

GCSE **PSYCHOLOGY**

41802 - Understanding Other People
Report on the Examination

June 2014

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2014 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Unit 2: Understanding other people

General comments

This was the fourth Unit 2 examination under the new specification. Most students made an attempt to answer each item again this year and there were clearly areas where schools, colleges and students have incorporated the advice from previous reports into their teaching and learning.

As was the case last year, it appears that individual items across the paper seemed to be more or less testing of students' knowledge rather than whole sections, and these are highlighted below. Nevertheless, the paper seemed to discriminate well and the percentage of students achieving each grade is similar to that seen in Unit 1. The mean mark has fallen this year and is now comparable to that of Unit 1. This was expected given the recent changes in GCSE delivery and the fact that the course is now linear. In the past, students have been able to build on the understanding and skills gained from experience of Unit 1 over a longer period of time.

One final factor was the restriction placed on the evaluation of Q2b. Although most students could accurately describe a study, the fact that the evaluation could not focus on ecological validity caused many students problems. It seems clear that some schools and colleges are still teaching generic evaluations that can apply to any theory/study. Students should be encouraged to offer focused evaluation specifically tailored to the study/theory in question. Students who adopt this approach demonstrate a broader and richer understanding of the key concepts and research. This enables them to give concise and accurate answers, as well as being able to adapt their knowledge and understanding to new scenarios.

Many students offered brief answers to items that carried more than one mark. Questions that require students to 'outline' or 'explain' require elaboration, rather than a simple statement of knowledge.

Compared to 2013, students' knowledge of research methods this year was disappointing. It is highly recommended that students be given many opportunities to engage practically with the subject. Sampling issues proved to be a particular area of weakness, along with data analysis.

The QWC questions (1b and 3d) are outlined in more detail below but it should be noted that there was a clear improvement here compared to previous years. In the past, students often used headings or bullet points, which meant that answers were not in continuous prose. This limited the number of marks that could be earned to a maximum of 4 marks.

Comments relating to students' performance on specific sections can be found below. It is hoped that these comments will help to inform the teaching of this unit in future.

Section A: Learning**Question 01 (b)**

This was the first 6 mark question and students performed reasonably well. Most attempted the question and were able to earn at least some credit. There were also some very knowledgeable answers. However, very few students gained the full 6 marks despite having a good understanding of the treatment. This was usually due to students overlooking the importance of relaxation in the process and many didn't mention it at all. Other answers lacked elaboration and were often a series of brief points.

Some students still only described here, missing out evaluation altogether. However, this was not as common as in previous years.

Question 01 (c)

This was a good discriminating question with most students able to gain some credit, which was often for the example. Many answers lacked the clarity to be regarded as a clear definition of punishment. For example, to say 'a consequence for bad behaviour' does not adequately define punishment. Many didn't highlight the idea of reducing/stopping/weakening behaviour or that it was a negative consequence to behaviour. Some examples were too vague, such as 'getting punished for swearing'. This does not describe a punishment, but just explains why it is given.

Question 01 (d)

This question caused students some problems. Many answers received no credit. The main reason for this was that students simply described 'Pavlov's Dog' study without actually outlining any contribution that Pavlov made. Nevertheless, some students were able to outline one or more of his contributions and then use the study effectively as an illustration of the classical conditioning schedule.

The best answers were those that chose to outline more than one contribution, such as briefly outlining classical conditioning, using the study as an example and then explaining another aspect of Pavlov's work, such as the concepts of generalisation or extinction.

Section B: Social Influence**Question 02 (a)**

Most students were able to explain accurately what is meant by deindividuation and refer to the article effectively. Many students gained full marks. Those who did not earn full marks often simply referred to a loss of identity and gave hoodies or riots as an example. Further elaboration of what the term means was needed. Others gave an accurate and elaborated explanation of the term but then failed to refer to the article at all. Some references were simply a direct quote from the article, rather than using information in the article to illustrate their definitions.

Others were unable to distinguish clearly between the processes of deindividuation and conformity and therefore gave a muddled answer.

Question 02 (b) (i)

Many students described the selected study reasonably well, with Zimbardo's abandoned car study and electric shock study being most often referenced. Others outlined his prison study but struggled more to focus on the aspects of deindividuation. Diener's 'trick or treat' study was also described quite well.

This year, many students were better at distinguishing between the aim and the conclusion, allowing them to gain full marks. Another improvement was in the quality of the conclusions drawn. On the whole, they were clearer than in previous years. However, there were other students who chose a relevant study but did not gain full marks because their conclusions were too vague or their aims and conclusions were too similar.

A large minority of students failed to gain any marks, often because they muddled deindividuation with another aspect of social influence, such as bystander intervention or conformity. Some failed to gain marks as they invented a study, often focusing on riots and hoodies, possibly using the article for ideas. Some even suggested that very unethical psychologists set up the London riots just to see how people would react.

Question 02 (b) (ii)

Students' performance on this item was generally poor. Although, those who chose the Zimbardo electric shock study or Diener's trick or treat study tended to do better, as more ethical issues were relevant.

Over half the students failed to gain any credit at all and less than one in ten gained full marks, even if they had gained full marks for part (i). This was due to a number of reasons:

- The question disallowed ecological validity as an evaluation yet a large number of students still included it.
- Zimbardo's 'Car study' gained credit for only stating how its results cannot be generalised to other locations.
- Ethical issues in field studies: Students often cited irrelevant ethical issues such as consent and deception. Due to the nature of the study, these ethical issues could not be criticisms of studies like the Zimbardo car study. Students need to know how to be more discriminating when discussing ethical issues.

Question 02 (c)

This question allowed students to utilise a known study or to create one themselves, based on their knowledge of the topic. There was evidence that either approach could gain full marks. However, many missed out key elements, despite the question listing what was required. Only one in three students gained full credit here.

Most were able to complete two elements. However, it was not always clear how social loafing would be measured: 'amount of effort', 'watching to see who is socially loafing' and 'how good the work/presentation' were vague descriptions and not creditworthy.

Other students focused on different sized groups, which is relevant. However, most missed out the individual condition, which is essential to test social loafing.

Students who based their answers on known studies, such as 'clapping', were often much more able to meet the demands of the question, as the measurement, conditions and task were already identified in that research.

Question 02 (d)

The practical implication question was answered less well than last year. Over 40% of students were unable to gain credit here. This was sometimes due to answers that either outlined applications or examples were used without clear reference to the knowledge gained from the results of research.

Better answers followed the path of people being more likely to obey someone in a position of authority/uniform, with examples to illustrate. Others were able to make the Challenger space shuttle example work by clearly outlining why it happened, based on the results of research. Some simply described the example of the space shuttle disaster without giving the reason why it happened and therefore they were unable to gain credit.

Section C: Sex and Gender**Question 03 (a)**

Almost all students were able to gain some credit here, often because they presented a good example. Many students were able to outline gender identity accurately, although a large number lacked the elaboration needed to gain the second mark. Stronger answers added the concept of masculinity and femininity or the fact that gender can be identified through attitudes and behaviour. Some students muddled gender identity with sex identity.

Question 03 (c)

Students seemed to find this question challenging with many failing to gain any credit at all. Common mistakes were:

- Simply describing GST rather than evaluating it
- A large proportion muddled GST with SLT
- Generic evaluation that could be applied to any theory or the irrelevant use of 'lone parent families' as an evaluation point
- Many students evaluate GST as 'being bad' because it is 'not good to stereotype' or point out that it cannot be generalised because not every boy likes football. Students seem to see GST as suggesting that we ought to stereotype gender rather than see it as an explanation for what might be happening.

Question 03 (d)

This was the second 6 mark question on the paper and it proved to be challenging for students. Most were able to identify the theory and give a reasonable answer. Almost a quarter of students who attempted this question gained no marks and some did not attempt it. There were only a few students who gained full marks for this question, mainly for the following reasons:

- Missing out some essential aspects of the theory, most typically identification with same sex parent or the unconscious nature of the process.
- Giving a generic description of psychodynamic theory (id, ego, etc.) and not focusing on gender development.
- Spending a great deal of time describing both the Oedipus and Electra complexes at the expense of other essential elements of description or evaluation.
- Not elaborating responses. Typically students referred to lone parent households and homosexuality without outlining the point effectively. Others simply stated that it is 'hard to prove' without any elaboration.
- A small number muddled psychodynamic theory with SLT or simply described the little Hans study.

Section D: Aggression**Question 04 (b)**

Students were able to do very well on this item as long as they chose a study of development of aggression. Students could gain an elaboration mark for either the method or the results, which helped many of them gain the full 3 marks.

Some students mixed up conditions or simply outlined only one condition of a study, which limited the marks that could be earned. Others chose studies that were not concerned with the development of aggression and these received no credit.

Question 04 (c)

Most students were able to identify a biological way of reducing aggression with the most likely being drugs and psychosurgery. However, in parts (ii) and (iii) they often struggled to write enough to gain full marks.

Question 04 (c) (ii)

Students often struggled to explain how the method would actually reduce aggression and simply described the method. Many only stated that surgery removed the part of the brain causing the aggression but failed to elaborate. Others were a little confused over the different parts of the brain and the roles they play. Those who chose to outline drugs performed better, with the typical answer being about Ritalin and the stimulation of the pre-frontal cortex (PFC).

Question 04 (c) (iii)

This item was better answered when students chose surgery as a way of reducing aggression, as they were able to write in more detail about the risks involved and the irreversible nature of the surgery. Students found it harder to criticise the use of drugs in much detail and those who had chosen ways such as exercise or sport rarely achieved any marks here. Overall, most were unable to offer the elaboration needed to gain the full marks and instead stated one or two unsubstantiated points.

Question 04 (d)

There were a few concise and accurate answers but for the most part, this was not particularly well answered. Most students could give a general idea of why playing sports could help but many did not go far beyond the information given to them in the stem.

Students often found it difficult to distinguish frustration-aggression from psychodynamic ideas and often missed out the key concept of reducing, releasing or avoiding frustration.

Section E: Research methods

Students' responses showed some improvement in this section. However, students often failed to apply their knowledge consistently and accurately. Typically, real understanding of how research methods works was limited and many were unable to manipulate the information given, such as in the sampling and median questions. Students need to understand the concepts well enough to allow them to adapt their knowledge to the 'unique' scenarios presented in the examination paper.

Question 05 (a)

The majority of students gained no marks here. Few students could accurately describe how an opportunity sample could be gathered in this situation. Most gave a generic explanation of opportunity sampling or would say 'go to the clinic and choose whoever is there', which clearly would not ensure the people chosen were all patients who had been treated or that there would be 10 in each group.

Question 05 (b)(ii) & (iii)

Students were able to show at least some understanding of both open and closed questions. Most earned at least one mark but only a minority achieved full marks on these items. This was often due to a lack of elaboration in their answers, often because students stated more than one advantage but without any elaboration. Often when students attempted elaboration, they simply repeated the same point. Others only gave a short response such as 'It leads to more detailed answers' but failed to explain why it might be an advantage to have more detailed answers.

In terms of closed questions, students found various ways of saying that the options for answers are limited or already pre-set. However, these responses tended to be vague.

Question 05 (c)(i)

Most students were able to identify an ethical issue. However, students often spent a long time describing or explaining the ethical issue rather than simply identifying it, which is what the question required.

Question 05 (c) (ii)

This is the part that most students found most difficult to answer. Some simply explained what the issue was and did not explain it in terms of why it should have been considered in this situation.

Question 05 (c) (iii)

This was slightly better answered than part (ii) but most students still struggled with it. Quite often students wrote the same, or very similar answers to parts (ii) and (iii) and rarely engaged with the stem material. Instead they opted for more generic explanations and criticisms. The question confused some students, who thought they were being asked about the ethics of the treatment rather than the study/questionnaire. They spent a lot of time writing about how putting people through flooding might cause harm.

Question 05 (d) (ii)

Only the very able students performed well on this question with a few gaining full marks and over half the students gained no marks at all. Key issues were:

- Students often failed to understand what the median value indicated
- Very few were able to actually engage with the data. Many simply said ‘they are the same so it makes it hard to decide which is best.’ Few were able to explain that even though the values were the same, median values do not reflect individual performances and then go on to mention the differences in the range, for example
- Many students simply stated what the median was and then said it was therefore not reliable or accurate
- In short, very few actually outlined why the medians might be misleading in this situation.

Question 05 (e)

The case study questions proved challenging for many students. This might be because they were the final questions on the paper. Perhaps concentration, tiredness or lack of time played a part here.

Question 05 (e) (i)

Quite a few students could state concisely that a case study is a detailed study on one individual, small group or event and gained credit. Common mistakes included stating that a case study was:

- ‘A study where you find something’
- ‘A study that includes aim, method, findings and conclusions’
- A study over a long period of time
- Often very generic explanations that could relate equally to a number of methods.

Question 05 (e) (ii)

The common answer here was that it is ‘difficult to generalise’. Answers often failed to elaborate further and therefore failed to gain more than one mark. Some students did refer to the unique nature of the person/group/event or discussed population validity. Others wrote about the higher risk of withdrawal due to the long term nature of the method.

As in 5b, students often identified more than one advantage without any elaboration. These answers were only awarded a maximum of one mark.

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](#)