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GCSE

# PSYCHOLOGY

Unit 1 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 2015 and, where possible, to give advice on how their performances might 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 sixth Unit 1 examination for 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.

Students' knowledge of Research Methods did show some weaknesses this year, particularly in understanding the advantages and disadvantages of the experimental method, offering reasons for a chosen calculation and in understanding standardised procedures. Section E is worth 25% of the marks available for the GCSE qualification, therefore, schools/colleges are encouraged to provide as many opportunities as possible for students to develop their research methods skills. This can be aided by appropriate practical work and demonstrations in the various topic areas.

Many schools/colleges prepared their students well for questions that required application of knowledge (AO2 skill). This was seen especially in answers to the items in question 2. The number of marks allocated to AO1, AO2 and AO3 is the same every year (28, 28, 24) but the distribution of these assessment objective marks between questions will vary from year to year.

Some students still persist with writing their responses to questions outside the allocated lined space provided in the question paper. There were several instances where students wrote part or complete answers in blank spaces below other items. Occasionally, arrows were drawn, pointing to their answer. This was not helpful for examiners. The ONLY place where answers should be continued is on the additional sheets provided and NOT in blank spaces in the answer booklet itself.

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

1. Many students wrote their answers using faint coloured ink; possibly light blue, making some students' work very challenging to read even with the online tools available to examiners. Students should be encouraged to write in black ink.
2. Some students' handwriting was so tiny the answers were very challenging to read even with the magnifying tools available. They should be encouraged to write using sensibly sized letters 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.

Some students will disadvantage themselves simply because their handwriting is very difficult 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 1 (b)**

This item was well answered by a large number of students. Clearly, they were helped by the choice of explanations contained in the question and many chose well, particularly with the multi-store part of their answer. However, in both parts, some students failed to earn the second mark by not identifying the appropriate part of the conversation that related to the explanation. For example many simply described the multi-store model without any reference to 'repetition.'

### **Question 1 (c)**

There were many good answers to this item. The most popular choice of study, unsurprisingly, was Loftus. However, there were good descriptions of other eyewitness studies too. A large number of students earned 3 out of 4 marks for this item, mainly because their conclusions were weak, often not going beyond what was written in their aim. For example, weaker conclusions stated "leading questions affect eyewitness testimony." But the question is 'how' has it been affected? After reading/conducting the study, students should have been able to offer a strong conclusion; for example, "leading questions reduce the accuracy of eyewitness accounts." Some students earned no marks for describing the 'War of the Ghosts' study. This was not a study of eyewitness accounts.

### **Question 1 (d)**

This item required an explanation of why studies of eyewitness accounts lack ecological validity. Some students offered a definition of ecological validity. This was not required by the question and definitions earned no marks. Many students gave a generic explanation of why studies might lack ecological validity, limiting the number of marks they could earn. The question specifically asked about studies of eyewitness accounts and therefore, for maximum marks, answers needed to refer to what happened in those studies which might place their ecological validity in doubt; for example, while watching videos we are prepared for something to happen, which is unlikely to happen in real life situations.

**Section B Non-verbal communication****Question 2 (a)**

This was well answered. Most students could explain one function of eye contact. Those students who earned just 1 mark here did not use the relevant part of the conversation to support their answer. They should have referred to Hayley not knowing when it was her turn to speak. It was also quite common to see answers incorrectly stating that a function of eye contact is 'so that we know if someone is talking to us or someone else'.

**Question 2 (b) (ii)**

The majority of students knew a relevant study of the relationship between facial expressions and hemispheres of the brain. Most of these were based on the work of Sackeim. However, a significant number of descriptions were inaccurate, particularly when describing the procedure used to create pictures of faces. Students often found it difficult to describe the method clearly, often stating that 'two left sides of the face were stuck together' rather than giving the idea of a mirror image.

**Question 2 (c) (i)**

Students were better prepared for this type of item and many answered it very well. This type of question appeared for the first time last year and allows students to demonstrate how they can apply their knowledge (AO2). The majority of answers were based on the Lynn and Mynier (1993) study. Others chose to describe studies containing gestures other than having waitresses squatting to take orders. If these studies made psychological sense, full credit was given. Many responses which earned fewer than four marks neglected to say what would be measured in their study or only described one condition.

**Question 2 (c) (ii)**

There were some excellent ideas here. However, some students did not explain their answer, as required by the question, they simply listed several factors that may affect tipping behaviour, limiting the number of marks they could earn to 1 mark.

**Section C Development of personality****Question 3 (a)**

This is the first year that a full 6 AO1 mark question has appeared. The majority of students tackled this item very well, many earning top band marks. The weakest part of many students' answers related to how the named personality scale is used to measure personality. Many simply said that people answered a questionnaire, without adding any more detail; for example, how scores were plotted. Many students still used side headings rather than using continuous prose as required by the question. This prevented them from entering the top band of marks. Also, there were many incorrect references to the F scale, again preventing students from gaining top band marks.

**Question 3 (b)**

This was generally well answered but there were also many disappointing answers to this item. Many students stated that 'not everyone can fit on the scale'. This is incorrect. Everyone who answers the questionnaire will fit on the scale by definition. There also seemed to be a misunderstanding amongst many students that extraversion/introversion are distinct categories, rather than a continuum.

**Question 3 (c)**

This was the second QWC question which followed the more familiar 'describe and evaluate' format. Generally, students answered it well with focused evaluation. However, some chose to use an APD study rather than a temperament study. No marks were awarded for these answers. Again, many students answered with side headings rather than continuous prose and therefore could not be awarded top band marks.

**Section D Stereotyping, Prejudice and Discrimination****Question 4 (a)**

This was very well answered by a large majority of students, many of whom provided a textbook definition of stereotyping. Those who did not earn full marks failed to provide an appropriate reference to the article in their answers. In this case the reference should have related to the stereotype of foreigners reserving their sun beds before breakfast.

**Question 4 (b) (i)**

Students now seem to like items where they are required to use their knowledge of psychology to describe the possible outcome of a study where the method is presented in the stem; in this case item 4 (b)(i) was very well answered. Those who did not achieve full marks often did not refer to both conditions when outlining the results or gave further description of the results rather than providing a conclusion. A conclusion must go beyond simply re-stating results.

**Question 4 (b) (ii)**

Generally, this item was well answered but some students did not explain the ethical issues as the question required; they simply listed them. A list of ethical issues without any explanation earned a maximum of 1 mark.

**Question 4 (c)**

There were some excellent answers to this item. However, often there was some confusion between the jigsaw method and working together on a task with a common goal. Many students were unable to separate the two and therefore simply repeated one way of reducing prejudice using slightly different words. This limited the number of marks they could earn for their answers.

**Question 4 (d)**

Students still struggle with practical implications. Many outlined a practical application as opposed to an implication. It must be remembered that an implication does not involve doing something in the future to change behaviour, that would be an application. An implication is an understanding of behaviour in the real world based on what psychologists have discovered from their research; for example, 'we now know that people tend to be prejudiced against members of out-groups.'

**Section E Research Methods****Question 5 (a)**

Students' knowledge of research methods still gives cause for concern. This was the first time that this question had appeared in this form in the life of the specification. The majority of students found it difficult, especially outlining advantages of the experimental method. Some answered about specific experiments, rather than the experimental method itself. Many students vaguely outlined advantages such as 'they can be used to test a theory' or 'they bring extra knowledge on a subject' with little success. There was surprisingly little written about control of variables, cause and effect, etc. The disadvantage part of the question was answered more successfully, with a focus on artificial settings/demand characteristics, etc. There were often incorrect references to experiments being time consuming. Some experiments may take longer than others to conduct but this is not a disadvantage of the experimental method. Others incorrectly said that the experimental method is unethical, referring to specific experiments rather than the method itself, which is not unethical.

**Question 5 (d)**

Many students struggled with item 5 (d). Some misunderstood the question, which required an appropriate calculation for the data collected. These students wrote about collecting other data, rather than using the totals. The majority did understand what the question required but most students could not provide a reason for their choice of calculation. Many students identified a calculation and then described how to carry out the calculation rather than giving a reason for their choice as required by the question.

**Question 5 (e) (i)**

Most students were able to state one other procedure that should have been standardised but the reason was not always explained well. For example, 'time of day because people perform differently in the morning than they do in the afternoon.' The issue here is that it doesn't matter which time of day the groups are tested, only that both groups should be tested at the same time of day. Therefore, many answers lacked the clarity necessary for the second mark. Some students even suggested that the temperature should be the same for both groups. Students must be reminded to read the stem carefully.

### **Question 5 (e) (ii)**

Many students did not understand why standardised procedures were necessary. Quite often they stated ‘so that the participants know what to do’ rather than explaining why everyone should be treated the same way, particularly as it was an independent groups design. There was often reference to it being a ‘fair test’ here. This is not a creditworthy statement.

### **Question 5 (g) (i)**

This question was not answered particularly well. Many answers were too vague to earn credit. Students often referred to ‘a variable that can’t be controlled.’ Extraneous variables that are known about in advance can be controlled. However, if they are not controlled, they could affect the DV. Therefore students need to be more careful when offering a definition for terms such as this one.

### **Question 5 (g) (ii)**

The important issue here is the effect that extraneous variables could have on the outcome of the experiment. Students did not always refer to the effect on results/outcome and therefore failed to earn the mark for this question.

### **Question 5 (h) (i)**

Answers to this question should have focused on behaviour being a true reflection of what people normally do. Students often referred to the real-life nature of the setting, rather than the real-life behaviour of the participants and therefore received zero marks.

### **Question 5 (h) (ii)**

This question was very well answered by the majority of students. Many focused on how it is more difficult to control extraneous variables in a natural setting.

## **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](#)