witnessed some improvement in students' knowledge of Research Methods. However, two particular areas of weakness were found; issues relating to systematic sampling [5 (c)] and drawing conclusions [5 (f)]. More will be said about this later. Section E carries 25% of the marks available for the GCSE qualification. Therefore, schools and colleges are encouraged to provide as many opportunities as possible for students to develop their research methods skills in different topic areas.

Many schools and colleges responded well to advice given last year regarding 'focused evaluation'. Fewer students resorted to generic evaluations this year, which would limit the number of marks that can be earned to 1 out of 3 marks.

Three specific issues arose this year with the way students used the answer booklets and additional sheets. Schools and colleges need to be aware of this and to advise their students accordingly:

1. Many students wrote their answers using faint coloured ink; possibly light blue. Scripts are now marked online and these do not photocopy well, making some students' work virtually impossible to read, even with the online tools available. Students should be encouraged to write in black ink.
2. Some students' handwriting is so tiny, it is impossible to read online, even with the magnifying tools available. They should be encouraged to write larger and to ask for additional sheets, if necessary.

3. Many students this year did not identify items clearly on the additional sheets; for example, instead of writing '2 (c) (ii)', they wrote simply '2' or '2 c'. This often made matching additional sheet responses to script responses very difficult. Students should be encouraged to label additional sheet responses accurately.

On all three of the above issues, students are in danger of not earning the marks they may deserve, simply because their handwriting is impossible to read.

Comments relating to students' performance 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 could describe a study in which the reconstructive explanation of memory was investigated. The majority described Bartlett's study, with varying degrees of accuracy. Those who described studies for other explanations earned no marks. Some students described Loftus' study of eyewitness testimony. Most attempts at this did not earn marks unless they referred to the reconstructive nature of recalling events. Examiners noticed an improvement in the quality of evaluations this year. Many schools and colleges heeded advice given last year about 'generic' evaluations. However, there were still some students who resorted to generic only evaluations and they were limited in the number of AO3 marks that they could earn. For full credit, a direct unambiguous reference to the study described must be part of the evaluation to earn more than 1 AO3 mark.

Question 01 (c) (i)

This item was about application of knowledge and carried AO2 marks. It was clear that a large number of students knew the levels of processing explanation, but many merely described it, which is an AO1 skill. Therefore, they did not earn the marks available. They needed to say how they could put this knowledge into practice to earn the AO2 marks.

Question 01 (c) (ii)

This item required students to outline at least one criticism of the levels of processing explanation of memory. Students' performance here was disappointing; many criticised levels of processing studies rather than the explanation. They were unable to earn any marks for these answers unless they used the methodology or information gained from the study to criticise the explanation itself; for example, by saying that the explanation is based on the findings of studies in which participants learned lists of words. This does not reflect the type of learning that people normally do in their daily lives. Therefore, the explanation itself might be flawed.

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

This was a straightforward question but many students did not earn the mark. The crucial piece of information that was missing from many answers was that people have to look at each other's eyes at the same time for eye contact to happen. Answers that did not make that point clearly received no credit.

Question 02 (a) (ii)

This was the first time that this question style, offering 5 marks, has appeared in a Unit 1 paper and students handled it very well. The mark scheme allowed many routes to top marks and students took good advantage of this, with many earning 4 or 5 marks. However, the question clearly required the method and results of a study of eye contact. Therefore, those students who described a study of pupil dilation, in which participants looked at photographs rather than into another person's eyes could not earn marks for those answers. There was no eye contact involved in that study.

Question 02 (b)

The majority of students provided a good definition and article reference here. Most of those who failed to do so gave a good reference to the article but were unclear with their definition, thinking that paralinguistics included posture and other forms of body language.

Question 02 (c) (ii)

This is the first 5 mark question of this style to appear in a Unit 1 paper and, again, students handled it well. The mark scheme offered different ways to achieve 3 marks for the method, citing five possible points of description. Therefore descriptions were varied and good. Reporting of results tended to be straightforward and the majority of students earned 4 or 5 marks for their answers. Those who struggled were unclear about how personal space was measured. Students who described confederates sitting next to people on park benches to see how uncomfortable they appeared were less successful.

Section C: Development of personality**Question 03 (c)**

Many students found this item challenging and seemed not to understand Eysenck's type theory at all. They appeared to think that it placed people into discrete categories, rather than placing them on a continuous scale for each personality dimension. This led to invalid criticisms; for example, many said that not everybody would fit into a specific category. By definition, everybody can be placed somewhere along each dimension. Therefore, marks could not be earned for this type of criticism. Credit was given for criticisms of how Eysenck gathered data to support his theory and students who took this approach were more successful.

Question 03 (e) (i)

The majority of answers focused on biological causes of antisocial behaviour and these were the most successful responses, particularly the Raine study of abnormalities in the pre-frontal cortex. Many of these descriptions earned maximum marks. Unfortunately though, there was also some confusion over studies conducted by Raine. In particular, there was one study of aggression in which some of the participants were murderers. This was not a study of antisocial personality disorder (APD) and therefore it could not be awarded marks. Students who offered studies of situational causes of APD tended to be less accurate with their answers and sometimes muddled their descriptions with studies of temperament.

Question 03 (e) (ii)

It was noticed this year that students are becoming better at offering valid criticisms of studies. They have started to move away from making 'generic' statements that could apply to any study. This was noticed with this item. It is a positive development and it should be encouraged.

Section D Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination**Question 04 (b) (i)**

Many students earned only 1 mark here for making appropriate reference to the article. However, they failed to define 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' sufficiently well for the other 2 marks, simply saying they are groups that we belong to and groups that we don't belong to. This is too vague, as we can belong to a group without it being an in-group. For it to be an in-group, we have to believe that we have something in common with members of the group.

Question 04 (b) (ii)

This is the first time that a Unit 1 question has offered 4 marks for the description of the method of a study. For maximum marks, students were required to give details of three elements; the sample, the task and what was being measured. Several studies could have been used for this purpose but a large number of students wisely chose to describe the method used by Tajfel. However, many neglected to include all three elements, limiting the number of marks that could be earned to 2 out of the 4 marks available. Typically, there were reasonable descriptions of the sample and the task but no indication of what was being measured.

Question 04 (b) (iii)

Many students were good at describing the results following the method they described in question 4 (b) (ii), particularly those who used Levine's study. Many who described Tajfel's method earned only 1 out of 2 marks for correctly saying that the boys awarded pairings of points that created the biggest difference between the groups but they did not go on to say that it was not the pairings that would have given them the most points.

Question 04 (c)

Students found this item very challenging and it was poorly answered. Reference to this part of the specification is contained in the 2013 Examiner's Report following very similar responses which were received to a comparable item appearing in the question paper that year. This year, students were required to evaluate one way of reducing prejudice and discrimination. The majority of students either described a way of reducing prejudice or evaluated a study of prejudice. None of these types of answers earned any marks. It is recommended that more attention is given to this part of the specification when schemes of work are reviewed.

Section E Research methods**Question 05 (a) (i) and Question 05 (a) (ii)**

It was pleasing to see that many more students now understand the difference between the IV and the DV. They were successful at earning both marks. Only a small number reversed the terms and there were just a few who incorrectly identified the IV as 'the machine'.

Question 5 (b)

Hypothesis wording is now showing signs of improvement with more students earning 2 marks this year. This is encouraging. Still the biggest problem, however, 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 terms 'better' and 'more likely'. Others stated the aim of the study and this earned no marks.

Question 05 (c)

This is the first year that a 6 mark, QWC question, has appeared in Section E. Most students made a reasonable attempt at answering this item and it was encouraging to see that a large proportion knew the principles of systematic sampling. Therefore, the potential was there for these students to earn marks in the top band for their answers. Consequently, it was disappointing to see the majority of answers fell short of this potential as four main problems emerged.

The first problem was that a large number of students appeared to mis-read the question and therefore incorrectly identified the target population. The question clearly said that there were more than 100 workers in the plant. However, many students said that the target population was 100 workers. This was a careless error which meant that one of the available marks could not be earned. Students were very good at recognising that systematic sampling involves selecting every *n*th member of the target population. However, the second problem was that many did not follow this through to say 'until the sample of 10 has been reached', and this meant that another mark could not be earned. Many students could outline one limitation of systematic sampling quite well; the best answers focused on how representative the sample might or might not have been, raising issues of generalisation.

The third problem was that not many students went on to explain how the limitation might affect the study; for example, how this might lead to an incorrect conclusion being drawn. The fourth problem was that a large number of students said that a limitation of this sampling method is that it is time consuming. This statement did not earn any marks. This is not a limitation, at best it might be a disadvantage compared to opportunity sampling but it does not place a limitation on what the sampling method can achieve. Sampling methods; their advantages and limitations, is a recommended area for further development in schemes of work.

Question 05 (d)

The majority of students did not know about counterbalancing and earned no marks for this item. The minority who did understand the term gave clear and excellent answers. Those who earned 1 mark did not make it clear that half of the participants would take part in Condition A first and that half would take part in Condition B first. The half-half split was missing from their answers.

Question 05 (f)

It was rare to find a student who earned more than 2 out of the 4 marks available for this item. The main problem was that students did not draw any conclusions at all. They simply described the data with varying degrees of accuracy. They wrote about participants' performance in each condition and about the results from Condition A and Condition B. A conclusion goes beyond the results of the experiment; for example, 'people respond quicker to sounds than to visual information'. That statement would earn 1 mark as a conclusion. Students can then go on to explain the statement by referring to the data; for example, the mean times are lower for the ringing bell than for the flashing light'. That statement would then earn an additional mark to support the conclusion that was stated.

Simply repeating the numbers is not good enough and students must demonstrate that they understand the meaning of the statistics presented. It was worrying to find that more than a few students thought that 15 milliseconds was a 'better' mean time than 14 milliseconds. They did not realise that the smaller the number, the faster the reaction time. The question asked for more than one conclusion. Therefore, students were required to go through the same process with the ranges. Again, some students thought that a range of 10 milliseconds meant that the times for the ringing bell were slower because a range of 7 milliseconds for the flashing light was a smaller number. Data analysis, particularly in relation to time, is a recommended area for further development in schemes of work.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

Converting Marks into UMS marks

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

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