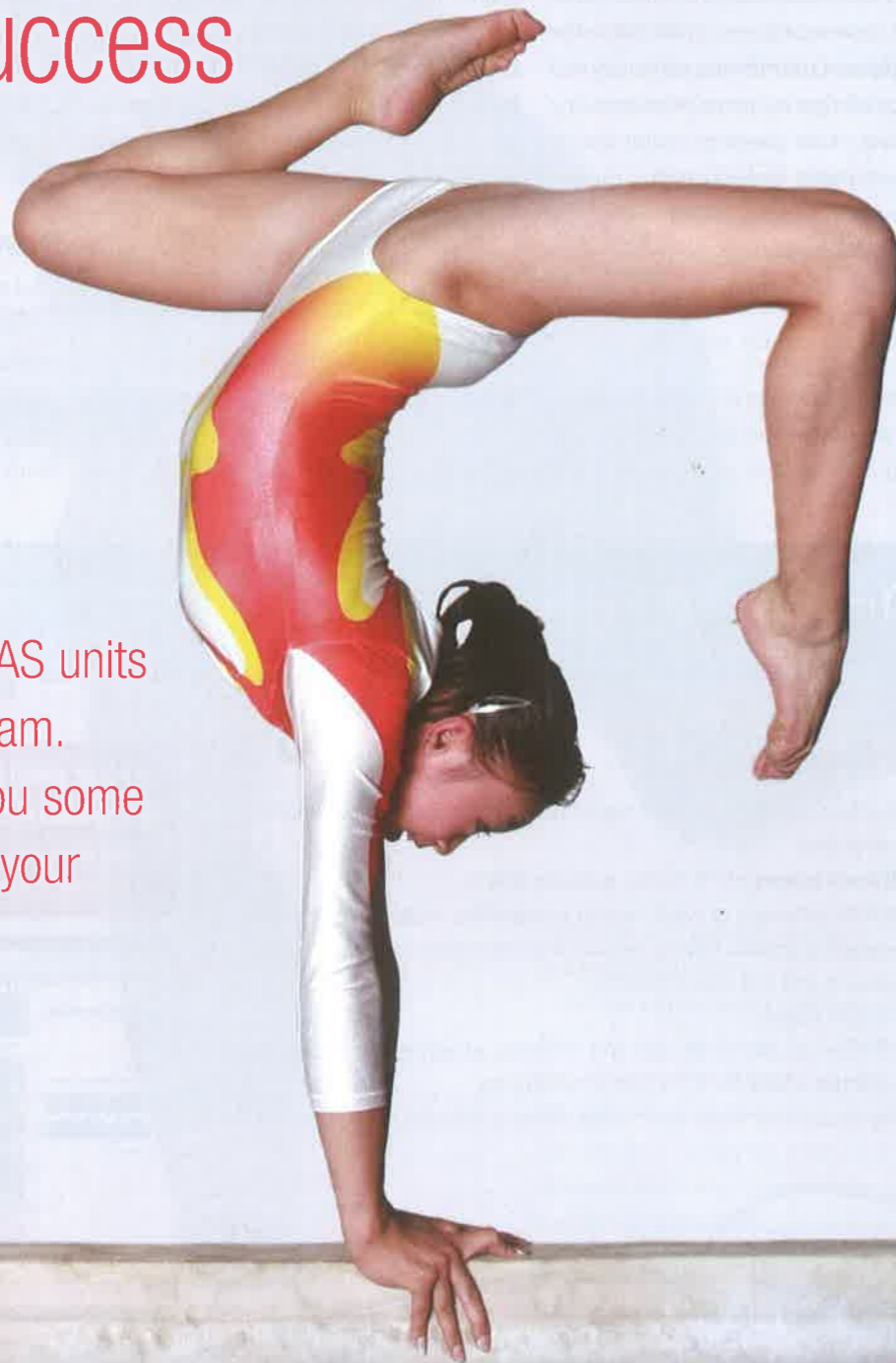


The PHED1 exam

Tips for success

One of the two AQA AS units is assessed by an exam. Mike Murray gives you some pointers on boosting your marks.



The AQA AS examined unit in physical education is referred to as PHED1. It covers opportunities for and effects of leading a healthy and active lifestyle. Students usually take the exam in May. Re-sit exams are possible in the following January.

The examination consists of a 2-hour written paper, divided into two sections:

- section A has 6 questions, each worth 12 marks
- section B has a single 12-mark question

The question in section B (Question 7) is used to:

- 'stretch and challenge' you
- assess your quality of written communication (QWC)

All questions are compulsory and they give a total for the examination of 84 marks.

Section A

Questions 1 and 2

The first two questions in section A are on applied exercise physiology. Topic areas within this include:

- health, exercise and fitness
- nutrition
- pulmonary function
- transport of blood gases
- cardiac function
- analysis of movement
- levers

The two questions here are expected to be scenario-based (for example, to do with breathing during a basketball match) and will be divided into various sub-parts so each question can cover several topics from the specification. However, there is no guarantee about what may or may not be covered in any one examination.

You should expect to meet a variety of command words and expressions. There will be straightforward commands like 'name', 'list', 'state', 'identify' and 'what do you understand by the term...'. However, you will also find commands that require you to be

more discursive (talk about the issue a bit more), such as 'discuss' or 'explain'.

Remember that changing the wording of the question, especially with a command word, will change what the question requires you to do. For example, 'What colour is blood?' is a very different question from 'Explain the colour of blood'.

Box 1 sets out what key commands require you to do, and tells you what other key terms mean.

All examinations are designed to produce a range of marks; there will be easier questions and harder questions. In general, the harder questions are to do with applying the particular topic to the performance scenario. In physiology, not very many topics can actually be applied to improve performance. This is why examiners use the topics that

Box 1 Some key commands and terms: what do they mean?

Key commands

- 'Define': give a clear, concise statement of the meaning of a word or term
- 'Explain': give an answer along with reasons to justify it
- 'Describe': give an accurate account of the main points relating to the task you have been set
- 'Critically analyse/evaluate/discuss': give both sides of an argument or debate, stating your own opinions as appropriate
- 'State/give/list/identify': show that you clearly understand unique and/or key characteristics
- 'Apply/demonstrate your knowledge': use practical sporting examples to clearly illustrate your understanding of theoretical content

Key terms

- 'Characteristics': features and/or important distinguishing qualities
- 'Benefits': positive outcomes

have more difficult concepts as a way to discriminate between candidates.

The difficult topics are to do with the regulation of physiological parameters, like breathing rate and heart rate. Note the different levels of skill required to answer the following questions:

- 'Name, sketch and label a lever system' mainly requires you to recall facts.
- 'Explain the mechanical advantages and disadvantages of a particular lever system' requires a higher level of skill — you have to give an answer and reasons to justify it.

All this means that questions 1 and 2 will usually develop from easier factual-recall questions concerning a scenario, towards more difficult concepts. This is certainly how things have been in the exam papers produced recently.

Recent exam papers have also shown some repetition of questions: for example, the papers from May 2009 and January 2010 both asked about the anatomy of the leg and the regulation of the breathing rate. However, remember that there is no absolute guarantee that a particular topic area will or will not be present in the exam you will be writing.

Questions 3 and 4

These two PHED1 questions come from the skill-acquisition area of the specification. The format follows that of the previous questions. Questions 3 and 4:

- are scenario-based
- are structured
- involve initial factual recall followed by more applied questions

There are more opportunities within the specification for applied questions in this area. Topics include:

- characteristics and classification of skill
- information processing
- stages of learning
- motivation
- learning theories

- transfer of learning
- goal-setting

With topics like this for questions 3 and 4, it is a basic requirement for you to:

- understand the theory
- explain how the theory can be improved or used to benefit the performer

Remember that the specification is divided into three broad areas: skill, information processing and learning. This means that in any one series of exams, some areas within each of these topics will always be examined.

There is also a wide range of topics from within the information processing and learning areas of the specification. Again, you should expect a growing level of difficulty as you progress through each question, with a

requirement to apply theoretical knowledge to the performer in at least one question.

As with questions 1 and 2 there has already been a repetition of topics over the exams, with a question on operant conditioning appearing in both 2009 and 2010.

Questions 5 and 6

These questions will be from the area of the specification on opportunities for participation. This area has four main sections:

- concepts of physical activity
- current provision for active leisure
- creating opportunities to increase participation
- potential barriers to participation

This area of the specification is more broad-based than the previous two sections and in answering the questions you need to take a more discursive approach. You will find that several questions do need some remembering of facts, but many will be asking about opinions and ways of getting things done, where there are no clear statements of intent.

You should expect these questions to be structured like the questions in the previous sections — although individual answers may well be for 3 or 4 marks rather than the 1, 2 or 3 marks per question found in the other sections.

Questions 5 and 6 may also be repeats of questions in previous exams. For example,



a question on the National Curriculum for Physical Education has occurred in both the series of papers undertaken so far.

Section B

Section B contains just one question: question 7. The topics covered in the relevant section of the specification are shown in Box 2. Evidence from previous exams suggests that this question usually goes like this:

- There is a standard introduction, for example: 'You have been asked to help with the fitness and skill development of a group of performers within an AS physical education class.'

Then, you are given two areas to write about. There seems to be a trend towards asking about specific topics rather than general topic areas — for example, asking about 'visual guidance' rather than just 'guidance'.

The way question 7 is marked is very different from the way the other questions are marked. In questions 1–6, every correct answer gains a mark. However, question 7 is marked using a banded-mark scheme:

- first, an ideal answer is produced
- then, the examiners give marks in bands depending on how close the answer they

are marking is to the ideal answer (that is, the 'correct' response)

This means if you want to score well you will have to provide the majority of the answer expected. This is why no allocation higher than 12 marks is provided for question 7.

If you know a lot of detail about one specific area of the question but not very much about another area you probably won't be able to gain full marks, because good, balanced answers are required.

Preparing well for question 7 is likely to be important, as the difference between a good and a poor answer can result in a big difference in how many marks are allocated. Teachers should 'coach' you so that you:

- understand the nature of the topic areas
- clearly understand that the exam question will always be 'open-ended'

The examiners will require you to provide:

- as much information as possible
- a lot of reasons for the answer you give

For example, a question on teaching styles would expect you to be able to define each different teaching style, then identify the characteristics of both the learner and the task in order to come to a conclusion as to which style might be preferred in particular

Box 2 Topics involved in section B of the PHED1 exam

The following content should be delivered in Unit 2, but will be assessed by a question in section B of the Unit 1 written paper:

- Applied exercise physiology in practical situations
- Principles of training: concepts of specificity, progression, over-training, overload, reversibility and tedium, FITT principles
- Calculating working intensities for optimal gains through heart rate and Borg scale, weights — one rep max
- Fitness testing: reasons for testing, principles of maximal and sub-maximal tests, limitations of testing, specific test protocols, issues relating to validity and reliability
- Physiological and psychological value of a warm-up and cool-down; types of stretching exercises (active, passive, static and ballistic); principles of safe practice
- Training methods: continuous, intermittent, circuit, weights, plyometrics and mobility; explanation of the principles of each method, with specific examples, advantages and disadvantages.
- Skill acquisition in practical situations
- Factors to consider when developing skill and planning training/coaching sessions
- Teaching styles: command, reciprocal, discovery and problem-solving
- Methods of presenting practice: whole, part, progressive part and whole-part-whole
- Types of practice: massed, distributed, variable and mental
- Methods of guidance: verbal, visual, manual and mechanical
- Feedback: types of feedback, knowledge of performance, knowledge of results, terminal, concurrent, delayed, positive and negative, intrinsic, extrinsic

scenarios. The examiners would not require you to identify a preferred style of teaching.

The other important thing about question 7 is that it is the only question where your quality of written communication (QWC) is credited. This is also done using a banded-marking system. The examiner:

- first adds up the total number of correct pieces of information you have provided
- then works out your final mark for the question based on how well you presented your answer

For you to gain the higher marks, at least half the responses you provide will have to be acceptable according to the mark scheme. For question 7 you should probably write joined-up prose, but it is fine to answer questions 1–6 using bullet points.

It's probably a good idea to take your time over question 7. You might well find it easier to complete question 7 first, when you start the exam, rather than waiting until the end when you might be struggling for time and you might not do the question justice.

Preparing for the exam

Preparing is going to be a long process: there are well over 50 different topic areas, and if you revised one a day it would take you more than 7 weeks. Allowing for days when you don't revise or need a rest, you'd be better thinking of a revision programme of 10–12 weeks. This suggests that for an exam taking place towards the end of May, you should have started revising by the end of February.

Some tips to help your revision:

- Use your knowledge of skill acquisition to aid revision.

- As you revise, condense your knowledge down to a series of bullet points which you can record or use in spider diagrams or mind maps.

- Use diagrams to help you. Remember the lesson on long-term memory: we store information as images.

- Remember the limits of short-term memory. Don't revise for too long without a break.

- Set yourself goals — aim to complete topics within a specified time.

- When you achieve a goal, give yourself a reward to help your motivation.

Happy revising.

Mike Murray is principal examiner of a major exam board and author of a number of teaching resources.

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