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# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCE (NEW)  
PSYCHOLOGY  
AS/Advanced**

**SUMMER 2019**

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<b>Unit</b>	<b>Page</b>
Unit 1	1
Unit 2	5
Unit 3	9
Unit 4	13

# PSYCHOLOGY

## General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### UNIT 1

#### General Comments

There were some outstanding answers to many of the questions, with candidates demonstrating an impressive depth and breadth of knowledge. The use of the constrained paper appears to have helped further with any timing issues and the majority of candidates attempted every question on the paper, using the mark allocation more carefully to spend the appropriate amount of time on each question. However, it is important to remind candidates of the need to label any extra work on additional paper clearly, and also to indicate at the end of the lines that work is continued on additional sheets.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** There was an excellent attempt rate of 98.5% on this question and a mean score of 5.6. There were lots of excellent answers to this question, characterised by clear use of appropriate terminology and examples. When candidates were describing dream analysis, many seemed confused about what was meant by dreamwork. Despite being able to accurately describe the processes, many seemed to think that this was what the therapist did rather than the way in which unconscious desires were changed. The best answers made it clear that the process of dream analysis was therapeutic and therefore fully described the role of the therapist and the use of dream analysis to resolve unconscious conflicts. There were fewer answers on group analysis psychotherapy and many did not give enough detail about processes like mirroring or the therapeutic element of it to access the highest mark bands.
- Q.2 (a)** This was one of the most attempted questions on the paper (99.3%) and received a mean score of 2.7. Most candidates were able to accurately identify an assumption from the psychodynamic approach and use some of the terms associated with it. As with assumptions questions in previous years, many candidates are not addressing the 'using an example from psychology' part of the question. Candidates should be encouraged to use the assumption to explain a particular behaviour or use theories and research from other parts of the course to illustrate it. The best answers fully explained what was meant by terms like fixation and how the process could affect behaviour. Many candidates found it hard to access full marks using the unconscious mind assumption as they were not able to explain how processes like defence mechanisms could affect behaviour. Similarly, whilst there were some very thorough descriptions of the different elements of the tripartite personality, the process of ego conflict and id or superego dominance was not always made clear.
- (b)** Most candidates were able to identify a relevant assumption and make reference to a relationship. Whilst many candidates chose to refer to the

psychosexual stages in order to explain the development of relationships, some would have benefited from a more thorough explanation of the processes involved in the Oedipus complex or fixation on a particular stage. Answers using Bowlby's theory did not always make it clear how this linked to an assumption from the approach or the formation of a particular type of relationship. This may explain the slightly lower mean score on this question (2.3) compared to the 2a.

- Q.3 (a)** The ideal way to approach this question was to consider why a behaviourist psychologist in particular would view one of these therapies as the most appropriate method to choose. Many candidates failed to engage with the question properly and as a result achieved low marks. Although the question was attempted by 98.1% of candidates the facility factor of 47.9 suggests that not all candidates were able to approach the question in the right way. Candidates who talked about ethics/effectiveness often failed to link this with appropriateness. There were also a number of candidates who described the therapy with no attempt to answer the question presented. The best answers referred to the conditioning or blank slate assumptions, made reference to how the phobia/addiction might have been formed and then explained how the therapy was an example of counter conditioning and therefore an appropriate method to use.
- (b)** This question was generally well answered with 96.6% attempting it and a mean score on the question of 4.2. Many candidates selecting appropriate evidence and arguments and explaining fully how they illustrated the effectiveness of the therapy being discussed. Weaker answers tended to focus on ethics and did not make a good argument for the link to effectiveness. In answers evaluating systematic desensitisation, many candidates referred to ancient fears and described Seligman's work into biological preparedness. However, this was not always used effectively to evaluate the therapy.
- Q.4** Overall this was the most attempted question on the paper (99.4%) and also received the highest facility factor (71.6). Most candidates were able to outline some basic details about evolutionary influences but these varied in terms of clarity of explanation and the terminology used. As with all assumptions questions, an example of how this assumption would explain behaviour was needed to access the highest marks. Many students referred to altruism as an example of natural selection or mate preferences as an example of sexual selection, but these were not always explained in terms of how this would aid survival.

Most candidates were able to identify a second assumption from the biological approach (more frequently using localisation of brain function than neurotransmitters). There were some excellent descriptions of different areas of the brain and their links to different behaviours that showed an impressive amount of knowledge. Many candidates were also able to use appropriate examples to illustrate this assumption such as Raine's research or case studies such as Phineas Gage. Many answers for the neurotransmitters assumption would have benefited from more description of the neurotransmission process (such as referring to the synapse or receptors) but many were able to identify the link between neurotransmitters and psychological problems such as depression or schizophrenia.

- Q.5** 97.6% of candidates attempted this question and there was a mean mark of 5.3. However, a standard deviation of 2.4 suggests a wide variation in the quality of

answers. There were some excellent answers to this question where students were able to identify appropriate evaluation points, use examples from the approach and explain why they were a strength or a weakness. The latter was helpful for adding depth to the answer and helping candidates access the highest bands. Some issues arose when students used evaluation points relating to the nature/nurture debate. Many candidates said that the positive approach ignored the debate when in truth, the approach recognises the contribution of both sides (e.g. Lyubomirsky *et. al.*, 2005). Whilst many candidates successfully argued that the subjective nature of happiness made the approach unscientific, many missed the opportunity to discuss this further by mentioning the scientific method used in many studies from this approach. Some candidates also limited their marks by evaluating Myers and Diener's research or mindfulness therapy. Whilst these can be used to illustrate some of the wider evaluation points, the focus of this question should be evaluating the approach as a whole.

- Q.6** This question received the lowest facility factor on the paper of 38.7. The mean score of 3.1 and a standard deviation of 2.3 suggests a wide range of quality of responses. There were some excellent answers to this question, where candidates were able to accurately report the findings for different areas of the brain and also increase the range of their answer by describing other findings such as performance on the CPT or information regarding ethnicity or brain injury. There was no requirement to outline the possible reasons for the brain differences or similarities and some candidates wasted time by either describing the study or the conclusions.
- Q.7** As with 3a, there was a failure by many candidates to fully engage with this question indicated by a mean mark of 2.1 and a facility factor of 42.8. This question assessed AO2 skills and therefore required candidates to apply their knowledge fully to the scenario presented. The weakest answers simply described both approaches and their assumptions, which attracted no credit. Some were able to provide a basic comparison between the approaches and give context to this (e.g. cognitive being interactionist and behaviourist being nurture). The best answers then went on to explain why this meant the cognitive approach was a 'better' explanation (e.g. takes into account more factors, provides a more complete explanation of behaviour).
- Q.8** There were some very good answers to this question that made a range of relevant points and fully explained them with reference to the study and why they could be considered a strength or a weakness. The biggest issue was many candidates making relevant evaluation points such as the use of a laboratory environment but without clear reference to the context of the study. This may explain the fairly low mean score of 5.5. There were some answers that could have been about any study, with no reference made to car crashes or eye witness testimony. Many candidates introduced alternative evidence (possibly from studying this topic for Unit 2 Contemporary Debates). Whilst not necessary for the top band, when used effectively this provided depth to the evaluation. However many candidates described relevant evidence but did not make it clear what this showed about the strengths and weaknesses of Loftus and Palmer's research.
- Q.9 (a)** The key element of the methodology and procedures used by Myers and Diener is that they used secondary sources and carried out a literature review/meta-analysis. Unfortunately, many candidates described a number of methods like correlations and observations and suggested that Myers and Diener had carried out the studies themselves. Many candidates also failed to elaborate enough for 3 marks. They stated that it was a literature review (or similar) and mentioned examples of the

methods but did not give any more detail or explain how this was used by Myers and Diener to report on happiness and subjective wellbeing. This is reflected in a mean score of 1.4 and a facility factor of 45.8.

- (b) This question was attempted by 92.3% of candidates with a mean score of 1.5. For this question, most answers referred to age, gender, race or culture. Some candidates were able to pick one factor and refer to specific findings or percentages. Many candidates did more than one factor but could only be credited for one. This was a particular issue for race and culture. In the original article these are reported separately and therefore if candidates reported on both, only one part of it could be credited. It is important to check other sources against the original article to ensure the correct findings are being described as there were also some inaccuracies. The findings regarding money were often misreported, although some gave responses including relevant details such as the finding about lottery winners or the Forbes rich list.

### **Summary of key points**

- The use of psychological examples in assumptions questions is required to access the highest marks (AO1 - q2a and q4).
- It is important to use the original article to ensure the accuracy of responses relating to the classic evidence (AO1 - q6 and q9a/9b).
- Candidates would benefit from more practice of AO2 skills to ensure they fully apply their knowledge to the requirements of the question (AO2 - q3a and q7).
- Evaluation points should be clearly linked to the context of the question and the approach or study being evaluated (AO3 - q5 and q8).

# PSYCHOLOGY

## General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### UNIT 2

#### General Comments

This year the standard of responses was high, particularly for the contemporary debate and maths components (pie chart Q8(bii) and standard deviation Q10 (f)). Candidates were well prepared with very few non-attempted questions. Candidates appear to have responded well to the constrained paper and there appeared to be fewer issues with missing responses, or parts missing, than in previous years as a result. Areas for improvement remain focused on; levels of data (Question 2 (i) and (ii)), confounding variables (Question 10 (e)) and ethical guidelines for working with animals (Question 9 (a)). Centres are also encouraged to allow candidates to adopt word processing as their 'usual way of working', to avoid issues arising from a serious decline in the quality of candidates' handwriting.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

**Q.1** Responses to this question were pleasing. Most students focused on three core themes of debate (education, work and leisure), showing a range of knowledge, but the depth of understanding demonstrated varied considerably between candidates, accounting for the wider standard deviation for this question than any other (SD= 4.8). Key areas of strength included knowledge and evaluation of Seligman's PPC (Positive Psychology Curriculum) and the Penn Resilience Program. Weaknesses included the fact that some evaluation points were quite generic and not always well tailored to the question stem. Features that differentiated between average and good responses included: the use of meaningful conclusions, rather than a re-hatch/summary of what had been written in the main body, and social/economic implications that were well developed (e.g. links to current mental health increases in young people); links to the ethical issues surrounding the dark side of mindfulness in the workplace; links to economic impacts on business etc. Once again, writing style made a considerable difference to the quality of the argument provided and amount of credit awarded. That said, centres are to be commended on the overall quality of candidate responses, particularly those that have included wider positive research into areas such as its use in the military.

#### **Q.2 (i) and (ii)**

This question was the most poorly answered on the entire paper and the least accessible to candidates with facilities factors of 48.3 and 43.8 respectively. It is still concerning that students are unaware of core terminology such as 'levels of data'. An alarming number of candidates not only scored zero on these questions but wrote a response that was not a level of data (e.g. bar chart, frequencies, correlation). As a rule, those who were able to identify a level of data usually selected the appropriate level and gained credit.

- Q.3** This question was well attempted (96.8%) with most candidates being able to identify and explain one, or two characteristics of external validity (mean score 1.3). Some learners, however, are either not reading the question fully, as they failed to include an example, or do not have the ability to apply their knowledge and, thus, could not gain full marks. Too many candidates are still claiming that external validity is to do with extraneous/external variables that researchers cannot control.
- Q.4** Quality of responses to this question varied dramatically, with a minority of candidates gaining zero despite having extensive knowledge of the ethical issues arising in Milgram's research. Some candidates clearly did not understand the synoptic nature of the question. Many candidates just evaluated Milgram's research superficially, in terms of ethics, and provided one word/sentence solutions. Few candidates were able to access the top mark band, but those that did clearly read the question and composed a response, rather than providing a stock ethical issues prepared answer. Solutions such as debriefing, which Milgram actually used in his original research, gained limited credit when discussed alone. Better discussions referred to Perry's (2012) research, which suggested that some participants were not debriefed for up to a year after the study took place. Commenting upon the fact that a debrief should have been immediate demonstrated a deeper appreciation of how psychologists can improve research and deal with ethical issues.
- Q.5** Attempt rate for this question was reasonable (91.3%), however the number of candidates who are continuing to use 'slow and expensive' as a weakness, without making a comparison to another named sampling technique is disappointing and reflected in the mean score of 0.6 for this question. Evaluative comments about speed and ease of a sampling method have only ever been credit worthy when compared to a slower/faster, harder/easier technique. Some candidates who did name an alternative technique as a justification incorrectly identified snowball sampling or stratified techniques, which are not necessarily any quicker/easier than quota sampling and thus were not credit worthy. Those candidates who chose disadvantages such as researcher bias tended to secure more marks, but on the whole, there were many candidates who missed out on full marks due to a lack of explanation as to why the criticism was specifically appropriate to quota sampling.
- Q.6** Candidates would benefit from stating differences using words not included in the term. For example, to suggest that a difference between directional and non-directional hypothesis is that one points to a specific 'direction' is entirely superficial, and akin to saying that a difference between internal and external validity is that that one is outside and one is inside the study. Many candidates forgot to make a comparison i.e. would state a feature of one type of hypothesis, but not compare it to how the other is different. For those who correctly identified a difference, some failed to use an example and thus could not gain full marks.
- Q.7** The range of acceptable responses for this question was quite broad. Most of those who identified an appropriate methodology in part (i), (e.g. case study, longitudinal study, semi-structured interviews, cross-cultural research), were able to identify at least one feature accurately in part (ii). Unfortunately, some candidates chose to describe two features of Kohlberg's work, rather than of the methodology identified. A small proportion of candidates selected an experimental design or sampling technique in part (i) and thus could not gain credit in part (ii).
- Q.8 (a)** Nearly all learners got credit on this question for naming a method (mean score 1.9), but disappointingly some of them then described a method they had not named. This was very common with naming stratified and then describing systematic techniques.



Unfortunately, lots of learners failed to get full marks for not fully contextualising their response with details from the scenario.

- (b) This question had one of the highest attempt rates (98.4%). Some students appeared to complete elongated calculations for the numerical data to fill in the pie chart, which was not necessary. The most common score for this question was 3/4, where most candidates only lost marks for a lack of title (mean score 3.1).

**Q.9 (a)** Most candidates attempted this question (97.3%), but often superficially recycled human ethical guidelines and applied them to animals (e.g. must not cause physical/psychological harm). It was encouraging to see that a minority of students were able to identify guidelines specific to animal research (e.g. the three Rs). However, most answers lacked depth of description, for example explaining what would happen in the research if the guideline were actually utilised. A small number of candidates, worryingly, appeared to believe that animals are taken from the wild for psychological research.

- (b) Contextualisation still continues to differentiate candidates. Most candidates were able to identify one factor that could affect validity, but responses either lacked clarity in explanation, or through contextualisation, where only weak links to chimpanzees were cited, explaining the mean score of 1.7 out of 3 for this question.

- (c) On the whole this question was answered well. Some candidates contextualised their response, which was not required, but did not negatively affect marks. Some candidates are missing the second mark as they do not fully describe the disadvantage e.g., they do not state the impact of researcher bias, or why something such as a lack of control is negative. It should also be noted to candidates that non-participant observation does not necessarily mean that researchers will be at physical distance so 'cannot see what's going on'. Distance is theoretical, not physical.

**Q.10 (a)** This question was attempted by most candidates; however, syntax caused all sorts of problems. The way candidates responded had a large impact on the score. Many knew what a null hypothesis was and attempted to show that there would be 'no difference', however the way they worded their response meant that many answers read as if one group would have no change to emotion, but the other would. For example, 'participants that spend 15 minutes alone will have no change in emotional response, compared to participants that spend 15 minutes chatting'. On the other hand, some candidates slipped into alternative/experimental hypotheses e.g. 'there will not be a decreased emotional response for participants who are alone compared to participants who were chatting'. These common errors meant that scores of zero were frequent. To avoid this issue, it is suggested that the experimental/control groups are reported together within the hypothesis, before the effect on the DV is stated e.g. 'whether a participant spends 15 minutes alone or 15 minutes chatting to a researcher, will have no effect on emotional response'.

- (b) **(i) and (ii)**

These questions were well attempted (99.6% and 99.7% respectively), with most candidates scoring full marks in (b) (ii) (mean score 0.9).

Some candidates failed to note both conditions of the IV (or imply both conditions) leading to a lower mean score of 0.5. A minority referred to the use of a mobile phone, so haven't read the question stem closely enough.

- (c) This question was well answered on the whole. It is encouraging to see that candidates have improved their knowledge of experimental design. Lots of candidates received full marks for identifying and explaining independent groups in context.
- (d) Almost all candidates were able to identify one strength and one weakness of research in a laboratory environment (mean score 3.2 out of 4). As with question 5 and 9 c) some candidates missed out on the second mark for each evaluation point, through a lack of elaboration in their description of why the point was a strength/weakness. That said this question had the highest facility factor and attempt rate on the whole paper, suggesting that students were able to access it well.
- (e) This was a well answered response on the whole, with most candidates achieving at least 2/3 marks. Work still needs to be done regarding definitions of confounding versus extraneous variables, as some candidates are still clearly unaware of the difference. However, more pertinently, full contextualisation of responses to AO2 questions is an area for improvement to gain full marks. Many candidates mentioned 'emotional response' without utilising prompts within the scenario to specify how the confounding variable might have affected emotions, such as excitement, interest, fear or anxiety, specifically.
- (f) Candidate responses to this question were encouraging. Most were able to demonstrate at least some understanding of the various calculations involved in standard deviation (mean score 3). It should be noted that all marks for this question were awarded for calculations and, thus, showing their working is essential practice for candidates. For those who gained 5/6 marks their first mark was often lost for not showing their workings for calculation of the mean.  $n-1$  calculations were also frequently omitted. However, overall, responses to this question were impressive.

### Summary of key points

- Candidates are to be commended on their attempt rate, where very few scripts had un-attempted questions.
- Areas of strength include contemporary debates, graphical representation and standard deviation.
- Areas of improvement include contextualisation, to allow access to full marks, through application of responses to the scenario, and increasing knowledge of research methods terminology. Where candidates understood the terms used in the question, they were better able to access higher marks e.g. areas for focus include levels of data, confounding variables and external validity.

**PSYCHOLOGY**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
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**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**UNIT 3**

**General Comments**

The excellent preparation for Unit 3 has continued this year with many candidates displaying thorough knowledge and understanding of all chosen behaviours and controversies. There also seems to have been a further drive on refining skills to reach marks in all of the AOs. AO2 seemed to be a discriminator for students who often reached full marks or very few. The controversies, on the whole, were better answered than last year. However, some students did not respond to the question posed, but rather a question they had hoped for or prepared for. The best responses used the key words in the questions to shape their response.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Section A - Implications in the Real World**

**Q.1 Addictive Behaviours**

- (a) This question had a mean score of 5.7. Describing two individual differences explanations was needed and most candidates discussed Eysenck's personality theory and cognitive biases. There were many exceptional responses who not only described the explanations but used research to add depth. Some discussed self-esteem as an individual difference, but quite often explained this self-esteem as seeking approval from peers – unfortunately, these responses leaned towards a social psychological explanation.
- (b) Evaluation of the individual differences explanations were needed with application to the statement to gain A02 marks. Unfortunately, several responses evaluated other explanations (biological and social psychological) throughout their response and therefore misunderstood the key focus. The best answers evaluated individual differences explanations by discussing methodological issues and research to support or refute. These candidates also used the biological and social explanations to evaluate the individual differences explanations and this technique worked well. Application marks seemed to be gained in a relatively straightforward way.

**Q.2 Autistic Spectrum Behaviours**

- (a) The majority of candidates were able to correctly identify both Theory of mind and Weak central coherence as appropriate individual differences explanations. Some candidates made errors and referenced other explanations (e.g. social psychological – empathising-systemising theory being a common error).

Theory of Mind was the strongest explanation with many students able to provide necessary depth and range to material including Baron-Cohen (1985), Sally-Anne task, Baron-Cohen (1995) - differences between mental-physical and appearance-reality distinction, use of gaze and mindblindness.

- (b) (i) Application was clearly problematic with the majority of candidates struggling to apply social psychological explanations to modifying autistic spectrum behaviours and rather simply describing the explanations or describing the methods of modifying. Consequently, few candidates were able to access top band. A minority of candidates were able to apply the empathising-systemising theory really well to PECS/Lego modification methods, making several associations between both - PECS used in order to appeal to an autistic child's strong systemising, and as a method used to strengthen empathy and communication. Well-developed answers provided more depth by explaining the roles (supplier of bricks, designer and builder – requiring communication and interaction) and their impact.
- (ii) On the whole, the evaluation was accurate with breadth and depth of issues relating to usefulness, ethical considerations and social implications, which were supported by studies and discussion in top band responses. Only a very few candidates described the methods of modification throughout the response, and/or at the beginning of their discussion displaying improvement in skills teaching. Many candidates were able to reference several varied issues relating to both methods, but tended to be superficial and list like, rather than investing time in discussing each issue with the necessary depth.

### Q.3 Bullying Behaviours

This behaviour was infrequently chosen by centres.

- (a) The mean mark was 7.2 for this question. AO2 was needed in this question by linking to the scenario with several issues on offer (e.g. David's physical and verbal aggression, his father and brother also showing aggression, David's lack of empathy, David's response to criticism). Generally, application skills were good. The bullying gene, the Narcissistic personality and Theory of Mind were the most common explanations used and these were well applied to the scenario. The best responses were able to reference relevant studies which strengthened the depth and range of material provided and ensured effective application. Top band answers were also able to link to several aspects of the scenario provided whereby the weaker candidates would focus solely on one aspect of the scenario (e.g. the aggression of David's father and brother).
- (b) The majority of candidates opted to evaluate the bullying genes and gender differences. A minority of candidates were able to provide good empirical support to the evaluations made for example referencing Waldman (2002), Ball *et. al.* (2008), Owens *et. al.* (2000). A large proportion of discussions centred around methodological weaknesses of twin studies and issues surrounding nature-nurture debate. Other issues that could have been addressed could include - problems in defining / measuring bullying, social desirability bias in self-reports, usefulness of understanding evolutionary nature of bullying, application of explanation to methods of modification

#### **Q.4 Criminal behaviours**

This behaviour was one of the two most attempted on the paper.

- (a) (i) This was answered poorly on the whole with the focus on describing categories of crime rather than characteristics of people who commit the crimes. This is also displayed through the lowest facility factor on the whole paper. Many responses purely listed the Farr and Gibbons 7 types of crime, therefore received little or no marks. Some answered well with the characteristics of type 1 and type 2 murderers.
- (ii) This question had the highest facility factor of 62.4 on the paper with a mean mark of 3.1. A mixture of Differential Association Theory (Sutherland) and Gender Socialisation were chosen and answered very well by most, writing in detail about their chosen explanation. Very few candidates wrote about Normalisation Theory.
- (b) Many were able to apply the statement to their answer and gained AO2 marks. Many answered the question by using AO3 evaluation, however some candidates misread the question and wrote a description of the explanations of criminal behaviour rather than evaluating. This was especially true with twin and adoption studies. Weaker responses linked the explanations to the statement by copying the statement at the end of each description.

#### **Q.5 Schizophrenia**

Again, this behaviour was most attempted with 87%.

- (a) A mean mark of 8.4 was reached for this question. Most candidates were able to describe two explanations of schizophrenia in detail using research and examples to increase depth. Many were able to apply their description to the scenario – Rhian – and used her symptoms effectively to show understanding. However, some candidates only used Rhian’s name to link throughout. Most common explanations chosen were dopamine, expressed emotion and dysfunctional families.
- (b) Most candidates evaluated two social psychological explanations accurately, using expressed emotion, dysfunctional families and/or cultural norms. However, some responses did describe the individual differences and biological explanations by mistake. At the lower end, some candidates described the explanations and named studies that supported them rather than focusing on evaluating the explanations.

#### **Q.6 Stress**

- (a) (i) This question was well answered by most candidates. They were able to fully explain two social explanations of stress – these were mainly life events and daily hassles. However, some candidates tended to describe Rahe's study alone.
- (ii) On the whole, candidates found this question challenging which is highlighted by the mean mark of 1.5. Most students were unable to apply the social psychology explanation to a method of modifying stress and mostly either described the method of modifying the behaviour or described a social psychology explanation. Some candidates applied daily hassles to savouring as an alternative method of modifying the stress.

- (b) This question was well answered by almost all candidates. They were able to fully evaluate a method of modifying stress and there were range of responses which evaluated SIT, CBT and beta blockers. There were still some candidates describing the different studies and then issuing a statement that is supports or contradicts the method of modifying stress rather than evaluating the method.

## **Section B – Controversies**

### **Q.7 Cost and Benefits of Psychology as a Science**

This controversy was more popular than question 8 with a 56.1% attempt rate. The mean mark was 13.5 but a standard deviation of 4.8 which may display the range of answers encountered. There were a range of answers here where the better responses debated the cost and benefits of psychology being a science with appropriate evidence to support their points as well as evaluating the evidence. However, the weaker responses answers gave simple strength and weaknesses. Some candidates discussed the status of psychology as a science rather than benefits and drawbacks, this limited the range of discussion that could have been presented. Many candidates discussed Milgram, Loftus and Palmer and Watson and Rayner.

### **Q.8 Cultural Bias**

This controversy was less frequently attempted with a 41.4% rate. The mean mark was 12.8 with a standard deviation of 5. Better essays had selected studies/evidence from across their A Level course to support and develop arguments that linked to the question. Rather than outlining different biases only (i.e. ethnocentrism), the better responses discussed studies that demonstrated these biases which led to discussion of why this could be an issue and what could be done to minimise the effect of these biases. The questions also asked for social and historical considerations which were not always addressed. Frequent research or evidence included Freud, schizophrenia diagnosis, Buss and positive psychology.

### **Summary of key points**

- Some candidates have over depended on text books which resulted in more generic answers.
- Better differentiation between AO1 and A03 in candidate responses.
- Candidates would benefit from additional practice of A02 skills, both within a mixed AO question and as a standalone AO2 response.

**PSYCHOLOGY**  
**General Certificate of Education (New)**  
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**UNIT 4**

**General Comments**

There were many very impressive scripts seen, with candidates showing accurate knowledge and understanding of research methods, applied effectively throughout the paper. Candidates should be commended for their efforts. The timing seems to have been controlled effectively by the candidates, most candidates completed every question on the paper. The attempt rate across all questions ranged between 98.2% and 99.9%. Overall, the candidates have responded well to a constrained paper and seem to apply the appropriate time and detail to each question. Most candidates applied their knowledge and understanding of research methods to the personal investigation questions. The discriminator on the paper was question 4 due to lack of application in the candidates answers. The importance of developing the AO2 skills needs to be addressed for future examinations.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

- Q.1 (a) (i)** The simplest approaches to this investigation title yielded the best answers. Most candidates were successful in clearly stating an alternative/experimental hypothesis with both variables clearly operationalised or identifiable and relative to the Chameleon effect. Many top band answers hypothesised that the mimicking effect would increase likeability of the interviewer compared to the non-mimicking condition. Candidates have been creative with their personal investigations, such as, mimicking behaviour having an effect on employability compared to the non-mimicking group. The attempt rate for this question was 99.9%. Unfortunately, some candidates stated a simple hypothesis without identifiable variables or not connected to the Chameleon effect. A hypothesis comparing males and females did not receive credit when not related to the investigation title.
- (ii)** This question required the candidate to identify the IV from the above hypothesis and the answer needed to be related to the personal investigation. Most candidates identified the IV as mimicking or non-mimicking behaviour.
- (iii)** Unfortunately, many candidates were unable to state an appropriate DV, some candidates repeating the IV or stating a DV that was not apparent in the hypothesis. Candidates did not receive credit for stating a DV that does not show the Chameleon effect such as, comparing male and female responses. The facility factor was 52.8 for this question, evidence that candidates were stating an inappropriate DV. The majority of correct responses stated likeability as a measure of the Chameleon effect.

- (b) There were some very good answers to this question. As a ten mark question, candidates were given the opportunity to explain in depth the ethical issues that were faced when planning the experiment and discuss the ways in which they ensured participants were treated ethically. This was an AO2 question, therefore, the main criteria for this question was to apply the information to their own personal investigation. The attempt rate of 99.9% shows how confident candidates are with ethics. Unfortunately, without application to the personal investigation the candidate could only access the lower bands of the mark scheme as the answer would appear as a generic response to an ethics question, facility factor of 52.7. The best answers discussed three or more ethical issues and applied their answers consistently to the personal investigation; therefore, the answers had the required range and depth with appropriate application.
- (c) The best answers discussed a way of assessing reliability, often the test-retest method or inter-rater reliability and discussed the type of reliability it would improve i.e. internal or external reliability. A basic discussion of consistency could not reach the top band. Unfortunately, some candidates discussed their use of a pilot study or ways of ensuring their measuring tools were accurate, this was not credit worthy as it is a discussion of validity.
- Q.2** (a) This question had a low facility factor (33.2). Unfortunately, many candidates stated a conclusion rather than a finding, often with great detail and relevant to the investigation but not an appropriate answer to the question. The best answers stated a clear finding and the aim of their investigation was clear.
- (b) Generally, this was a well answered question with many candidates stating the sampling method that was used, generally an opportunity sample with a full explanation of their experience of collecting the sample. This question had the highest facility factor (85.4). The best answers provided an explanation of the collecting of participants i.e. stating who they chose and the location they collected them from.
- (c) This question required the candidate to state two ways of improving the investigation, suggest a way in which they would carry out this improvement and suggest how this suggestion could improve the investigation. Two different suggestions were required to avoid repetition. Most candidates suggested changing the sampling method to gain better representation of the target population. Unfortunately, many candidates suggested a random sample as an improvement to gain a greater representation, which is inaccurate as a random sample reduces bias but does not ensure better representation. Many candidates referred to ethical issues such as ensuring consent and including debriefing. There were some very good answers suggesting changes to the wording of questions and specific adaptations of the measuring tool that was used.
- Q.3** (a) It is clear that candidates are confident with their knowledge of research methods and can recognise areas to improve when analysing a piece of research. This was answered well by most candidates with a variety of responses, many of which explained appropriately. The question asked for three changes, unfortunately, some candidates only suggested and explained two. Most candidates referred to changes regarding increasing the sample; using a self-selected sample; changing to a longitudinal study; using a laboratory environment; using a matched pairs design. Good answers stated the change and explained the reason or the effect of this change.



- (b) This was answered very well by most candidates. Good answers included the suggestion of a task such as using numbers as well as words or a problem solving task. This suggestion must be appropriate to the research with regards to validity, how it would improve the validity of the research needed to be explained and the type of validity under discussion must be stated for a full marks answer, such as content validity.
- Q.4** (a) (i) This question required clear application to the research which many candidates failed to include. Reference to males and females and/or aggression were relevant as evidence of application. Some candidates briefly suggested a way in which to investigate differences between males and females with no reference to aggression. The top band answers were explained fully with clear reference to the research and the way in which aggression was measured was explained explicitly such as named behaviour categories or defined levels of measurement on a likert scale.
- (ii) Unfortunately, as an AO2 question, the application was essential to avoid candidates writing generic ethics answers. This is evident in a lower facility factor (49.8) compared to the attempt rate of 99.6. Credit was not given to answers that did not contain application. However, there were some very good answers with thorough explanations of ways to ensure ethical research when comparing males and females and measuring aggression.
- Q.5** (a) Generally this was a well answered question with candidates showing a clear ability to explain the purpose of a scatter diagram with reference to age and number of hours slept. Without application to the scenario, the candidates answer could not achieve the top band.
- (b) (i) Some candidates answered referring to the reasons why Wilcoxon pairs signed ranks test was the incorrect choice such as, only appropriate for a test of difference. Some candidates answered through discussing the need for a test of relationship rather than difference. It is clear that candidates have improved on their knowledge and application of statistical tests, this question was well attempted and generally well answered.
- (ii) This was the lowest attempted question (98.2) with a good facility factor of 75.3. As with question 5.b (i), it is clear that candidates have improved on their knowledge and application of statistical tests. This was a generally well answered question with candidates stating Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. (N.B. Students writing just 'Spearman's' was accepted as credit worthy.)
- (c) The mean mark for this question was 0.6 with the lowest facility factor on the paper (27.9). An extraneous variable is an independent **variable** that may disturb an experiment or bias the results, disrupting the effect that the chosen independent variable has on the dependent variable for all participants involved. This question required the candidate to refer to the scenario when identifying an extraneous variable and noting the affect it would have on all participants.
- (d) As has been the case with similar questions, as an AO2 question, there had to be clear application to the research scenario.

The best answers stated an issue of validity, such as content validity, they explained this issue, such as the measuring tool as an estimation of sleep and suggested a way of improving the research, using a sleep tracking app. These answers had clear application to the research through the discussion of validity.

### **Summary of key points**

- Clear involvement and enjoyment of the personal investigations is evident in the answers that candidates produce. The ability to apply their subject knowledge is to be commended with regards to discussing their personal research projects.
- The simplest approaches to the personal investigations enabled candidates to access questions in the most effective manner.
- The AO2 skill hinders some candidates that display good subject knowledge, especially when discussing ethics. They are clearly confident with the content but must be able to apply that content to research scenarios.
- A focus on terminology and accuracy of use, even with simpler concepts such as sampling frames would benefit all candidates.



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