

# Psychology

Advanced GCE A2 H568

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H168

## Report on the Units

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**January 2010**

**HX68/MS/R/10J**

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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**Advanced Subsidiary GCE Psychology (H168)**

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# G541 Psychological Investigations

## General Comments

Examiners were generally impressed with the knowledge and application of most students, which indicates that students are being generally well prepared by their teachers. Most students attempted to really answer the question and they seemed thoroughly engaged with all the subject matter of psychological investigations. Following previous reports some candidates had been clearly advised to link their answers to the context of the question. However there were still many who failed to realise the full potential of their response by not following through sufficiently in terms of contextualising their answers to the activity described in the question paper. The variable quality of response across sections and specific questions would suggest that candidates need to ensure all aspects of the specification are covered in their preparation for this examination. There were two 10 mark questions in this paper and candidates need to be aware of this possibility and the need to fully address these questions. The contextual aspect is particularly important for high marks in these questions as indeed is the need to give each of them equal focus. Evidence would suggest that candidates who performed very well in both the longer questions were the exception rather than the norm.

## Comments on Individual Questions

- 1     **(a)**   There were very few problems with this question and most candidates were able to explain what the mean was and/or how it was calculated. There was a small minority who confused it with the mode or median.  
  
       **(b)**   Candidates who had clearly evidenced an accurate understanding of the mean in part (a) generally gave a competent description of how to calculate it. Some candidates produced responses based on overall mean for both genders or item mean scores. For the highest mark the answer needed contextualising to the topic under investigation and many did not do this.
- 2     This question was not particularly well answered. Most candidates knew what the median was or how to work it out in a dataset but very few could address adequately its appropriateness and why.
- 3     As in previous papers there was clear evidence that the concepts of validity and reliability are not well understood by candidates. This question asked for them to be evaluated in the context of the dependent variable and many strayed away from this into broader methodological issues relating to design and sample. Placing the response in the context of this study was also frequently overlooked. The better responses were focussed, clear and well contextualised.
- 4     To achieve high marks in this question, candidates needed to provide sufficient procedural information to facilitate replication. Many restricted their mark potential due to major omissions in terms of what was being observed and how it was being observed. Minor omissions included the who, when and where. Evaluation points were frequently generic (eg demand characteristics, ethics) which although creditworthy needed to be contextualised for highest marks. The procedure needed to be fully described before the full range of marks could be given for evaluation.

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- 5** Candidates were generally aware of a relevant ethical issue and were able to give a good description of it. Most could offer a suggestion for dealing with the issue but again contextualising it clearly in context proved challenging for many.
- 6** (a) There was generally a good understanding of this with a statement as to what it means and an example to illustrate. Some candidates were not prepared for this area and failed to respond at all to this question.
- (b) Most candidates who had previously demonstrated understanding in the preceding question produced appropriate responses. Contextualising the answer adequately proved to be the biggest challenge.
- 7** (a) Most candidates appreciated the differences and identified appropriate questions.
- (b) Given there was 3 marks for each, many candidates restricted their potential by not contextualising their response sufficiently or indeed at all.
- 8** (a) Candidates generally provided sound responses to this. Clarity and detail was sometimes an issue. A minority of candidates either misunderstood or misread the question and described quantitative data.
- (b) Most candidates answered this question quite well. Clearly candidates who were confused about open and closed questions or the differences between qualitative and quantitative data in previous questions failed to provide appropriate responses here.
- 9** (a) Candidates appeared to be well prepared for extracting and interpreting data from a table. There were some occasional very vague responses not deserving of full credit.
- (b) Many provided good answers here relating to the sample details given in the study description. For the highest mark responses needed to be contextualised a little more in relation to the actual study. Some candidates responded in terms of sampling procedures which was not requested.

## G542 Core Studies

### General Comments

Examiners felt the paper was appropriate for the ability range of the intended candidates. Few candidates scored exceptionally highly, few did extremely poorly and there was a good spread of results overall.

The majority of candidates completed all the required sections of the paper and there were fewer than usual incomplete/unfinished scripts. There were however many candidates who made rubric errors by answering **both** Question 17 **and** Question 18. Teachers are advised to make it clear to candidates that only ONE question in Section C should be answered. 'Hedging bets' by answering both questions results in full justice being given to neither question.

Performance overall suggested that many teachers had either read the relevant information and guidance on the OCR website, read the January and June 2009 Reports to Centres and/or attended appropriate OCR feedback courses as candidates generally understood the requirements, content, time and mark allocation of the paper.

Most candidates seemed to know the Core Studies well though there were many instances where fine details were omitted, answers not adequately contextualised or psychological terminology understood e.g. 'hypothesis'. Handwriting, in general, this session was very poor though literacy was found to be better overall than in previous sessions. Few candidates were able to spell the word 'quiet' preferring to spell it 'quite'.

Examiners therefore felt this paper discriminated effectively across ability levels.

### Comments on Individual Questions

#### Section A

- 1 (a) Very few totally correct answers though many candidates correctly identified one symbol.  
(b) Generally poorly answered. The better candidates were able to recognise that Kanzi would have observed his mother but few went on to suggest that he copied/imitated what he had observed.
- 2 Generally well answered though many candidates failed to describe the strength and/or weakness in relation to Loftus and Palmer's study i.e. did not contextualise their answer.
- 3 Many candidates showed confusion between the control tasks and the experimental tasks. There were also frequent references to Happe's Strange Stories and the Sally-Anne Test. Often, candidates did not even attempt to answer this question.
- 4 Generally well answered.

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- 5** The majority of candidates scored at least 2 marks on this question. Many answers were however vague or incomplete and often conclusions were referred to rather than findings.
- 6** Most candidates gave adequate descriptions of two tasks but very few stated the question asked correctly, saying 'participants were asked if there was/were more....', instead of 'participants were asked if the number/mass/volume/amount was the same'.
- 7** (a) Overall, very well answered.  
(b) Well answered by most candidates.
- 8** (a) Most candidates referred to epilepsy but a fair number then suggested the operation 'cured' rather than 'reduced' the problem.  
(b) Generally well answered.
- 9** (a) Many candidates either didn't give both IV conditions or suggested the IV was the length of time as a taxi driver. In addition, many stated the DV was either the size of the hippocampus or the amount of grey matter in the hippocampus/brain.  
(b) Again many candidates referred to changes in the size of the hippocampus rather than the distribution of grey matter in the hippocampi.
- 10(a)/10(b)** Generally well answered.
- 11** (a) Few candidates actually gave the correct answer. Most referred to 'how far up the shock machine participants were willing to go' or outlined the procedure.  
(b) Most candidates were able to identify an appropriate problem but many failed to really contextualise their answer in relation to Milgram.
- 12** (a) Many excellent answers given here.  
(b) Many answers were either generic or related to the Zimbardo study. The question (and the mark scheme) made it clear that the ethical concerns should be related to things that happened in the Reicher and Haslam study.
- 13 (a)/13(b)** Generally well answered.
- 14(a)/14(b)** Generally well answered.
- 15** Generally well answered by candidates who read the question carefully.

## Section B

Loftus and Palmer was the most popular study with about an equal split between Griffiths and Dement and Kleitman.

- 16 (a) When written as an hypothesis this question part was generally answered well. However many candidates answered by stating the research aim.
- (b) The sample was usually well described though there were many characteristics identified in the L & P study that are not actually listed in the original study. However when referring to the weakness of the sample, there was a tendency towards supposition e.g. with L & P to presume students were young and therefore had little driving experience. Other candidates often failed to fully contextualise their answers.
- (c) Generally well answered though again many candidates did not fully contextualise their answers. Also, some thought the EEGs/EOGs were ways of collecting data in the D & K study. Many failed to make it clear how the data collected was actually quantitative.
- (d) Generally well answered though valuable marks were often lost because answers were not fully contextualised.
- (e) Answers varied in specific detail here. Most candidates were able to give two or three general findings appropriate to their chosen study. Good candidates were able to add fine details e.g. numbers, examples. Many candidates failed to gain marks by outlining conclusions rather than giving findings.
- (f) This question rarely scored marks as candidates failed to consider how their suggested change might affect (change) the results. The suggested change had to be appropriate and practical so in L & P reference to 'watching a REAL car crash' was not creditworthy whereas reference to 'a staged/simulated/set-up car crash' was acceptable. Likewise for Griffiths, suggesting a case study where a person was followed from being a NRG until they became a RG gained 0 marks.

## Section C

More candidates chose to answer Question 17 (Individual Differences Approach) than Question 18 (Psychodynamic Perspective). Many candidates confused the Psychodynamic Perspective with the Developmental Approach.

- 17/18(a) Most answers scored 1 mark because the response was too vague or had no reference to behaviour.
- 17/18(b) This question became a good differentiator as few candidates were able to show the connection.
- 17 (c) Candidates who chose to compare two studies listed in the Individual Difference Approach in the OCR specification scored better than those who opted to go 'outside the box'. Those who chose alternative studies did not make it clear how they could be viewed from the approach. Most candidates were able to identify an appropriate similarity/difference though many were then unable to fully describe the similarity/difference in relation to both their named studies.

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**18 (c)** Most candidates chose to compare Freud with Thigpen and Cleckley but as with 17(c) few were able to fully describe the similarity/difference in relation to both studies.

**17(d)/18(d)** There was a range of answers here though overall this question part received better answers compared to either January 2009 or June 2009. Many candidates were able to give two appropriate strengths and two appropriate weaknesses. However there was often an imbalance between the two and frequently the evidence cited did not actually support the strength/weakness identified. This question part therefore rarely achieved full marks as insufficient/inappropriate detail was given on the studies used in the answer. As in previous sessions some candidates wandered away from answering in relation to the approach/perspective and gave strengths/weaknesses of studies they used as evidence

## G543 Options in Applied Psychology

### General Comments

The examination paper appeared to be fair and accessible, presenting no consistent confusion or difficulty. A whole range was seen, some candidates responded very well and had clearly been well prepared. It differentiated across the whole ability range. Candidates seemed to understand the general requirements of the questions and there were minimal rubric errors. The vast majority of candidates answered 2 questions from 2 options. Some candidates showed an amazing ability to write accurately and at length throughout the paper. The timings seemed fair insofar as most candidates made a consistent attempt at all four questions; however many other candidates made a good attempt at two questions and an anecdotal or lay attempt at the other two. Accuracy of responses to the questions varied, in terms of selection and addressing the question asked in part (a); and in terms of contextualising and development in part (b) which provided a good means of differentiating candidates. Selecting appropriate research and using evidence explicitly was varied in response to the question. Most candidates referred to theory, evidence and concepts but to varying degrees of detail, accuracy and breadth. Many gave very general evaluations of the topics rather than a focused answer on the specified issue in the questions. Part (b) was often answered using the PEC-type structure but too often candidates offered little more than formulaic counter-arguments. Many centres had prepared their candidates well, but equally some had prepared their candidates less well or not prepared them well at all.

### Comments on Individual Questions

The vast majority of centres, and therefore candidates, took the forensic and clinical options and so there were more papers and hence more comment on questions from these options. There was a fair smattering of sport, with fewer education papers, hence less comment:

- 1 (a) Popular but not particularly well answered. Candidates often failed to address the 'more than' aspect, simply providing biological explanations for crime. Some described studies but lacked a link to gender or biology. In contrast, some candidates used research very effectively to address the question using evolutionary, genetic or biochemical evidence in particular. Many of those who proffered an evolutionary account struggled to provide a good evolutionary explanation in biological terms. Others used studies which had male participants and drew unsubstantiated conclusions about males and females (other candidates used same studies and made cautious, supported statements which were accepted as legitimate responses). Many candidates did not use research which evidenced a difference between males and females. Some candidates made little or no link at all to biology.
- (b) Most failed to address the 'to what extent' command. Those that did so effectively were deemed to be top band answers. Often just an evaluation of the biological approach was provided. The issue of reductionism was popular, with better answers appreciating this does not necessarily mean 'down to just one thing', equally, some thought the biological approach consists of three studies.

- 2** (a) Good discriminator. Those that could describe the features of the CI and describe them well accessed good marks very readily. Sadly, several candidates lost marks by focusing solely on the research, without describing the interview. Fisher was commonly quoted, which compared the CI whereas the question required a description of the CI.
- (b) Some impressive answers with candidates commenting on research and data from CIs and related research. Some answers were rather general or not located in comments about interviewing witnesses. They may have merely expressed vague comments about the types of data ('qualitative is valid and quantitative is reliable'...neither of which are true, of course) and others erroneously assuming that self report is entirely qualitative.
- 3** (a) The bottom-up approach was sometimes well described but all too often candidates merely described the John Duffy case study at length. Occasional confusion with Top/Bottom/US/UK approach. Too few candidates could explain how the bottom up approach created a profile and simply stated aspects of Canter's theory on profiling without showing how this is then used to generate a profile.
- (b) Many candidates were vague about the meaning of 'reliability' or did not distinguish between reliability and validity. Those that did could not relate the concept well to profiling. Much credit was serendipitous, relating biases to reliability when this point was not made explicitly. Reliability caused many problems in this question as many seemed unable to apply it to how a profile is used or created.
- 4** (a) Most candidates were able to demonstrate a link between suicide and prison but with varying degrees of competence. Similarly, most were able to support their answers, most notably with reference to Dooley. This was done with varying degrees of effectiveness. A few candidates resorted to anecdote. Again, some candidates detailed a study without drawing much comment about the link between suicide and imprisonment.
- (b) Most candidates did well at this question, looking at usefulness in terms of application and/or critical commentary on the research methodology. Some wrote about the usefulness of imprisonment generally, so gained little credit.
- 5** (a) This question was often well answered. Some candidates concentrated on reasons for non-adherence, or described Lustman's study with little focus on the measurement of adherence and how measuring glucose levels in blood was a measure of adherence. Some candidates described more than one way to measure adherence. Others referred to a study with only incidental reference to a measure of non-adherence, such as the use of self-report.
- (b) Reliability again foxed many students. This question was effectively answered when candidates could discuss the objective and subjective measures of adherence, for example. Some effective responses but too many candidates are confusing reliability and validity.

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- 6** (a) This was the most popular question with the vast majority attempting it and generally answering it well with Johansson and his sawmill workers study.
- (b) Candidates responded well to the general 'identify problems' demand of the question (although most offered strengths, too, for which they earned limited credit). The best candidates tailored their answers specifically to the causes of stress.
- 7** (a) Candidates who attempted this question were often able to describe the 3 stages of SIT. A few candidates concentrated on Michenbaum's study not on SIT or what it entails, or confused other non-cognitive techniques.
- (b) Comparisons seemed to be lacking in many part (b) answers, with more often an evaluation of the biological approach and occasionally evaluation of other approaches with no link between the approaches being made. Where legitimate comparisons were made candidates were readily credited in the top band.
- 8** (a) For many who had learned about characteristics of a disorder this proved to be a straight-forward way to gain a good mark assuming a correct disorder was identified. Some inappropriate disorders suggested as psychotic (eg phobias), some characteristics stated rather than described and some characteristics inaccurate (the worst being to suggest that a characteristic of schizophrenia was a split personality). In general a less popular question but often reasonably well answered.
- (b) Better done than the part (a) as most candidates could explain symptom overlap between disorders, the fact that completely different symptoms can result in the diagnosis of schizophrenia, cultural relativism, difficulties with labelling and so on.
- 9** (a) Those who provided relevant responses generally referred to Martens' CSAI-2 or occasionally to Fazole and Hardy. Many candidates missed the 'multidimensional' aspect, others providing merely vague, anecdotal accounts and seemed unprepared for this question yet still attempted it.
- (b) Surprisingly few good answers with some candidates not clear on validity with regard to this question. Challenging whether certain questions from self report measures truly assessed 'anxiety' was a simple way for some candidates to access higher marks.
- 10** (a) Again surprisingly few good responses, many candidates seemingly unprepared. The name Bandura prompted many a candidate to detail Social Learning Theory and ignore self-efficacy altogether.
- (b) Some very competent answers, particularly when a broader interpretation of 'usefulness' was applied. Many candidates failed to engage with the question adequately, merely repeating the fact that self-confidence is useful. Too often again, anecdote prevailed.

- 11 (a)** Some of the better answers from this option were found in response to this question, but there were also superficial and anecdotal responses.
- (b)** Candidates seem to struggle to apply the concept of 'qualitative' and 'quantitative', and similar comments to those of question 2(b) apply here. In some cases the evaluation of 'better' was really well considered, and derived due credit.
- 12 (a)** Some very good answers in direct response to the question, which explicitly linked research, often theory, to statements about its effect on mental health. There was however a shortage of such responses, with an oversight of the mental health demands or a failure to draw a statement from the research about the link between exercise and mental health.
- (b)** Not enough 'discussing' going on with this answer, certainly nothing like the kind of ideas expressed in the mark scheme.
- 13 (a)** Some thoroughly impressive responses, whilst other answers were rather anecdotal.
- (b)** Some were well answered, although there was sometimes a tendency to describe rather than discuss.
- 14 (a)** The majority of candidates seemed to lack specific or general psychological knowledge for this question. Many were answering a question about self-esteem without any knowledge of what self-esteem was, with even their 'common-sense' definitions being way off the mark. Conversely, those that had been prepared by their centres readily accessed top marks.
- (b)** Some surprisingly good answers here despite the apparent lack of knowledge in part (a). Candidates seemed comfortable with the concept of ethnocentrism and with applying it to relevant research.
- 15 (a)** Very few attempts at this question, but quite good attempts from those that did. The concept of a strategy was one which the candidates handled well, with reference being seamlessly included. I get the feeling that in some cases candidates have been involved in anti-bullying initiatives in their own schools and so could describe and add evidence to their experiences, which is exactly what applied psychology should be.
- (b)** Rather anecdotal and vague..
- 16 (a)** A few candidates really knew where they were going with their responses and were comfortable in their references to supporting literature, such as Bloom.
- (b)** Quite well discussed although many answers tended to lose the focus on additional needs and drift into methodological issues generally.

# G544 Approaches and Research Methods in Psychology

## General

This is the first paper for G544 and the entry for this synoptic unit was 4,390. The overall standard of performance of the candidates varied considerably but candidates appeared to have been taught appropriate material and to be well prepared for the style of questions. In section A candidates described a feasible investigation in detail which was both practical and ethical. Some candidates did not gain full credit as they chose investigations which could not have resulted in the collection of ordinal level data. However, many candidates gave imaginative and carefully thought out descriptions of a practical project based on the research question. Popular choices of research question were police officers remembering car registration plates and women and men remembering details of clothing. In section B, most candidates showed understanding of the questions under discussion but sometimes their points were not fully elaborated or their examples described in much detail. Questions 8 and 9 attracted a similar number of answers although answers to question 9 tended to be slightly stronger. There were few rubric errors: in Section A candidates usually chose one of the research questions on which to base their practical project, in Section B they selected one out of the two questions. Most candidates were able to complete the paper in the allocated time but some appeared to be short of time as the parts d and e on section B could be very brief. Although there is not a requirement to include research from the A2 options unit many candidates were over-reliant on AS studies which limited the scope of their answers. However, the AS studies were used to good effect in the candidates' responses.

## Section A

Most candidates framed a null hypothesis but many did not fully operationalise both variables (particularly the dependent variable). Some candidates described an alternate hypothesis rather than a null.

This question was marked out of 13 +6. 13 marks were given for the description of the practical project and its replicability and appropriateness. 6 marks were given for the design and its feasibility. The full range of marks (13) and (6) was awarded.

The method was clearly described although it was not always fully replicable. Many candidates missed out details of scoring and did not give sufficient details of how the sample was obtained. Questions (a) and (b) on visual illusions attracted weaker answers and many of the candidates who selected (b) did not collect ordinal level data. In (c) and (d) police / non police registrations the answers were strongest. Candidates lost marks in the design section if they: described an unethical study such as depriving students of food for 12 hours or using children, or if the procedure would have resulted in the collection of nominal level data.

Candidates could gain full marks for describing the advantage of a repeated measures or matched pairs design whichever was most appropriate but the answer needed to be given in the context of the practical already described.

The quality of responses to this question were varied, most candidates gave clearer answers related to ecological validity than to experimental validity. The full range of marks was awarded for this question.

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Most candidates identified a sampling method but did not always explain how the sample could be selected or why it would be representative.

Candidates have a good knowledge of appropriate ethical issues but do not always discuss them in the context of their own practical project.

This question gave candidates the opportunity to develop possible future research ideas. Some candidates made appropriate suggestions but some were implausible or completely unrelated to the original research question. The majority of answers focused on changing one variable in the sample eg older, younger etc

### **Section B**

- 8**
- (a)** Most candidates could describe the cognitive approach clearly and with some degree of accuracy. They linked cognitive processes to a computer model and many were able to describe the approach in terms of studying the mental processes of memory, thinking, language etc. A minority of candidates confused the cognitive approach with the physiological approach. The full range of marks was awarded.
  - (b)** Loftus and Palmer was the most popular choice of cognitive research in this answer and better candidates were able to explain why the study was 'cognitive'. Marks were awarded from all bands.
  - (c)** There was some clear evidence of structure to these answers with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Better answers evaluated the approach and used evidence effectively to support the points made. Weaker answers gave evaluation of the studies cited rather than directing the points towards the cognitive approach. Marks in all bands were awarded although the majority of marks fell between 6 -9.
  - (d)** Most candidates were able to make some distinctions between the cognitive approach and the behaviourist perspective and support this with appropriate evidence, commonly Bandura for the behaviourist perspective or Watson and Rayner. Some candidates had little understanding of the behavioural approach. Weaker responses focused on a comparison between evidence from the two areas and some gave inappropriate evidence. Marks were awarded in all bands – but a minority of candidates were awarded marks in the top band for this question.
  - (e)** Most candidates knew some of the features that make psychology a science and could link this to the cognitive approach. Most answers related science to the methodologies of lab experiments. Many candidates were not able to develop their answers into a coherent discussion. The full range of marks was awarded in all bands.
- 9**
- (a)** Most candidates could describe what is meant by ecological validity and many referred to it as 'like real life'. Stronger candidates related it to the procedures of research. Few candidates who chose this question were awarded fewer than 2 marks.
  - (b)** Piliavin was the most popular choice of a study high in ecological validity and most candidates could explain why the research had high ecological validity. Weaker candidates gave inaccurate descriptions of research and some chose inappropriate research for this question. A small minority described research from the A2 specification. Marks were awarded from all bands.

- (c)** Stronger candidates argued a range of at least two strengths and weaknesses of research low in ecological validity and supported their points with appropriate evidence. However, weaker answers sometimes drifted into descriptions of research with high ecological validity or tended to be repetitive and only emphasised the positives of research with low ecological validity. Marks were awarded from all bands.
- (d)** This question generally produced mid band answers although marks were awarded across all bands. This may have been because candidates were starting to run out of time. The majority of candidates made one point of comparison, focusing on how laboratory experiments have low ecological validity whereas field experiments have high ecological validity. Stronger candidates argued a range of points arising from the different experimental methods e.g. validity, reliability, demand characteristics, ethics, samples etc. Weaker candidates simply described lab and field experiments without identifying their differences/similarities.
- (e)** This appeared to be a straight forward question but many candidates did not highlight the applications from the research and either described it or picked out the positive aspects of it. A minority of candidates seemed to think that Little Albert/ Freud/ Thigpen and Cleckley or any research not done in a laboratory were field experiments. Stronger candidates wrote answers making points on 'usefulness' from both a theoretical and a practical viewpoint. Marks were awarded in all bands.

# Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Psychology H168 H568  
January 2010 Examination Series

## Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
G541	Raw	60	45	41	37	33	29	0
	UMS	60	48	42	36	30	24	0
G542	Raw	120	82	73	64	56	48	0
	UMS	140	112	98	84	70	56	0
G543	Raw	100	62	54	46	38	31	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
G544	Raw	80	57	50	44	38	32	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0

## Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
H168	200	160	140	120	100	80	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
H168	9.9	28.7	58.7	82.1	93.5	100.0	1332

## 1332 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums/index.html>

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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