



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



GCE A level performance descriptions for psychology

July 2007

QCA/07/3242

Introduction

Performance descriptions have been created for all GCE subjects. They describe the learning outcomes and levels of attainment likely to be demonstrated by a representative candidate performing at the A/B and E/U boundaries for AS and A2.

In practice most candidates will show uneven profiles across the attainments listed, with strengths in some areas compensating in the award process for weaknesses or omissions elsewhere. Performance descriptions illustrate expectations at the A/B and E/U boundaries of the AS and A2 as a whole; they have not been written at unit level.

Grade A/B and E/U boundaries should be set using professional judgement. The judgement should reflect the quality of candidates' work, informed by the available technical and statistical evidence. Performance descriptions are designed to assist examiners in exercising their professional judgement. They should be interpreted and applied in the context of individual specifications and their associated units. However, performance descriptions are not designed to define the content of specifications and units.

The requirement for all AS and A level specifications to assess candidates' quality of written communication will be met through one or more of the assessment objectives.

The performance descriptions have been produced by the regulatory authorities in collaboration with the awarding bodies.

AS performance descriptions for psychology

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3
Assessment objectives	<p>Knowledge and understanding of science and of How science works Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise, recall and show understanding of scientific knowledge select, organise and communicate relevant information in a variety of forms. 	<p>Application of knowledge and understanding of science and of How science works Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse and evaluate scientific knowledge and processes apply scientific knowledge and processes to unfamiliar situations including those related to issues assess the validity, reliability and credibility of scientific information. 	<p>How science works Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate and describe ethical, safe and skilful practical techniques and processes, selecting appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods make, record and communicate reliable and valid observations and measurements with appropriate precision and accuracy analyse, interpret, explain and evaluate the methodology, results and impact of their own and others' experimental and investigative activities in a variety of ways.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge of a range of psychological concepts, theories, studies, research methods, applications, principles and perspectives from the AS specification show understanding of most principles and concepts from the AS specification select relevant information from the AS specification organise and present information clearly, using psychological terminology in appropriate contexts 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> apply principles and concepts in familiar and new contexts involving only a few steps in the argument engage with the issue, using relevant analysis and evaluation of psychological theories, concepts, studies and research methods describe significant trends and patterns shown by data presented in tabular or graphical form and interpret phenomena with few errors and present arguments and evaluations clearly comment critically on statements, conclusions or data successfully translate data presented as prose, diagrams, drawings, tables or graphs from one form to another. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> show sound knowledge and understanding of the principles of research design comment effectively on strengths, limitations and ethical issues in research design interpret and draw appropriate conclusions from data.

<p>E/U boundary performance descriptions</p>	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate basic knowledge of theories, concepts, studies and research methods from the AS specification b) show basic understanding of some relevant information c) present information, using basic psychological terminology from the AS specification terminology. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) apply a given principle to material presented in familiar or closely related contexts involving only a few steps in the argument b) make some attempt to focus on the issue, showing a rudimentary analysis and evaluation of psychological theories, concepts, studies and research methods c) describe some trends or patterns shown by data presented in tabular or graphical form d) when directed, identify inconsistencies in conclusions or data e) successfully translate data from one form to another in some contexts. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) show basic knowledge and understanding of the principles of research design b) comment on strengths, limitations and ethical issues in research design c) interpret or draw conclusions from data.
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A2 performance descriptions for psychology

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3
Assessment objectives	<p>Knowledge and understanding of science and of How science works Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise, recall and show understanding of scientific knowledge select, organise and communicate relevant information in a variety of forms. 	<p>Application of knowledge and understanding of science and of How science works Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse and evaluate scientific knowledge and processes apply scientific knowledge and processes to unfamiliar situations including those related to issues assess the validity, reliability and credibility of scientific information. 	<p>How science works Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate and describe ethical, safe and skilful practical techniques and processes, selecting appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods make, record and communicate reliable and valid observations and measurements with appropriate precision and accuracy analyse, interpret, explain and evaluate the methodology, results and impact of their own and others' experimental and investigative activities in a variety of ways.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge of a range of psychological concepts, theories, studies, research methods, applications, principles and perspectives from the A2 specification show understanding of most principles and concepts from the A2 specification select relevant information from the A2 specification organise and present information clearly, using psychological terminology in appropriate contexts. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> apply principles and concepts in familiar and new contexts involving several steps in the argument directly address the issue, showing effective analysis and evaluation when considering psychological concepts, theories, studies, research methods, applications, principles and perspectives describe significant trends and patterns shown by complex data presented in tabular or graphical form, interpret phenomena with few errors and present arguments and evaluations clearly critically evaluate statements, conclusions or data successfully translate data presented as prose, diagrams, drawings, tables or graphs from one form to another. select a wide range of facts, principles and concepts from both AS and A2 specifications link together appropriate facts principles and concepts from different areas of the specification. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> show sound knowledge and understanding of the principles of research and design give clearly reasoned justification for design decisions comment effectively on strengths, limitations and ethical issues in research design comment effectively on the issues of the reliability and validity of data interpret and draw appropriate conclusions from data.

E/U boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate basic knowledge of appropriate psychological concepts, theories, studies, research methods, applications, principles and perspectives from the A2 specification b) show understanding of some principles from the A2 specification c) select some relevant information from the A2 specification d) present information using some psychological terminology from the A2 specification. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) apply given principles or concepts in familiar and new contexts involving a few steps in the argument b) partially address the issue, showing basic analysis and evaluation of psychological concepts, theories, studies, research methods, applications, principles and perspectives c) describe, and provide a limited explanation of, trends or patterns shown by complex data presented in tabular or graphical form d) when directed, identify inconsistencies in conclusions or data e) successfully translate data from one form to another in some contexts f) select some facts, principles and concepts from both AS and A2 specifications g) put together some facts, principles and concepts from different areas of the specification. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) show basic knowledge and understanding of the principles of research design b) justify some design decisions c) comment on strengths, limitations and ethical issues in research design d) comment on the reliability or validity of data e) interpret or draw conclusions from data.
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