



Course Report 2014

Subject	Psychology
Level	National 5

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

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It 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 and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Assignment

SQA provides centres with a template for the report. The report is the assignment evidence. Most candidates submitted the completed template as provided by SQA. It is recommended that all centres issue candidates with the template to be submitted for assessment purposes.

Centres are reminded that candidates must uphold ethical standards when choosing their topic and planning their research study. Adherence to ethical standards set by the British Psychological Society is essential when planning the research study. It should be noted that many candidates submitted plans that were unethical.

Component 2: Question paper

Centres had prepared candidates well for the question paper. The majority of candidates were producing answers at SCQF Level 5.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Assignment

The majority of candidates selected the mandatory topics of sleep and dreams and conformity for the assignment. Some candidates selected non-verbal behaviour.

The majority of candidates completed the report provided by SQA and were able to use psychological terms appropriately.

Ethical standards were not upheld in a number of the submissions. Examples include:

- ◆ Candidates were planning to replicate Asch's line judgement task (this may cause psychological harm in the form of embarrassment, discomfort or lowering of self-esteem).
- ◆ Candidates were planning to use under-16s as participants (candidates cannot use under-16s, even with parental consent).
- ◆ Candidates were planning to either deprive participants of sleep or disrupt their sleep (this could cause psychological and/or physical harm).
- ◆ Candidates were planning to ask personal questions in a survey about sleep (this could cause psychological harm and is an invasion of privacy).
- ◆ Candidates were planning to compare conformity levels of British and Asian citizens (this could cause psychological harm).

Component 2: Question paper

The candidates were able to select appropriate topics for the optional questions. They were also able to distinguish between individual and social topics. Centres had prepared the candidates well regarding the overall structure of the new paper. Overall response was very good.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Assignment

Candidates generally described their chosen topic well and were able to clearly identify the aim, method, sampling method and procedures using appropriate terminology. Candidates demonstrated an understanding of the research process.

Component 2: Question paper

Most candidates were awarded high marks in the research questions: Question 1(d) and Question 3(c). Candidates were able to describe their chosen research study clearly for both of these questions.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Assignment

Candidates found it demanding to plan the research in a way that upheld ethical standards.

Component 2: Question paper

Question 2(d)(i): many candidates had difficulty in identifying and describing an individual factor that may influence conformity levels.

Question 2(d)(ii): many candidates had difficulty in identifying and describing a cultural factor that may influence conformity levels.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Assignment

Centres are required to emphasise the importance of the BPS ethical principles when planning research. The assessor is required to ensure that the candidates protect the welfare, dignity and rights of all participants. Centres may wish to set up an ethics committee (depending on the centre this could consist of other social science lecturers, HN Social

Science students, Higher Psychology students or peers who are also studying National 5 psychology).

As there is a free choice of which topic can be investigated, centres may wish to give candidates more choice in planning research that is meaningful to them. This will engage the candidates more fully in the process and stimulate an interest in psychology. The assessor should approve the candidates' selection of a topic before they begin the assignment task. Before approving the topic, the assessor should ensure that ethical standards are being upheld, that appropriate resources can be accessed, and that the candidate understands the requirements of each stage of the task.

Centres are reminded that, whilst candidates can work in groups as part of the preparation for assessment, the report itself must be written individually.

Component 2: Question paper

Centres are reminded that the Course Assessment Specification (CAS) states that candidates must be able to 'explain a minimum of three psychological approaches'. The CAS also states that 'for the mandatory topic of sleep and dreams the biological and psychoanalytic approaches must be used'. Candidates must be aware therefore that they could be asked to explain the biological and/or the psychoanalytic approach without necessarily applying these to the topic, unless specifically instructed to do so.

Question 1(a): Explain the psychoanalytic approach in psychology. Some candidates were awarded marks for a generic explanation of the approach. Other candidates explained sleep and dreams using the psychoanalytic approach and they too were awarded marks.

Question 1(c): Psychoanalytic is one approach in psychology. Describe how one other approach would explain the above topic. For this question candidates were required to explain the selected topic using another approach. They could not give a generic explanation of another approach for full marks; they had to use the approach to explain the topic.

Centres should make sure that candidates are able to identify and describe individual, cultural and situational factors that may affect conformity levels in an unfamiliar scenario. Candidates at this level may be able to describe and list individual, cultural and situational factors, but may find it challenging to apply this knowledge to an unseen situation.

Further information

2014 was the first year of the new N5 qualifications. Overall the course assessment for Psychology proved to be easier than intended and each grade boundary was increased by 5 for Upper A to 73; by 10 for A to 66; and by 14 for C to 54. Insufficient questions in the QP permitted grade discrimination which was attributed to the lack of testing on higher order skills. Similarly, in the Assignment, there was a lack of testing on higher order skills and it was also considered that some marks were gained too easily.

The above affected all Grade Boundaries but the C candidates had the biggest advantage. The A and Upper A candidates were advantaged ,too, but to a lesser extent; so the increase was scaled accordingly as above.

It was agreed that a review of the 2015 QP will be undertaken for consistency with SCQF level 5, especially the higher order skills. The Marking Instructions and documentation for the Coursework are to be reviewed/revised for clarity and to realign the marks with the skills expected at SCQF level 5. This work will take place for implementation in the academic year 2014/15.

It was also agreed that the requirements for this Course will be reviewed after the 2015 examination diet.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	0
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	84
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 80				
A	34.5%	34.5%	29	66
B	26.2%	60.7%	22	60
C	20.2%	81.0%	17	54
D	4.8%	85.7%	4	51
No award	14.3%	-	12	-