



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Psychology 41801

(Specification 4180)

Unit 1: Making Sense of Other People

Report on the Examination

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Unit 1 Making Sense of Other People (41801)

General comments

This was the third Unit 1 examination under this specification and it was, without doubt, the best year for student performance so far. Schools/colleges have responded well from lessons learned following previous years and prepared students more effectively for the 2012 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 still gives cause for concern: Section E carries 25% of the marks available for this unit. Overall, Research Methods as a section of the full award is worth 25% whereas each of the other sections represents roughly 9% of the total GCSE assessment. Therefore centres are encouraged to provide as much opportunity as possible for students to develop their research methods skills in every topic area.

Despite rubric instructions, some students still persist in answering questions outside the lined spaces provided in the question. This creates serious marking issues. 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.

Comments relating to candidates' 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

Questions 1(b)(i) and 1(b)(ii)

Most students realised that the multi-store explanation was better in this case. The vast majority made explicit reference to the article. Several explained how it might not have been the multi-store explanation, and this was creditworthy. However many did not say that semantic/deeper processing increases the likelihood of recalling information and therefore were not able to earn the third mark.

Question 1(c)

Peterson & Peterson and Murdock were the most common studies offered here. However, a significant number of students described elements of more than one study, which provided an unclear answer that did not qualify for the top band of marks. Students also had a tendency to offer generic evaluations, which could be applied to virtually any study at all. This limited the number of marks they could earn here. For maximum AO3 marks, students' evaluations should focus on the particular study that has been described. Most common causes for awarding 0 marks were the use of interference or levels of processing studies. Students should be discouraged from using bullet points or side headings in continuous prose questions, as this limits the Quality of Written Communication (QWC) award for their answers.

Section B *Non-verbal communication*

Question 2(a)

This was well answered by many students and the majority were awarded a mark for referring to the article. However, many definitions included the words ‘communication’ and non-verbal’, and these were not creditworthy. Alternative words and phrases must be found when providing a definition for ‘non-verbal communication’.

Questions 2(b)(i) and 2(b)(ii)

This was one of the best answered items in the question paper. A large number of students described the ‘library’ study, as expected. Others were quite inventive with their descriptions of touch studies, many of these worthy of full credit. There were a number of descriptions that did not relate to ‘touch’, and these earned no marks.

Generic evaluations that did not relate specifically to the touch study described were limited to a maximum of 1 mark.

Question 2(c)

A large number of students correctly identified closed posture or lack of posture echo. Many could also describe a relevant study. However, others struggled when describing the study, occasionally omitting one of the conditions or even describing a study that was not related to the feature that had been identified. Some students merely described the picture rather than a relevant study.

Section C *Development of personality*

Questions 3(b)(i) and 3(b)(ii)

The majority of students realized that the article referred to situational causes of Antisocial Personality Disorder (APD). However, a large number did not offer an alternative word to ‘situational’ in their explanations and therefore could not earn both marks for 3(b)(ii). Good answers referred to ‘environment’ or ‘surroundings’. Many students used the information in the article to explain why the cause was not biological. Those answers were also worthy of full credit.

Question 3(c)

Temperament studies most often described were Thomas et al., Kagan and Snidman or Buss and Plomin. The most common incorrect answers focused on Raine and Adorno, describing APD or personality studies rather than studies of temperament. Some students’ descriptions were muddled, where two or more studies had been mixed together. There were many examples of totally generic evaluations, as mentioned in previous sections. Once again, this had an effect on the number of marks awarded.

Question 3(d)

As in previous years, students found the task of outlining implications of research the most challenging part of the examination. Nevertheless, performance this year was noticeably better than in the previous two years of this specification. The most common error still was outlining applications of research. It was interesting to note that students were much better at identifying implications in item 2(d).

Section D Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination

Question 4(a)

Many students earned full marks for this question, providing excellent definitions in most cases. Some examples of stereotypes were quite bizarre but earned a mark nevertheless.

Question 4(c)

This question was answered well by the majority of students. The most common studies described were those of Sherif, Elliott and Adorno. However, each of these was often flawed in different ways. Descriptions of Sherif's work frequently gave an aim and a conclusion stating that competition causes prejudice (rather than competition for scarce resources). Students also confused *co-operation* and *working towards a common goal*, with *competition for scarce resources*, creating a muddled description. With descriptions of Elliott's work, students often struggled with the aim and conclusion and Adorno was frequently said to have interviewed Nazi soldiers. Some descriptions focused on causes of prejudice whilst others concentrated on reduction of prejudice. Either route was worthy of full marks if done well.

Question 4(d)(i) and 4(d)(ii)

A large majority of students earned full marks for the first part of this question, using knowledge of psychology to outline one way in which the teacher might reduce prejudice. However, there were also a few suggestions not rooted in psychology which would clearly have increased prejudice; for example, separate the white from the non-white children and put them into different rooms or give treats to the non-white children and not the white children or punish the trouble-makers. Such suggestions received no credit.

Evaluations proved to be more challenging for students. Many evaluations earning fewer than three marks were of the studies that their suggested ways were based on rather than on the way of reducing prejudice itself. The more sophisticated answers that earned maximum marks used knowledge gained from these studies to judge the possible success of their suggested way of reducing prejudice.

Section E Research methods

Question 5(b)

It was disappointing to find that only one quarter of students knew how to write a testable hypothesis. This has been a persistent problem for the past three years. Although most students had some sense of the IV & DV, the two most common errors were the lack of an operational term and the failure to state both conditions of the IV, therefore making the statement untestable.

Question 5(c)

Graphs were very well done this year, with many students earning full marks. The most common error was providing a title that was too vague and did not contain both conditions of the IV.

Question 5(d)(ii)

Most students correctly stated 'Yes' to 5(d)(i) and therefore were able to earn some credit here. However, answers often were too brief, not stating the full aim of the study or not providing a full enough account of how the results supported the aim.

Question 5(f)

Generally, this question was not answered well. Students' knowledge of sampling methods, their advantages and limitations, continues to be very shaky. Many students confused stratified sampling with systematic sampling with disastrous consequences in terms of marks awarded. Therefore, schools/colleges are encouraged to regard this as a priority area when developing 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: <http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html>

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