



Course Report 2018

Subject	Psychology
Level	National 5

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

2017–18 was the first session of the revised National 5 course.

The course assessment performed in line with expectations. Candidates understood what was required of them and were able to complete the question paper within the allocated time.

Feedback from the marking team and from practitioners indicated that the assessment was fair in terms of course coverage and level of demand. Candidate responses were at the expected level for knowledge and understanding of psychological concepts and theories, application of knowledge and the use of terminology. Candidates demonstrated that they had developed the ability to use thinking skills when explaining and applying their knowledge of psychology.

Component 1: question paper

In Section 1, all candidates answered question 1 (sleep and dreams). Candidates then had to choose between question 2 (personality) or question 3 (phobias). The majority of candidates answered question 3.

In Section 2, all candidates answered question 4 (conformity). Candidates then had to choose between question 5 (altruism) and question 6 (non-verbal communication). The majority of candidates chose to answer question 6.

Component 2: assignment

The assignment requires candidates to produce a report based on the background research of a topic in psychology, and a research plan for further research on this topic.

They choose a topic, conduct a literature review of other research into this topic, then plan a piece of research of their own. Candidates are not required to carry out the research for this assignment. The assignment is worth 30 marks, which is 30% of the course assessment.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper

Candidates performed particularly well in the mandatory topics of sleep and dreams (question 1) and conformity (question 4).

Candidates gained high marks in question 1(a), where they were asked to describe restoration theory and in question 1(b) (i), where they were asked to describe Dement and Kleitman's 1957 study. These questions were accessible to all and provided candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the topic. Candidates were also able to apply their knowledge of theory in question 1(c). This question allowed candidates to demonstrate their higher-order thinking skills and elicited thoughtful responses.

Question 4(b) was challenging as it required candidates to read a table and to apply their knowledge of a situational factor to explain the results. Candidates performed very well here. In question 4(c) candidates were required to apply their knowledge of concepts to explain behaviour in an unseen scenario. Candidates could not rely on recall to answer these application questions and again performed well.

Candidates performed particularly well in question 6(b), where they used their knowledge of non-verbal communication to explain how Russell could give a good impression at an interview. Candidates demonstrated their thinking skills and applied their knowledge very well.

Component 2: assignment

The majority of candidates were given some personalisation and choice to choose which aspect of their topics to investigate.

Overall, candidates were not following a formulaic response, indicating that their assignments were their own work.

Candidates submitted reports in the appropriate format and demonstrated that they had developed basic research skills.

Markers noted that more candidates achieved 4 marks for ethics this year compared to previous years.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

Candidates found questions 1(b) (ii), 2(d) (ii), 3(d) (ii), 6(d) (ii), which required them to explain a strength and/or weakness of a research study, challenging. For example, some candidates explained a conclusion rather than a strength, while others identified a strength or weakness but did not explain it.

Candidates did not score highly in question 2(b), where they were asked to describe the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire — Revised). Many described Eysenck's personality theory instead. Some candidates explained the biological causes of personality and not of anti-social personality disorder (APD) in question 2c).

Question 3(b) was also challenging for some candidates. For example, some candidates described systematic desensitisation and not social skills training. Some candidates found it difficult to describe the role of classical conditioning in the creation of phobias in question 3(c). For example, some described classical conditioning but did not explain its role in the creation of phobias.

In question 5(b) (ii) some candidates found it difficult to explain how the results of the study supported the theory.

Candidates did not perform as well as expected in question 6(c). When explaining cultural differences, some candidates did not identify the cultures. When explaining gender differences, some candidates did not specify the differences between the genders.

Component 2: assignment

A: Many candidates did not gain the second mark available in this section because they did not explain why their chosen topic was of psychological importance.

B: Many candidates described the research studies very well. However they did not link these to concepts or theories, therefore they could not access all of the marks available.

E: Some candidates identified the research method, but did not describe it. Some identified a strength and weakness of the method, but did not explain them. Some candidates did not justify their choice of sampling method, or why it was suitable. Many candidates did not identify the type of data collected.

A few candidates were unable to access the 4 marks for ethics because they were planning unethical research studies, for example by planning to:

- ◆ include discussion when replicating the Jenness study
- ◆ use confederates to deceive participants in conformity studies
- ◆ select participants under the age of 16
- ◆ replicate the Asch study
- ◆ ask participants to sleep for a specified number of hours

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper

Candidates managed the new question paper well and demonstrated excellent thinking skills.

Centres are reminded that in the new question paper candidates are required to describe research studies about a particular aspect of the optional topics. For example for personality, a study on either situational or biological causes of APD; for phobias, a study on either the genetic inheritance of phobias or the two-process model of phobias; for altruism, a study on either the empathy-altruism model or kin-selection theory; for NVC, a study on either nature or nurture.

Candidates need to be prepared to explain the strengths and weaknesses of research studies.

Component 2: assignment

Centres should continue to provide reasonable support that allows candidates to select topics of interest and complete the report to the required standard.

Centres are reminded that the assignment should provide candidates with an opportunity for personalisation and choice when it comes to choosing a topic and preparing their own assignment. Centres should familiarise themselves with the conditions of assessment and the guidelines regarding what 'reasonable assistance' can be provided to candidates as detailed in the *National 5 Psychology Course Specification*.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	622
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Number of resulted entries in 2018	775
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	31.5%	31.5%	244	70
B	16.4%	47.9%	127	60
C	16.8%	64.6%	130	50
D	13.8%	78.5%	107	40
No award	21.5%	-	167	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary).

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Therefore SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.