GCE Examiners' Report

Psychology

GCE

Summer 2026

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026



Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.[1]

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

[1] ***Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.***

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner | WJEC

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Contents

	Page
Executive summary	5
Unit 1 – Past To Present	6
Unit 2 – Using Psychological Concepts	9
Unit 3 – Implications In The Real World	12
Unit 4 – Applied Research Methods	20
Supporting you – useful contacts and links	24

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Executive Summary

Across all four units, candidate performance was generally strong, with evidence of secure subject knowledge and improving examination skills. There were encouraging signs that candidates are becoming more adept at recognising question requirements and applying the appropriate assessment objectives. However, a recurring theme is the need for greater precision, contextualisation and depth, particularly when applying knowledge to scenarios (AO2) and when developing evaluative responses (AO3).

In Unit 1, candidates showed strong knowledge and understanding across the paper, performing particularly well on assumptions and relationship-based questions. AO2 application skills appeared to have improved compared with previous years. Nevertheless, candidates often lacked sufficient accuracy and detail when describing findings from classic studies and did not always tailor responses to the specific requirements of questions. Particular weaknesses were seen in explanations of conclusions and social implications, where answers frequently drifted into irrelevant areas.

In Unit 2, research methods knowledge was a clear strength, especially considering candidates' relatively short time studying psychology. Most questions were attempted successfully, and time management appeared less problematic than in previous years. The contemporary debate on the relevance of positive psychology proved more challenging, and candidates often lost marks in Section B because they failed to apply their knowledge to the scenario rather than through inaccuracies in their understanding. Knowledge of concepts such as validity, research design, variables and descriptive statistics was generally secure, but contextualisation remained an area for development.

In Unit 3, many candidates produced strong responses, demonstrating secure knowledge and a better understanding of different command words and question types. Improvements were evident in candidates' ability to distinguish between explanations and methods of behaviour modification and in their use of AO3 evaluation. Candidates were increasingly successful at linking knowledge to specific behaviours and scenarios. However, responses often lacked the depth and precision needed for the highest mark bands. Five-mark questions remained challenging, and controversies essays frequently relied on rehearsed responses rather than addressing the specific focus of the question.

In Unit 4, candidates demonstrated a very good understanding of research methods, with high attempt rates across the paper and continued improvement in contextualisation. Evaluation skills also showed further development, with stronger use of research methods terminology and more fully elaborated evaluative points. The main areas of difficulty were explaining how validity could be assessed in correlational studies and justifying methodological choices, such as sampling methods and descriptive statistics. Overall, performance was encouraging, particularly in the application of research methods knowledge to novel scenarios.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

PSYCHOLOGY

GCE

Summer 2026

UNIT 1 – Past To Present

Overview of the Unit

Overall, there were some excellent responses across the different questions and assessment objectives, demonstrating in-depth knowledge and understanding applied to the question set. Candidates performed well on assumptions and relationships questions and showed improvement in their AO2 application skills. Areas for further improvement include the level of accuracy and detail when describing findings of classic evidence and ensuring that candidates tailor their answers to the requirements of the question. This was particularly the case when describing conclusions and social implications of classic evidence.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a) This was a well answered question by a number of candidates and was one of the most accessible questions on the paper. Compared to previous years there seemed to be an improvement in the number of candidates including an example from psychology. Most referred to the role of dopamine and/or serotonin in psychological problems and some used examples from relationship formation or therapy. In some cases, explanations of the neurotransmission process were not always clear or contained enough specialist terminology to access the highest mark band, even if the answer contained the main information required. In addition, some candidates would have benefited from giving some explanation of their example rather than just stating it. For example, making it clearer that in this assumption, an imbalance of particular neurotransmitters can affect behaviour.

(b) Many candidates were able to identify an appropriate assumption and apply this to a specific relationship. The most common assumption chosen was evolutionary influences applied to romantic relationships. However, many candidates simply described differences in male and female mate preferences without fully explaining the underpinning evolutionary processes. This meant that they were unable to access the top mark bands. For example, the answers would have benefited from reference being made to parental investment differences or the desire for males to seek fertile females as indicated by attractiveness. Other candidates used the example of the role of neurotransmitters in the formation of relationships and were able to give specific examples and sometimes research studies showing the process. For example, the role of dopamine or oxytocin.

Q.2 An issue for many candidates here was confusion between specific terms such as determinism and reductionism. In some cases, candidates would begin an evaluation point discussing one issue but use examples and explanation relating to a different one.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Another issue was clarity of explanation of how the strength or weakness applied to the cognitive approach. There are some aspects where the cognitive approach could arguably be applied to different concepts (for example it contains elements of both nature and nurture) but this was not always clearly explained, making the answer muddled. In addition, some answers focused more on evaluating the therapy from the approach rather than the approach itself. It is appropriate to use CBT/REBT as examples, but this should be to illustrate an evaluation point such as applications to the real world rather than evaluating the therapy per se. To answer this question effectively, answers should state a strength or weakness, apply it to specific examples from the approach (for example the classic evidence to illustrate its scientific nature) and then fully explain why this is a strength or weakness for the approach.

Q.3 There were some outstanding answers to this question, where candidates were able to recall a vast amount of detail about the procedures of the study. In this question it was important for candidates to balance the depth and range in their answer given the mark allocation. For example, some candidates spent too long explaining one part of the process and therefore did not include other aspects of the study such as stimulus generalisation or the change of environment. Unfortunately, some candidates spent time describing little Albert's reaction at each stage. As these are the findings of the study this was not creditworthy for this question.

Q.4 Many candidates were able to outline a number of key components of a therapy from the psychodynamic approach. Most answers described the components of dream analysis and outlined key aspects such as dreams being the “royal road to the unconscious”, and examples of dreamwork processes. However, with many answers there was some confusion about the role of the therapist in reversing the dreamwork process and some confusion about the latent and manifest content. In addition, a majority of answers did not make it clear how dream analysis forms a therapeutic process to access the unconscious mind and deal with issues to treat psychological problems. There were fewer answers that referred to group analysis psychotherapy. Some were only able to give vague descriptions of groups meetings to discuss issues, while better answers were able to refer to specific processes such as mirroring and explaining how these might help to deal with psychological problems that the individual was experiencing.

Q.5 Application of the positive approach to the formation of relationships was answered less well than the similar question earlier in the paper (Q1b). There were some very good answers that focused on concepts such as free will and international activity in relationships or an explanation of how relationships help individuals develop their signature strengths. However, there was confusion over terminology such as ‘flow’ and ‘good life’ in some answers and it was not always clear from answers how aspects of the positive approach were relevant in the formation of relationships.

Q.6 It was clear that many candidates were aware of the AO2 requirements of this question and made efforts to refer to both Morgan and Kiran in their response. Given previous examiners’ reports have often commented on the lack of AO2 skills being shown by many candidates, this was pleasing to see. However, sometimes in referring to Morgan and Kiran candidates did not evaluate the therapy in a way that allowed them to access the higher mark bands. For example, they did not include relevant research evidence for effectiveness or did not give specific examples to add depth to their evaluation points. The best answers were able to include effective evaluation along with sustained links to the scenario, for example reference being made to workplace stress and employees.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Q.7 Although social implications are included on the specification, a number of answers to this question referred to ethics which were not creditworthy, for example talking about the lack of valid consent or potential risks of harm to the children in the study. This question required candidates to explain how the findings of Bowlby's study could or have been used positively or negatively in society. The best answers gave a brief finding from the study and were able to show a specific social implication such as stigma for working mothers or changes to maternity and paternity leave.

Q.8 As with previous compare and contrast questions, the key element missing from a number of answers was an evaluative judgment that compared the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches. Many answers were able to give similarities and differences between the two approaches focusing on concepts such as determinism, nature and nurture and scientific status. They also gave specific examples from each approach to illustrate the comparison, using examples from assumptions, therapy and relationships. However, as this is an AO3 question, candidates are also required to make an evaluative judgement for the higher mark bands. For example, explaining how a similarity might be a weakness of both approaches or how a difference might make one approach better than the other. As with question two there was also some confusion over key evaluative terminology and how this applied to the approaches. For example, there were a number of candidates who made the assumption that by focusing on the role of the environment that meant that the behaviourist approach therefore took free will into account.

Q.9 This was the question on the paper attempted by the fewest number of candidates. Where it was answered, many were able to explain appropriate evaluation points and give specific examples from the study to add context to their answer. Candidates could receive credit for evaluating the use of secondary sources by Myers and Diener and/or the methods used by the studies included as part of the literature review. For example, many referred to the possible researcher bias when selecting sources or the problems with using self-report when measuring happiness.

Q.10 (a) There were some impressive answers to this question, where candidates were able to recall details about the average speed estimates in Experiment 1 and the numbers of participants who remembered seeing broken glass in Experiment 2. When including quantitative data, there were some errors in the numbers given but there were also a number of errors in the labelling. For example, mixing up the verbs in Experiment 1 or incorrectly naming the groups in Experiment 2. A number of answers gave only vague qualitative descriptions of the findings which received only minimal credit.

(b) This question required candidates to describe the conclusions of Loftus and Palmer's research. These conclusions should be taken from the original research article. The best answers were those that referred to concepts such as response bias and how Experiment 2 indicated a change in the participant's memory as a result of the verb in the question. Many candidates simply repeated the findings of the study or referred to social implications. For example, they stated that the conclusion of the study was that eyewitness testimony was unreliable. As with question 7, it is important that candidates are able to tailor their answer to the requirements of the question and ensure they cover all areas of the specification in their revision.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

PSYCHOLOGY

GCE

Summer 2026

UNIT 2 – Using Psychological Concepts

Overview of the Unit

This year, candidates again showed strong research methods knowledge, especially given their limited time studying psychology. Most questions were well attempted, and timing did not appear to be as big an issue as previous series. This year candidates found the contemporary debate question (relevance of positive psychology to today's society) more challenging than in the previous series and, similar to previous series, candidates often only lost marks in section B due to their lack of application, rather than inaccurate knowledge. Candidates frequently understood concepts such as validity and research designs, yet did not apply these to the specific scenarios, which prevented them from accessing AO2 marks. Scenario questions showed generally secure understanding of variables and descriptive statistics, with calculations often completed accurately. However, questions requiring explanation of why validity increased, or how a sample would be collected again suffered from limited application. Overall, students demonstrated commendable knowledge. Continued practice in applying this knowledge to unfamiliar scenarios remains essential, as stronger contextualisation will allow candidates to gain full credit for what they already understand well.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 This question was attempted by most candidates, but unlike in the previous series most responses did not attempt to engage with the quote. Responses were generally basic, with some candidates having quite limited knowledge of positive psychology's application in real life. These answers focused primarily on the assumptions of the approach and mindfulness in quite a vague way. Those who did score highly did so by including a range of themes for debate, the most popular were positive psychology in education, at work and in leisure and lifestyle. Some centres had also taught about the role of the military, and others had included more contemporary research than in mainstream published texts. Both allowed candidates to access higher marks when they were debated accurately. Candidates generally included a balanced argument with both benefits and costs of positive psychology's use in these locations. Conclusions this year were rather repetitive and often failed to make an overall judgement about the relevance of positive psychology in today's society.

Q.2 This was a multi-part question that asked candidates to identify terms that had been described. Q2 (b) which described a null hypothesis was highly accessible with most candidates achieving full marks, Q2 (a), (c) and (d) were well attempted but often incorrect. Many candidates identified reliability for Q2 (c) but did not specify external reliability so could not gain the mark. Candidates are reminded to be precise when identifying key terminology.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Q.3 Ethics and Milgram are always well received and answered. Parts (a) and (b) were attempted by most candidates. Higher scores were awarded for part (a) where almost all candidates were able to gain a mark for identifying an appropriate ethical issue. Most were also able to give a basic explanation of the issue in context. Part (b), where candidates had to explain how a debrief would overcome the issue they identified in part (a), suffered from a lack of contextualisation and/or detail limiting the average score.

Q.4 Levels of data have historically been an area where candidates struggled, therefore it was very pleasing to see both a high attempt rate and average score for this question. Many candidates who answered this question were able to secure marks by accurately explaining the difference between interval and ratio data.

Q.5 This question had one of the lowest attempt rates on the paper. Very few of the candidates who did respond were able to accurately describe 'time sampling' using an example. Many answers rehashed the terms by responding with something like "time sampling is when you sample people at specific times". Candidates who scored well were able to give clear examples, often which related to past papers with this term included, showing that those how had practised these types of responses were best able to access the marks.

Q.6 This question was well attempted, and candidates generally were able to give clear strengths and weaknesses of a semi-structured interview. Unfortunately, some of those candidates failed to contextualise their response, so whilst having excellent evaluative points, could not access any marks. Those who named participants e.g. 'boys' or who referred to the moral dilemmas in their answers scored highly.

Q.7 This question was again a low scoring but well attempted response. Many candidates confused natural experiments with field location, rather than focusing on manipulation of the independent variable (IV).

Q.8 This was the most attempted question on the paper, with almost all candidates writing some form of response about the meaning of 'confidentiality' in research. Many answers referred to privacy, which is not strictly accurate, but positive marking principles were applied and any responses that referred to keeping participant information secure gained credit. Those who went on to link this to anonymity scored most highly.

Q.9 This was the first scenario question, made up of an extended writing response (Q9 (a)) and shorter questions that required contextualisation (parts b – d). Part (a) asked candidates to evaluate research that is conducted online. A significant number of candidates scored at least half marks on this question. Those who scored at the lower end of the mark bands did so because they focused on the methods used online, rather than the location of research. All parts were well attempted, part (d) slightly less so than the others, but part (b) was found to be one of the most difficult questions on the paper. This question asked candidates to explain why using two methods of data collection would increase validity. Many candidates were able to give perfectly valid responses, but almost all failed to contextualise beyond using words from the question stem and so failed to score. Any reference to the webpage/site and which elements the participants found most appealing would have been enough context to score, but unfortunately many candidates missed out these vital elements in their responses.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Q.10 This scenario question was made up of eight short answer questions, all of which were contextualised (AO2). These questions were the best attempted on the paper and often the highest scoring, showing that candidates are confident with questions around variables and descriptive statistics. Questions 10 (b) and (c) (i) were found to be most difficult for candidates. Again, this was not usually because of a lack of research methods knowledge rather the lack of contextualisation in answers which limited scores. For example, many candidates were able to correctly identify that the research design was independent groups (Q10 (c)(i)), but most failed to contextualise their explanation, meaning they scored only 1/3. Q10 (e) (i) and (ii) asked candidates to calculate means using the data provided and were consequently very high scoring.

Q.11 The three questions on this final scenario all related to gathering research participants. Much like Question 5, most candidates were unable to explain what was meant by the key term 'sampling frame' in part (a). Many responses instead described the target population and referred to the scenario in their responses (which was not required for this question). As a result, this was the lowest scoring question on the whole paper. Parts (b) and (c) had reasonably low attempt rates compared to other questions (the exception being Q2 (d)). This may indicate that some candidates ran out of time. Those who did respond generally failed to contextualise their answers. Q11 (b) asked candidates to explain how the psychologist might have collected their quota sample. Responses were generally poor, with or without contextualisation. Some candidates were able to talk about splitting the participants into proportional subgroups, but very few were able to accurately explain how participants would then be selected from those groups. The lack of contextualisation and basic knowledge for this answer meant it was one of the lowest scoring questions on the paper. Part (c) asked for strengths and weaknesses of a quota sample in context. Whilst methods knowledge was slightly better on this question, again many candidates failed to contextualise, limiting their score.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

PSYCHOLOGY

GCE

Summer 2026

UNIT 3 – Implications In The Real World

Overview of the Unit

Many candidates produced strong responses across the paper, demonstrating secure knowledge and an improving understanding of the demands of different question types. There were encouraging improvements in candidates' recognition of command words and their ability to apply the appropriate assessment objectives, with many selecting relevant material and avoiding the confusion between explanations or methods of modification that had been seen previously. Performance on AO3 questions was also a notable strength, with more candidates effectively linking AO1 knowledge to the specific behaviours required. However, there remains scope for improvement in accessing the highest mark bands across all assessment objectives, where responses often lacked the depth, precision, or development required. The standalone 5-mark questions continued to challenge some candidates, and the controversies questions again revealed a tendency for candidates to rely on generic, pre-prepared responses rather than addressing the specific focus of the question. Greater attention to the wording of the question and a more targeted application of knowledge would enable more candidates to achieve the highest levels of performance.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a) This question required candidates to demonstrate both AO1 knowledge and AO3 evaluation, with all available marks awarded across these assessment objectives. The question had broad requirements, as candidates could select any two explanations of addiction from across the specification. For AO1, the most popular choice was biological explanations. Stronger responses demonstrated accurate and detailed knowledge, included relevant psychological terminology, and explicitly linked the explanations to addictive behaviour throughout. Weaker responses often described only one explanation or provided a general outline of the biological approach rather than specific explanations of addiction. Some candidates included limited key terminology, devoted disproportionate detail to one explanation while giving only a brief account of the second, or failed to make clear links between the explanation and addictive behaviour. AO3 performance was generally stronger, with many candidates producing a good range of evaluative points that demonstrated depth of understanding and clear contextualisation. Higher-mark responses explained why each point represented a strength or limitation of the explanation, rather than simply stating it. In contrast, weaker responses evaluated the biological approach in general rather than the specific explanations chosen, relied on generic evaluative points with little contextual detail, or failed to explain why the point supported or challenged the explanation. Conclusions were largely absent or ineffective, with many candidates simply summarising their previous points rather than reaching an appropriate overall judgement based on the evidence presented.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

(b) This AO2 application question continues to be one of the least well-performed questions on the paper. It required candidates to apply the social psychological perspective, either in general or through a specific explanation, to explain why a chosen method of modification would be appropriate. A common weakness was that many candidates simply outlined a method of behaviour modification without applying the social psychological perspective or repeated the wording of the question before describing the chosen method. Such responses gained no credit or were limited to only superficial marks. Other issues included selecting methods of behaviour modification that were unrelated to social psychological explanations or describing interventions that do not exist or are not recognised methods of behaviour modification. Candidates who missed the highest mark band often failed to explain clearly how the proposed method would modify or correct the behaviour, limiting the quality of their application. The strongest responses demonstrated clear and relevant application of social psychological explanations to the methods of modifying behaviour. A particularly successful approach was to explain addictive behaviour in terms of peer influence and social norms, before applying social norms marketing as an appropriate method of behaviour modification. These responses clearly explained how changing individuals' perceptions of their peers' drinking behaviour through mass media campaigns could influence behaviour, providing thorough and well-developed application throughout.

Q.2 (a) This AO1 question required candidates to describe one biological explanation of autistic spectrum behaviour. Although a small minority of candidates outlined more than one explanation, the vast majority selected a single explanation, with the role of the amygdala being the most popular choice. Stronger responses demonstrated accurate and detailed knowledge, used relevant psychological terminology effectively, and provided a thorough description of the chosen explanation. These candidates also made explicit links between the biological explanation and autistic spectrum behaviour throughout their response, ensuring the knowledge remained focused on the demands of the question.

Weaker responses tended to be vague or lacking in depth, which limited access to the higher mark bands, particularly given that all 10 marks were awarded for the description of a single explanation. Some candidates also failed to make a clear connection between the biological explanation and autistic spectrum behaviour, instead describing the explanation in isolation. A small minority confused the role of the amygdala in explaining autistic spectrum behaviour with its role in explanations of criminal behaviour, resulting in inaccurate and irrelevant content.

(b) This AO2 application question required candidates to apply a biological explanation of autistic spectrum behaviour to explain why a chosen method of behaviour modification would be appropriate. As with similar application questions, this proved challenging for many candidates. A common weakness was that candidates simply described a method of behaviour modification without applying a relevant biological explanation or repeated the wording of the question before outlining the chosen intervention. Such responses gained little or no credit or were limited to only superficial marks. Other issues included selecting explanations that were not biological or choosing explanations that were unrelated to autistic spectrum behaviour. A number of candidates appeared to believe they had to use one of the methods of modifications explicitly named in the specification, when any valid method

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

was acceptable. Candidates who did not access the highest mark band often failed to explain clearly how the chosen method of behaviour modification addressed or modified the behaviour identified by the biological explanation, limiting the quality of their application.

The strongest responses demonstrated clear and sustained application by explaining how abnormalities in the amygdala could contribute to the social and emotional characteristics associated with autistic spectrum behaviour, before applying oxytocin as an appropriate method of behaviour modification. These responses explained how oxytocin may improve social functioning by increasing attention to social cues and reducing social difficulties associated with atypical amygdala functioning, clearly justifying why the intervention would be appropriate and producing thorough, well-developed application throughout.

(c) Many candidates produced a good range of evaluative points that demonstrated depth of understanding and clear contextualisation to either Theory of Mind or Weak Central Coherence. Higher-mark responses explained why each piece of evidence represented a strength or limitation of the explanation, rather than simply describing supporting or contradictory research. In contrast, weaker responses often evaluated individual differences more generally, rather than the specific explanations they had selected. Some relied on generic evaluation points, such as "it is scientific" or "it has supporting research", without developing these in relation to Theory of Mind or Weak Central Coherence. Others described research studies without explaining what the findings suggested about the validity of the explanation. A small number of candidates drifted into discussing explanations despite these not being the focus of their response. Conclusions were often absent or lacked meaningful judgement. Many candidates simply repeated earlier evaluative points rather than reaching an overall conclusion about the relative strengths and limitations of the explanations they had discussed. Stronger conclusions weighed up the available evidence and made a justified judgement about the explanatory value of Theory of Mind and/or Weak Central Coherence in accounting for the characteristics of autistic spectrum disorder.

Q.3 (a) Another AO2 application question required candidates to apply a biological explanation of bullying behaviour to explain why a chosen method of behaviour modification would be appropriate. A common weakness was that candidates simply described a method of behaviour modification without applying a relevant biological explanation. Such responses gained little or no credit or were limited to only superficial marks. Other responses selected explanations that were not biological or methods of behaviour modification that did not logically address the explanation they had identified. Candidates who did not access the highest mark band often failed to explain how the chosen method would modify the biological factors underlying the bullying behaviour, limiting the quality of their application. Many confused gender as a ‘social aspect’ and lost focus on biology. The strongest responses demonstrated clear and sustained application by explaining bullying behaviour in terms of evolved gender differences, such as males' greater evolutionary predisposition towards competition and aggression for status and resources. They then applied sporting activity as an appropriate method of behaviour modification, explaining how structured sport could provide an alternative, socially acceptable outlet for competitive and aggressive tendencies while promoting cooperation, self-control and prosocial behaviour.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

These responses clearly justified why sporting activity would be an appropriate intervention in light of the biological explanation, producing thorough and well-developed application throughout.

(b) This question required candidates to demonstrate both AO1 knowledge and AO3 evaluation. Most candidates included both assessment objectives and appeared well prepared for the demands of this style of question, demonstrating an appropriate level of detail in their responses. The most common responses focused on social psychological explanations of bullying, particularly moral disengagement. Stronger AO1 responses used accurate psychological terminology and clearly explained the chosen social psychological explanation, maintaining an explicit focus on bullying behaviour throughout, rather than describing the explanation in general. For AO3, the strongest responses included a smaller number of well-developed evaluative points that were clearly linked to the specific social psychological explanation. Candidates who accessed the higher mark bands explained why each point represented a strength or limitation of the explanation, rather than relying on generic evaluative comments about psychology or research methods. Weaker responses often listed several undeveloped points or provided evaluation that could have applied to any explanation, limiting the depth and specificity required for the highest marks. As AO3 was worth 5 marks, a conclusion was not required.

(c) This question required candidates to demonstrate both AO1 knowledge and AO3 evaluation. Overall, performance on this question was stronger than in previous years, with most candidates including both assessment objectives and showing a better understanding of the level of detail required for this style of extended response. Stronger AO1 responses provided a clear and accurate description of the CAPSLE Program, outlining its key features and the strategies used to reduce bullying within schools. These responses explained how the intervention promoted positive relationships, encouraged empathy and reflection, and created a school environment that discouraged bullying behaviour. Candidates who accessed the higher mark bands consistently linked these features to reducing bullying rather than simply describing the programme in general. AO3 performance was also generally strong, with many candidates using a good range of relevant evaluative points that were clearly contextualised to the CAPSLE Program intervention. Stronger responses explained why each point represented a strength or limitation of the programme, often referring to its effectiveness in reducing bullying or improving the school environment. Weaker responses tended to provide generic evaluation of school-based interventions or bullying prevention programmes, with limited reference to CAPSLE Program specifically. Some candidates also described the intervention in detail but offered little meaningful evaluation, restricting their access to the higher mark bands.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Q.4 (a) This question was primarily an AO1 question, with 10 of the 15 marks awarded for knowledge and understanding. However, many candidates did not recognise this weighting and spent too much time focusing on Mike and the scenario rather than providing a detailed description of how anger management works. As a result, many responses lacked sufficient breadth and depth of AO1 content. A common weakness was that candidates simply named Mike repeatedly or copied sections of the scenario into their response without explaining how anger management modifies offending behaviour. This descriptive use of the stem did not gain application marks unless it was clearly linked to specific stages or techniques within the programme. Stronger responses provided a clear and accurate outline of the anger management programme, including its different stages and the psychological techniques involved, such as cognitive preparation, skills acquisition and behavioural practice. These candidates maintained a clear focus on anger management as a treatment for offending behaviour and explained how it aims to reduce aggression and the likelihood of reoffending. The most successful answers then applied this knowledge selectively to Mike, explaining how his particular characteristics and behaviours would benefit from the programme. Rather than repeatedly referring to the scenario, effective application linked specific aspects of Mike's behaviour to appropriate elements of anger management, demonstrating how the intervention could help him develop greater self-control, recognise triggers, learn alternative responses and reduce future offending.

(b) Many candidates demonstrated a balanced and well-developed evaluation of biological explanations of criminal behaviour. The strongest responses used relevant research and evidence effectively, explaining how this supported or challenged the explanation rather than simply describing study findings, which was more evident in the genetics explanation. Better answers also considered the complexity of offending behaviour, recognising that biological factors may interact with environmental influences rather than acting in isolation. Less successful responses tended to offer broad evaluation of biological psychology instead of focusing on biological explanations of criminal behaviour. Generic comments about scientific methods, determinism or research support were often included without being linked back to the explanation being evaluated. Some candidates described evidence at length but did not explain its implications for the credibility or explanatory power of the biological explanation. Where conclusions were included, they were often descriptive summaries of previous points rather than reasoned judgements. More effective responses considered the overall weight of the evidence before reaching a clear conclusion about the extent to which biological explanations provide a convincing account of criminal behaviour.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Q.5 (a) This AO1 question required candidates to describe one biological explanation of schizophrenia. While a small minority outlined more than one explanation, the vast majority focused on the dopamine hypothesis. Stronger responses demonstrated accurate and detailed knowledge of the chosen explanation, using appropriate psychological terminology throughout. These candidates clearly explained the role of dopamine in the development of schizophrenia and maintained a consistent focus on how dopamine dysfunction is thought to produce schizophrenic symptoms, ensuring their responses remained relevant to the demands of the question. Weaker responses tended to lack detail or precision, limiting access to the higher mark bands, particularly as all 10 marks were available for the description of a single explanation. Some candidates provided only a superficial outline of the dopamine hypothesis, often stating that there was "too much dopamine" without explaining the involvement of different dopamine pathways or receptor activity. Others described biological factors more generally, such as genetics or neural correlates, rather than focusing on a single biological explanation.

(b) An AO2 application question that required candidates to apply one individual explanation of schizophrenia to explain why a chosen treatment would be appropriate. A common weakness was that candidates simply described a treatment, most commonly cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), without first applying the chosen individual explanation to the scenario. Such responses gained only limited credit because the focus of the question was on explaining why the treatment would be appropriate in light of the explanation. Other candidates selected treatments that did not match the explanation they had identified or described biological treatments, such as antipsychotic medication, despite choosing a cognitive explanation. Candidates who did not access the highest mark band often failed to explain how the treatment would address the cognitive processes underlying schizophrenia, instead describing the stages of CBT in isolation. The strongest responses demonstrated clear and sustained application by explaining the individual's symptoms in terms of dysfunctional cognitive processing, such as faulty interpretations of experiences, irrational beliefs or deficits in information processing. They then justified the use of CBT by explaining how it would help the individual identify, challenge and modify these maladaptive beliefs, leading to more realistic interpretations of their experiences and a reduction in symptoms. These responses maintained a clear link between the explanation, the scenario and the chosen treatment throughout, producing focused and well-developed application.

(c) Performance on this AO3 question was generally very strong, with many candidates producing balanced and well-developed evaluations of two methods of modifying schizophrenia. The most commonly selected methods were antipsychotic medication and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). Stronger responses maintained a clear focus on evaluating the treatments, considering issues such as effectiveness, ethical implications, appropriateness and practical application. Research evidence was used confidently and accurately to support evaluative points, with many candidates demonstrating impressive recall of relevant studies and explaining what the findings suggested about the value of each treatment. Work needs to be done on producing appropriate conclusions.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Q.6 (a) Although this was a 15-mark application question, the majority of the available marks (10) were awarded for AO1 knowledge and understanding. Many candidates overlooked this balance and devoted too much of their response to Emma and the scenario, leaving insufficient detail about how beta blockers function as a method of modifying stress. Consequently, many responses lacked the depth of knowledge needed to access the higher mark bands. A frequent issue was that candidates repeated details from the scenario or continually referred to Emma without linking these details to the biological action of beta blockers. Application alone was not enough to gain credit unless it was supported by an accurate explanation of the treatment itself. A small number of candidates also confused beta blockers with benzodiazepines, incorrectly explaining that they enhance GABA activity or act as sedatives, rather than describing their effect on adrenaline and the cardiovascular system. The strongest responses demonstrated a thorough understanding of how beta blockers work by explaining that they reduce the body's physiological response to stress through blocking the effects of adrenaline and noradrenaline. These answers remained focused on the treatment throughout and avoided drifting into descriptions of stress itself or alternative drug therapies. Application was then used effectively, with candidates selecting relevant aspects of Emma's symptoms and explaining how reducing physical signs of stress, such as a rapid heartbeat or trembling, would help her function more effectively in the stressful situation described.

(b) Performance on this AO3 question was mixed. While many candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of individual differences explanations of stress, a common weakness was that responses became descriptive rather than evaluative. As a result, some answers included accurate accounts of the explanations and offered no analysis of their strengths and weaknesses, which left it uncreditworthy. Higher-mark responses presented a balanced evaluation of the explanations they had chosen, using relevant research evidence to support their points and, importantly, explaining why this evidence strengthened or challenged the explanation. Many also considered issues such as explanatory power, practical applications and the extent to which individual differences can account for variations in stress responses. In contrast, weaker responses often described the explanation in further detail instead of evaluating it, or simply listed research findings without explaining their significance. Generic comments, such as stating that an explanation was "supported by research" or "scientific", were common but were rarely developed sufficiently to gain higher marks. Some candidates also drifted into evaluating stress management techniques or discussing stress more generally, rather than focusing on the individual differences explanations named in the question. Conclusions were less well developed across the cohort. Many candidates ended their responses by summarising previous points rather than weighing up the evidence to reach a justified overall judgement. The strongest conclusions considered the relative value of the explanations in accounting for individual differences in stress and were supported by the evaluation presented throughout the response.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Q.7 As with previous years, many candidates appeared to rely on pre-prepared essays that did not fully address the demands of the question. This often resulted in lengthy descriptions of concepts such as ethnocentrism, alpha and beta bias, or examples of cultural bias, with little engagement with the central debate. Rather than discussing whether the cultural differences reported in cross-cultural research reflect genuine differences or culturally biased theories and methods, many responses became generic essays on cultural bias. A further weakness was the limited use of evidence to support or challenge arguments. Candidates frequently made assertions about psychology being culturally biased without using relevant research or examples to illustrate their points. There also needed to be greater emphasis on presenting a balanced discussion. Some responses argued exclusively that psychology is culturally biased, while others focused only on evidence suggesting cultural differences are genuine, without acknowledging the alternative perspective. The highest-scoring responses engaged directly with the controversy presented in the question. They debated whether reported cultural differences are valid findings or the product of culturally biased assumptions, using appropriate research and examples to support arguments on both sides. These responses maintained a clear focus on the issue throughout and finished with a well-reasoned conclusion that weighed up the evidence before reaching a justified judgement about the extent to which psychology can be considered culturally biased.

Q.8 A recurring issue with this question was that many candidates appeared to draw heavily on essays prepared for previous examination questions, rather than tailoring their responses to the wording provided. Consequently, a number of answers focused broadly on the ethics of animal research or it being avoidable, without addressing the key issue raised by the statement: whether non-human animals should be used in psychological research regardless of the existence of ethical guidelines.Many responses contained detailed descriptions of well-known animal studies, but these were often presented in isolation and not used to advance an argument. Candidates frequently described research without explaining how it supported or challenged the statement. Others concentrated almost entirely on ethical concerns, with little consideration of the scientific contributions, practical applications or necessity of using non-human animals in some areas of psychological research. These responses tended to be descriptive rather than discursive. Higher-scoring responses remained focused on the debate throughout. They considered arguments both for and against the continued use of non-human animals in psychological research, despite the BPS guidelines, supporting their discussion with relevant evidence and examples. Rather than relying on prepared material, these candidates selected information that was directly relevant to the question and used it to construct a balanced argument, ending with a reasoned conclusion that clearly addressed the statement.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

PSYCHOLOGY

GCE

Summer 2026

UNIT 4 – Applied Research Methods

Overview of the Unit

In this exam series, candidates demonstrated another impressive attempt rate across all questions on this unit. On the whole, the paper was accessible and a solid understanding of research methods was showcased. Contextualisation is, very pleasingly, continuing to improve throughout both Section A and Section B. Evaluation (AO3) skills are also continuing to improve with appropriate use of terminology and sufficient elaboration being developed in the responses.

Similar to the Summer 2025 exam series, candidates struggled with explaining how validity could be assessed in the correlational study. Justification for the choice of sampling method and descriptive statistic, for the experiment on language and learning, was also an area that candidates found challenging. These particular challenges echo those that were in the previous exam series and, therefore, should continue to be an area of improvement for centres.

Overall, it is very encouraging to see the continued improvement in research methods skills across all the assessment objectives, particularly the AO2 skill.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 (a) This question had both an impressive attempt rate and was well answered. The better answers clearly operationalised the two co-variables and this was achieved by either stating the unit of measurement and the time period it was measured over or by stating the unit of measurement and the measuring tool. For example, number of hours sleep in a 7-day period or number of hours spent on a mobile phone over a 7-day period by using the screen time app in the phone settings.

(b) (i) This question was answered very well by most candidates, and most were able to identify the appropriate statistical test for their correlational study.

(ii) Again, an impressive attempt rate and a very pleasing response rate to explaining whether the null hypothesis was accepted or rejected. It is worth noting here that for correlational studies an observed value that falls outside of the -1 to +1 parameter would not be creditworthy. However, candidates could still achieve marks for applying the correct rule of greater or less than the critical value when accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis. The better answers were able to apply the correct rule and use appropriate observed and critical values when explaining whether they accepted or rejected their null hypothesis.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

(c) Although this question was well attempted by candidates, it was one of the least accessible. Candidates are still struggling with explaining ways of assessing validity within the context of their personal investigation. The better responses were able to refer to a specific way of assessing validity e.g. face, content, concurrent, predictive, construct, and explain how that type could be used to assess the validity of their correlational study.

(d) This question was well attempted, but candidates struggled to evaluate two strengths of correlational studies. Most were able to evaluate one strength, but far fewer were able to identify another strength.

Q.2 (a) (i) All candidates attempted this question, and it was the most accessible question on the paper with an excellent response rate. Almost all candidates were able to correctly identify an appropriate sampling technique to select participants for their experiment.

(ii) Even though part (i) was answered very well, part (ii) was the least accessible question on the paper. Candidates struggled to justify the sampling technique identified in part (i). The better responses were able to contextualise their justification. There is still a considerable amount of responses using 'quick and easy' as a justification without any comparison to another named sampling method. Quick and easy alone is not creditworthy.

(b) (i) This was well attempted and well answered. Most candidates were able to identify an appropriate descriptive statistic used to describe the data collected from their experiment.

(ii) Again, this was well attempted but similarly to 2(a)(ii) candidates struggled to justify why they used the descriptive statistic identified in part (ii). The better responses were able to contextualise their justification to their experiment, for example, using the mean as there were no outliers in their data set and therefore the mean was the most sensitive measure of central tendency as it considered all the values in their data set.

(c) (i) A good response rate and generally well answered and a lot of candidates were able to correctly identify an appropriate level of measurement of the dependent variable which was encouraging.

(ii) A good response rate but some candidates did struggle to explain the level of measurement of the dependent variable used for their experiment. The better answers were able to explain the level of measurement identified in part (i) with contextualisation. For example, ratio data was used as the language test used was out of 25 and had equal units of measurement and a fixed zero.

(e) Almost all candidates attempted this question and, overall, it was answered well. Candidates were able to evaluate a strength and weakness of using experiments in psychological research. As it was an AO3 question, there was no requirement for contextualisation. The better responses used sufficient elaboration 'so what?' and appropriate terminology. For example, a strength of using experiments is that there is a high level of control over the variables and cause-and-effect relationships can be established which increases the internal validity of the research. A weakness is that because of the high level

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

of control the study might not be generalisable to real life which threatens the ecological validity.

Q.3 (a) Very well attempted and a good proportion of candidates were able to explain how one confounding variable could affect the research with a varied use of confounding variables contextualised appropriately. It is nice to see how candidates are focusing on how some or one individual could be affected in the research rather than all (extraneous).

(b) (i) All candidates attempted this question, and it was very well answered. Most candidates were able to explain why valid consent was an ethical issue in this research with appropriate contextualisation.

(ii) Most candidates attempted this question, and it was well answered. Candidates were able to explain one way of dealing with valid consent in this research. The better answers considered the consent part (asking the parents) and the valid part (informing the parents of the aims of the research).

(c) (i) Most candidates attempted this question, and a good proportion of candidates were able to identify the Mann Whitney U test as the appropriate inferential statistic.

(ii) This question was well attempted but not as well answered as part (i). Contextualisation was an issue here and the better answers linked each justification point, i.e. test of a difference, data was at least ordinal, and using an independent groups design, to the novel scenario.

(d) Almost all candidates attempted this question. The better answers fully elaborated on the weakness of longitudinal studies with appropriate terminology for example, that they are at risk of high attrition which would produce a biased sample threatening the internal validity.

(e) Again, a well attempted question and generally well answered. A lot of candidates focused on the improvement of both sexes being used for the novel scenario which makes it higher in population validity than Kohlberg's research that only used male participants thus making it more generalisable. It was good to see appropriate terminology being used and some candidates even referred to it overcoming beta bias that was an issue in Kohlberg's research.

Q.4 (a) Almost all candidates attempted this question, and the better answers gave 3 features of a case study to achieve 3 marks.

(b) This is another AO3 question, so no contextualisation to the novel scenario was needed, and the better answers used appropriate terminology in their responses, for example, low population validity. Elaboration to expand on why it's a strength or a weakness was seen in the better responses.

(c) This question was well attempted and, as an AO1 question, it required no contextualisation to the novel scenario. The better answers were able to define secondary sources using appropriate examples as to where secondary sources may come from.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

(d) It was pleasing to see the knowledge and understanding of specific brain scans. The better answers clearly knew the process of the brain scan they were discussing and were able to apply it to the boxer's case study in their answer.

(e) An AO3 question worth 3 marks which was well attempted and, on the whole, well answered. Similarly to the other AO3 questions, the better responses used appropriate terminology to fully elaborate on their evaluation points.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.
Tel: 029 2240 4284
Email: psychology@wjec.co.uk
Qualification webpage: https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/psychology-asa-level/ -tab_keydocuments

See other useful contacts here: Useful Contacts | WJEC

CPD Training / Professional Learning

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/

WJEC Qualifications

As Wales' largest awarding body, WJEC supports its education community by providing trusted bilingual qualifications, specialist support, and reliable assessment to schools and colleges across the country. This allows our learners to reach their full potential.

With more than 70 years' experience, we are also amongst the leading providers in both England and Northern Ireland.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026



WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026