

The following sample looks at the question: *Explain **one** factor that influences conformity.*

What is this question asking for?

- The command term “explain” requires that students give a detailed account including reasons or causes. In other words, why is it that this factor has an effect on conformity?
- The focus of the response should be on only **one** factor that influences conformity. The factor should be explicitly stated in the response.
- A study should be provided which illustrates how the factor influences conformity.

Sample response

Conformity defined.	Conformity is adjusting one's behavior or thinking to match those of other people or a group standard, because there is a desire to fit in or be accepted by others and maintaining order in one's life. The more people there are in a certain group, the more likely we are to conform in order to fit in that group. This is because as the number of members of a group increases, the more beneficial it becomes for us to be a part of that group.
The factor – group size – is identified.	
Explanation as to why group size may matter.	
	In the Asch paradigm, the participants of the study were real participants and confederates; they were all seated in a classroom. Each participant was asked questions concerning the lengths of lines. A longer and shorter line had to be compared and then each participant had to say his answer out loud, this was chosen because the correct answers were not ambiguous and therefore if people gave incorrect answers it would mean that they conformed. The confederates gave their answers before the real participant did, so that they could affect the real participants. The number of confederates changed with variations to the experiments.
The study is outlined – the aim, however, is not clearly stated.	The confederates answered some questions correctly but most of the time they provided incorrect answers. There was also a control group where there were no confederates. As a result only one participant gave a wrong answer in the control group. In the group with the confederates, the overall conformity rate was 32% this means that participants conformed on 32% of all trials. Nobody conformed on 100% of trials and 13 out of the original 50 never conformed at all. The number of confederates affected the conformity rate. With one confederate (3% conformity rate), two confederates (14% conformity rate), three confederates (32%). Further increases in-group sizes did not increase conformity.
The results of the study are clearly stated.	The one factor that increased the conformity rate among the real participants was the number of confederates answering incorrectly. As the number of confederates increased up to three, the real participants had a greater urge to adjust their behavior to match the confederates. Therefore, the more people there are in a certain group, the more likely we are to conform in order to fit in that group. This is because as the number of members of a group increases, the more beneficial it becomes for us to be a part of that group. It is also because if there are more people that state the same answer, then it increases the chance that the participant is, in fact,
A further explanation as to why group size has an effect on conformity.	



wrong. This study shows that conformity happens because of normative social influence (we have the need for social approval and acceptance) and informational influence (we get information to understand a situation from others).

Predicted score: The study is missing a clearly stated aim, but overall, the SAQ is well answered. Most likely would receive 7 marks.

What are common problems with this question?

- Students simply describe a study of conformity – such as Asch’s classic study – and do not address the question of a factor that influences conformity.
- Students describe more than one factor. In this case, only the first factor is assessed.
- The factor is identified and the study is outlined, but the actual effect that the factor plays on conformity is not explicitly stated.

