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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE
Health and Social Care (6941/01)
Unit 4: Social Aspects and Lifestyle Choices

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The paper continued with its usual format of three questions based on a scenario that runs throughout each of the exam questions. Each question is out of 30 marks, giving an overall total mark of 90. The case study for this series was based on Ava, an 18 year old student who has applied to study midwifery at university.

The questions around the case study assess the candidates' knowledge and understanding. In some instances candidates will be asked to recall facts, definitions etc., alternatively they may also be asked to apply their knowledge to parts of the case study or to discuss, analyse or evaluate key concepts or theories. The questions begin with shorter questions which focus on knowledge and understanding of the specification whilst remaining questions focus on application of knowledge. Candidates are rewarded for the quality of their written communication in the long questions where extended writing is required.

The external assessment paper covered the unit specification, which includes:

- Lifestyle choices and life course events
- Social factors affecting health and well-being
- Care professional/service user relationships

The examiners felt that the paper discriminated well, with a wide range of marks being seen in each question. They noted that the candidates' repeated previous mistakes seen in other series in that they failed to read the question stem correctly, confusing words in them and often repeating themselves. Many candidates paraphrase the question at the beginning of their response, thereby failing to gain any credit for their answer until half way down the page. Very few candidates managed to write a Level 3 response on the extended writing questions, these tended to be descriptive. The majority of learners attempted all the questions. Just a few here and there not answered. A number of candidates appeared to become so engrossed with the scenario of the question that they were unable to look beyond it. The Quality of Written Communication has improved. A holistic summation of the paper is that it was very fair and gave the candidates the opportunity to show what they have learnt throughout the course.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

This question was based on Ava, an 18-year-old A level student who has applied to university to study midwifery. The candidates were asked to draw upon their knowledge of formal/professional and informal support that Ava may receive in her pursuit of becoming a midwife.

1a) Most candidates were able to describe the type of support provided by Ava's tutor as the information was given in the scenario.

1b) The majority of candidates were awarded full marks for this question as they were able to describe two ways in which Ava's family could support her

when she goes to university, with many choosing to describe emotional and financial support.

1c) In this question the candidates were asked to describe how two care values may be applied in care settings. The care values were correctly identified although description of application lacked coherence and structure.

1d) This question appeared challenging for the candidates with regard to their understanding of what was being asked of them. They needed to link effective care practice, like valuing diversity, adopting a non-judgemental approach to the building of a service-user's self-esteem. The more able candidates were able to link the negative effects of effective care practice to self-esteem.

1e) Most candidates attempted this question, however, very few made it into the top mark band. Whilst many candidates' responses included the positive impact of work shadowing on an individual they were unable to link its impact on intellectual development.

Question 2

This question consisted of five parts which were related to the case study. It required candidates to recall terms and concepts, apply knowledge through explanation and demonstrate understanding of social class, absolute and relative poverty and their links to morbidity rates.

2a) The phrase that is key to the definition is 'A system of classifying people based on'. Many candidates were able to partially define the term social class.

2b) This question was answered very well by the candidates. They explained the difference between relative and absolute poverty with appropriate examples.

2c) Another challenging question for the candidates. They were able to give a good description of relative poverty with appropriate examples, however, links to how it affects emotional health was scant.

2d) It was pleasing to read the discussion by many candidates of the link between social class and morbidity rates. Weaker candidates answered it methodically using PIES whilst more able candidates supported their discussion with links to Acheson and Black Reports as well as the Inverse Care Law. They were able to discuss both positive and negative effects.

2e) Those candidates who scored high marks on this question were able to assess and not just describe how a person's access to care services may be influenced by their culture and ethnicity. Their focus tended to be on language barriers, the lack of female medical professionals available to them and the fact that they may be unfamiliar and unaware of the system in place.

Question 3

This question continues to use the theme of midwifery and in this case type of care that they offer to the service-user.

3a) For those candidates who recognised the approach to care used by the midwives in the antenatal clinic as person-centred care it was two marks. However, a number of candidates focussed on the word 'approach' and went on to describe the medical approach, which term is found in unit 1.

3b) Some candidates approached this question through the use of the care values with success. The majority were too vague in their description, focussing on ways like giving out leaflets.

3c) Discussion of the effects of smoking on an unborn baby's health was relevant with appropriate examples given by a large number of candidates. The more able candidates were able to write conclusions, which were coherent and structured.

3d) Discussion by candidates of the effects of lifestyle choices during pregnancy were appropriate with good examples given by the majority.

3e) The more able candidates were not only able to give a good assessment of the influence of care practitioners on an individual's lifestyle choice but to also provide both positive and negative alternatives.

Overall, the paper challenged the AS students and it gave them an opportunity to gain some good marks if they had the subject knowledge. However, it appeared that a number of candidates did not seem to understand what was being asked of them. It is always a little disappointing that more candidates do not gain marks in Mark Band 3. Centres appear to have completed some work on the verb hierarchy of exam questions, and generally overall how to answer the extended writing questions which is refreshing, but too many marks were lost because candidates did not read the questions properly. There were very few blank pages which is always a good sign for candidates. An observation from the examiners was the low standard of handwriting demonstrated by some candidates. Some scripts were near illegible, proving very challenging to read, thus making it difficult to assess candidates' knowledge and understanding.