

17 March 2005

To: SQA Coordinator (Secondary Schools, FE Colleges)
Directors of Education
SCIS
Customer Account Managers

**For the attention of all staff responsible for the
delivery of National Qualifications in Psychology**

Action by Recipient	
	Response required
✓	Note and pass on
	None — update/information only

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications in Psychology

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for National Qualifications in Psychology.

Diet 2004

Centres are advised to access the Principal Assessor and Senior Moderator reports for Psychology for Diet 2004. These reports contain essential advice and feedback for all teachers/lecturers delivering National Qualifications in Psychology.

The following reports can be found on the Psychology pages of SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk):

- ◆ Principal Assessor Report for Intermediate 1/Intermediate 2 Psychology
- ◆ Principal Assessor Report for Higher/Advanced Higher Psychology
- ◆ Senior Moderator Report for Psychology

Appeals

The procedures for stage 1 and 2 appeals were completed during September and October. Colleagues are requested to follow the guidance set out in the following documents prior to submitting appeals:

- ◆ *The Appeals Process: a guide for centres* (AA0690/3, June 2002)
- ◆ *Notes of guidance for centres on the Appeals process and on the preparation of evidence to support estimates and appeals.*

Both documents can be downloaded from SQA's website.

The most commonly found problems in evidence submitted for appeals this year were:

- ◆ Prelims not following the standard mark allocation as used in the question papers.
- ◆ Evidence from NABs assuming that the cut-off score is 50% (NABs indicate that cut-off score is 60%). Good NAB evidence is considered to be a score above 60%.
- ◆ No/wrong/incomplete marking schemes accompanying 'prelim' evidence.

These issues were reported in the January 2004 update letter, however, similar problems were replicated in 2004. In addition, examiners were disappointed with the quality of the presentation of evidence from some centres. This related to uncoordinated evidence such as several pieces of evidence for each candidate with no clear or direct link to the assessment instrument.

Centres should note that the above problems may disadvantage candidates.

Dual Running of Old and New Psychology Courses

Centres are reminded that the old and new psychology Courses are dual running in Session 2004/05 only. This is predominantly for those centres offering Courses over two years through Open and Distance Learning. Centres who are not **already** approved to offer the old Courses and Units cannot now seek approval for the old Courses or Units. New centres can only offer the new Courses and only when the approval criteria is satisfied.

National Qualifications Review

The work on the Review is now complete. The revised Psychology Courses have successfully been implemented in many centres this Session. Specimen Question Papers are available for the new Courses and three versions of National Assessment Bank materials are now available for each Unit. Versions 4 and 5 will become available around Easter.

Which Research/Studies should teachers use?

We have received several queries from centres asking which research/studies are to be used in the new Course, and where to find them. In contrast to the original Psychology Courses which prescribed all studies to be used in each area, the revised Courses do **not** prescribe any studies. Please see the text below which elaborates on the approach to be taken in relation to studies/research to be used:

'The teacher/lecturer can choose which studies to teach, and candidates will then have a choice as to which study to write about in their answer. The research studies named in the Marking Information for NABs (and in the Specimen Question Paper) are simply examples of possible studies. Whatever the topic area, including memory improvement techniques, there are many relevant research studies. There is no need for the Marking Information to provide any further examples, as the teacher is able to judge whether a particular research study is relevant to the topic area. It is true that the support notes do not provide detailed research studies on the particular area of memory improvement, however, many textbooks and websites do.'

The underlying principle is that teaching must be based on the outcomes and content given in the Course arrangements. The NAB Marking Information provides outline guidance on suitable answers to the specific items in each NAB, but is not a guide as to 'what to teach', since NAB questions sample only part of the candidate's overall knowledge of the unit topics.

Type of content expected in an answer to a research study question is described in the 'General points' of the Marking Information.'

Attached to this letter is an Appendix giving further advice on the use of research studies and some additional guidance as to choosing practicals for Intermediate 1 and 2.

I hope you find the above information helpful.

Higher Research Investigation

Please note that the arrangements for choosing the topic/concept on which to base your Research Investigation for the revised Higher has changed with effect from Session 2004/05. SQA has set a list of topics from which the Research Investigation **must** be based. This list covers the constraints/choice within the new Course Arrangements and can be found on SQA's website along with an updated Revised Higher Research Investigation Guidelines which now includes a more detailed guide on the allocation of marks.

Being an SQA Marker

If you are interested in becoming a Psychology Marker, an application form can be downloaded from SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk). Alternatively, please contact us on 0131-561 6825 and we will send a form to you. To become a Marker, we normally ask that you have taught the Course for at least three years, preferably within the past three years. We welcome applications throughout the year and, where a suitable vacancy exists, we may be able to offer an appointment for this year. I would like to point out that Psychology will be Centrally Marked this year — this entails markers, marking scripts over one extended period in the same venue.

Reminder

Centres are reminded that all Higher and Advanced Higher Research Investigations must be submitted to SQA for external assessment. All Research Investigations will be uplifted from your centre on **Thursday, 28 April 2005**.

Assessment Panel

The remit and make-up of the Social Sciences Assessment Panel has been reviewed with the result that there are now more representatives for each subject — Psychology; Sociology; Philosophy; Politics. The Social Sciences Assessment Panel continues to meet twice a year to look at issues arising in the assessment of Social Science Subjects. Colleagues are free to feed issues arising in their subject to the Panel either directly through panel members or via SQA officers.

I hope that you find the above information useful. If you would like to discuss any matter in more detail, please do not hesitate to telephone me on 0141-242 2343 or e-mail tom.stannage@sqa.org.uk

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Stannage". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tom Stannage
Qualifications Manager
NQ Social Sciences

Appendix

Psychology Update Letter January 2005

MAKING FULL USE OF AVAILABLE INFORMATION

One of the main ways in which the arrangements and assessment documents of revised NQ courses have been improved is in the provision of clear, relevant and meaningful information regarding what, exactly, is to be taught, and how, exactly, it will be assessed. So, in delivering the courses / units, teachers are, hopefully, making full use of the information given in:

- the Assessment Objectives, and Outcomes/PC
- the Content and Context sections
- sections on learning and teaching

...all of which are contained in the unit and course specifications.

In addition, to effectively prepare students for internal and external assessment, teachers will find detailed guidance in:

- The Course Assessment Specification (CAS)
- Specimen Question Papers and Marking Information
- NAB packs

It is hoped that teachers are finding all of this information to be of practical use, and no longer feel they have to rely on Marking Information for guidance on preparing students for assessment.

RESEARCH STUDIES AND EVIDENCE, IN 'UNDERSTANDING THE INDIVIDUAL', AND 'THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT'.

One aspect of the revised courses which has given rise to some uncertainty is the teaching and assessment of research studies and research evidence, in the first and third units. Previously, students learned a small number of 'Major Studies', or 'key studies', in great detail. In the revised courses, students need to learn about a larger number of studies, which should be taught in an integrated way, throughout the content: students should develop an understanding of research evidence, on every aspect of every topic, in order to be able to answer assessment items that demand such knowledge (see Outcomes/PC, and 'Content and Context' in each Unit). The 'Learning & Teaching Approaches' section in the unit specifications also has detailed advice on delivery of content relating to research studies. The emphasis is on developing an understanding of the meaning of research findings, in relation to the theory or concept being studied, rather than detailed analysis of methodology (although, when progressing to the 'Investigating Behaviour' Unit, teachers may at that point find it useful, as illustrations of methods, to draw on studies their students have learned in the previous unit). Students should be encouraged to develop the habit of providing a research reference whenever they describe a concept or theory; this is simply good practice, within the discipline.

As no *specific* research studies are prescribed, teachers can select whichever studies they prefer, or those for which information is most readily available, as long as they are relevant to the topic content.

For assessment purposes (internal and external), candidates will need to use their knowledge of research studies in two main ways:

(a) firstly, to answer questions on theories/concepts/ applications, where they may refer to evidence from research, and

(b) secondly, to answer questions on “a research study” per se.

In their revision advice, teachers can prepare students accordingly. To prepare for questions of the former type, students should have knowledge of a number of studies in limited detail, for each topic aspect. In the instrument of assessment, questions on theories/ concepts/ applications may or may not explicitly require reference to research evidence, but such material can always be credited in an answer, as stated in the Marking Information.

To prepare for the latter type of question, ie “research study questions”, teachers or students may select a small number of studies to learn in some detail, for each topic. Research study questions typically ask the candidate to ‘describe’ or ‘discuss’, either a whole study or part of it. In both Specimen QPs and NABs, the Marking Information for research study questions indicates the type of content expected in an answer (see below). The Marking Information also provides a number of studies: these are just examples of *possible* candidate responses – they are not ‘prescribed’ studies. Those given in the MI tend to be a mixture of classic studies from early to mid-20th century (eg Milgram, Bandura, Ainsworth), along with some more recent research examples. However, although all of those mentioned in the Marking Information can be found in one book or another, there is no need for the teacher to track down these particular studies (and certainly no need to seek out original journal articles), as they are not prescribed studies. In assessments, for questions on research studies, students can simply use the studies that they have learned for the topic, from whatever textbooks and learning materials they have used. Therefore, Marking Information is not a guide as to ‘what to teach’; in any case, NAB and exam questions sample only part of the candidate's overall knowledge of the unit topics.

Research studies at Intermediate 1 and 2

Whereas for Higher, many textbooks present a number of ‘key studies’ for each topic, the texts suitable for Intermediate levels (which are mainly those published for the English GCSE Psychology market) often do not provide detailed examples of research studies. As a result, some teachers are concerned about how to prepare students adequately for assessment, and in particular for research study questions in NABs and the exam. However, the amount of detail expected from an Intermediate candidate at this level is perhaps less than might be anticipated, especially where teachers have been accustomed to the old specification, for which candidates were expected to provide a large amount of detail on research studies, for a small number of marks. Now, they can gain “more for less”. Below is an example to illustrate how a research study, described in limited detail in a popular textbook, might be adapted by a teacher for Intermediate students, studying Motivation:

“Collins (1982)¹ performed a study of how self-efficacy beliefs affected children’s schoolwork. He sorted children into three groups according to how good they were at maths. In each group there were some who had high self-efficacy beliefs and some who did not. Collins found that the children with high self-efficacy beliefs did better than those with low self-efficacy, even when they were just the same in mathematical ability. Since they believed that they could be effective, they bothered to make sure that they learned, going back over problems and correcting them, and rejecting faulty solutions more

¹ Collins, J.L.(1982) Self-efficacy and ability in achievement behaviour. Cited in A.Bandura (1989) Perceived self-agency in the exercise of personal agency, *Psychologist* 2(10): 411-24.

quickly. Their beliefs affected how much effort they put in, and their efforts affected how well they did.”

Adapted from Hayes, N. and Orrell, S.(1993), *Psychology: an Introduction*,(2nd edition). Harlow: Longman. P.278.

The teacher might make certain points more explicit, such as the fact that it was an experiment (but there is no need to identify IV and DV). An Int 1 candidate providing several of the above points in response to a research study question could certainly achieve four marks, on the basis of the NABs and Specimen QP Marking Information. An Int 2 candidate providing most of the key points from the above could also achieve 4 - 6 marks, depending on whether a simple description, or description plus conclusion(s) is demanded. Bearing in mind that evaluation may be demanded at Int 2, the teacher might add some ideas: for example, one strength is that there is good ecological validity, as the children were doing maths tasks similar to those they would normally do at school; however, measurement of self-efficacy beliefs may have poor validity, and the study relates self-efficacy only to maths achievement, not to other subjects.

Another possible approach in teaching research studies at Int 1 and 2 is to adapt material from ‘A’-level textbooks, including those written for the AQA ‘A’ A2 specification. Again, an example of a motivation study is provided:

Cannon and Washburn's experiment with a balloon

When you feel hungry this is often accompanied by hunger pangs, which feel like contractions of the stomach. Is this what they are? Cannon and Washburn (1912)² devised an experiment where Washburn swallowed a balloon that was attached to a tube. The balloon could be inflated via the tube that came out through his mouth. If the balloon was inflated it was possible to detect muscle contractions because they would force air in and out of the tube. The tube was connected to a device that recorded changes in air pressure.

Whenever Washburn detected a hunger pang he pressed a key to record this. The record showed that each time he felt a hunger pang his stomach also contracted, demonstrating a clear relationship and suggesting that the subjective sensation of hunger is controlled by the stomach contractions.

Discussion points

1. The data in this experiment were collected from one participant. Is it reasonable to generalise from this?
2. Why would it be important for the body to use other cues than hunger pangs when determining hunger?

Evaluation

Neat as this explanation is, there are problems. First of all, people who have had their stomach removed still experience hunger pains. Second, cutting the vagus nerve, which sends signals to the brain from the stomach, also has little effect (Pinel, 1997). However, people who have had a leg amputated still think they can feel their leg, so it is possible that the brain is “imagining” the continuing sensory input in both instances, which would support the view that signals from the stomach do play a role in the sensation of hunger.

Adapted from: Eysenck, M. and Flanagan, C. (2001) *Psychology for A2 level*, Hove: Psychology Press. P.200

The teacher might simplify and shorten the above for the benefit of their Intermediate students, without losing the main points. The ‘Discussion points’ and ‘Evaluation’ are useful for Int 2, though not essential for Int 1. (An illustration of the experimental procedure, commonly found in textbooks, would also aid understanding).

In general, when teaching research studies in preparation for assessment items, teachers should ensure they address the key points required, and highlight these to students so that they know what to do to gain marks. This applies to all types of assessment items. For example, in Int 2 research study questions, candidates should give:

² Cannon, W.B. & Washburn, A.L.(1912) An explanation of hunger. *American Journal of Physiology*, 29, 441-454.

Intermediate 2

For Outcome 1: researcher name(s), date (preferably), what was studied (ie psychological process, behaviour etc), outline of method/procedure, results;

For Outcome 2, conclusions and brief evaluation.

Description of participants, apparatus, method etc can also gain credit.

Note that a question on a research study(ies) may also require the candidate to relate the research evidence to a theory, concept or application; on the other hand, the question may require only a specific aspect of the research study, eg the weaknesses.

Extract from NAB Marking Information, Understanding the Individual (Int 2)

For Int 1 and Higher, see the corresponding section of NAB Marking Information.

Internal assessment of practical research skills in the ‘Investigating Behaviour’ Unit at Intermediate 1 and 2.

For this unit, Int 1 and 2 candidates must plan, carry out and report two practical research tasks. This activity, the practical portfolio, accounts for 50% of the unit NAB. Teachers have free choice as to which tasks to conduct, within certain constraints: one must be experimental, the other non-experimental; tasks must be conducted ethically; both should be relevant to the topics studied in the course (unless taken as a freestanding unit). Full information is provided in the Arrangements document.

Teachers may wish to devise their own tasks, however, many good ideas for practicals are provided in various publications, often including photocopiable materials such as questionnaires (see below). The COLEG pack contains helpful guidance on delivering the practical research skills element. Often, the suggested practicals can be further simplified, eg by using only one hypothesis, one IV and DV, only one or two graphs, and a simpler title. The table below shows a few examples of such projects which may be useful to Int 1 and 2 teachers and students. In addition, for the mandatory Personality topic, personality questionnaires offer a range of possible research activities.

<i>Research task</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Relevant Int topic</i>	<i>Experimental / non-experimental</i>
Attitudes and classical conditioning	**	Cognition and learning / Social Perception	Experimental
Homeostasis and hunger	*	Motivation	Experimental
The Self-concept	*	Development of the self-concept	Non-experimental (survey)
Product Personalities	**	Social Perception	Non-experimental (survey)

USEFUL RESOURCES

Copeland, P. (2004) *Intermediate 2 Psychology: Investigating Behaviour. Tutors’ Support Pack*. Stirling: SFEU/COLEG.

*Flanagan, C.(1997) *A Resource Pack for 'A' Level Psychology Practicals*. Crewe: Hartshill Press.

**Flanagan, C.(1998) *Psychology Practicals: a Student Workbook*. London: Routledge.

McIlveen, R., Higgins, L., Wadeley, A. & Humphreys, P. (Eds) (1992). *BPS Manual of Psychology Practicals*. Leicester: BPS Books.