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# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCE  
PSYCHOLOGY  
AS/Advanced**

**SUMMER 2023**

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# PSYCHOLOGY

## General Certificate of Education

Summer 2023

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### UNIT 1 – PAST TO PRESENT

#### General Comments

Many candidates displayed some excellent responses across the paper, showing an impressive depth and breadth of knowledge. Candidates seemed well prepared for most of the different styles of question and there seemed to be improvement in the number of candidates using examples from the approach/evidence to develop answers to evaluation or comparison questions. The addition of extra lines for each question within the paper helped candidates to label their answers more clearly. Areas for improvement remain in the application of knowledge to longer answer AO2 questions and also in the distinction between findings and conclusions of classic evidence.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** The majority of answers to this question focused on either evolutionary explanations of mate preferences or the role of neurotransmitters such as dopamine. Many candidates were able to accurately describe the differences between male and female mate preferences according to evolutionary psychology with some reference to specific concepts such as parental investment and sexual selection. However, many answers would have benefited from a more complete explanation of how these concepts can be linked to the formation of relationships. There was a similar issue with some of the answers focused on neurotransmitters. For example, research such as Dutton and Aron (1974) was described but the explanation of how this linked to relationship formation was not always clear.
- Q.2 (a)** The majority of candidates were able to accurately identify two stimuli used in the study. It is worth noting that some candidates over complicated their responses by naming too many stimuli or giving additional information that was not required by the question.
- (b)** In order to gain higher band marks on this question, candidates needed to focus on conclusions rather than findings. Many answers simply described Little Albert's responses to the stimuli (findings) rather than focusing on wider conclusions drawn by Watson and Rayner as a result of these findings. For example, they could have referred to the learning of phobias through direct or transferred conditioning processes. There was confusion among some candidates over the reference made to Freudian theories in the original article and many candidates could have expressed this more clearly. Some outlined the Freudian interpretation as being one of Watson and Rayner's conclusions, without explaining that they are concluding that Freud would have been incorrect.

- Q.2 (c)** Most answers to this question referred to the ethical issue of risk of stress, anxiety, humiliation or pain. Most candidates then gave specific examples from the study such as Little Albert's thumb being removed from his mouth. Better answers developed the discussion by offering an alternative side to the ethical issue presented, for example mentioning Watson and Rayner's claim that the fear Little Albert was exposed to was no more than he would experience in everyday life. Candidates who chose to discuss valid consent did not always make it clear that Albert's mother was the one who consented and that her position working in the hospital may have affected her decision. Some simply mentioned Albert's age as being a barrier to valid consent, showing a limited understanding of the issue.
- Q.3** Answers on mindfulness were seen more frequently than those on Quality of Life Therapy. Terminology was used to add detail and many breathing and meditation techniques were explained accurately with appropriate examples. Many answers could have included more specific information about how these techniques are used as part of a therapeutic process, for example referring to specific methods such as MBCT or MBSR. It would be helpful for centres to supplement textbook information with more detail about these programmes and how they work. Candidates who wrote about Quality of Life Therapy gave some excellent descriptions of concepts such as the CASIO Model and Three Pillars, which allowed for a good use of terminology and accurate descriptions of a range of concepts.
- Q.4** Although the question was attempted by most candidates, not all candidates approached the question in the right way, leading to a display of variation in the quality of the responses. There were some outstanding answers to this question, with many candidates including a range of accurate and detailed information to describe both the methodology and procedures of the study. However, many answers did not always include enough information on methodology, focusing more on procedures, and this limited the marks available. Some answers also showed confusion over Experiment 2, with many misreporting the method (for example, when the question about broken glass was asked). There were also some candidates who merged both experiments together and therefore again limited the marks they could be awarded.
- Q.5** Most answers were able to identify points of similarity and difference using concepts such as determinism, their scientific nature or position on the nature/nurture debate. Examples were then accurately used to illustrate the similarity or difference (e.g. the unfalsifiable nature of the unconscious mind compared to the use of controlled studies like Skinner's research on pigeons). However, as has been mentioned before in relation to comparison questions, many candidates did not offer an evaluative comment as part of their discussion (e.g. the scientific nature of the behaviourist approach makes it more credible than the psychodynamic approach). This would help answers access the full range of marks.
- Q.6** Most candidates were able to accurately state two assumptions from the psychodynamic approach in their answers. There were some very detailed descriptions of concepts such as the psychosexual stages of development in the 'influence of childhood experiences' assumption or the id, ego and superego in the 'tripartite personality' assumption. However, as is often the case with assumptions questions, some candidates did not fully address the 'using an example from psychology' part of the question. Some were able to give an example such as different personality types, but they did not always fully explain the processes involved (e.g. how fixation occurs).

- Q.7** This question assessed AO2 skills (application) and therefore required candidates to apply their knowledge to the scenario presented. Although there were some excellent evaluations of CBT or REBT which included research evidence, examples and thorough discussion, many of these failed to mention Rhian or her doctor. Given the focus of this question this limited the marks they could be awarded. It would perhaps be useful for centres to practice more of these types of questions. They can use their existing evaluation knowledge as a basis for the answer but should look for opportunities to link to the focus of the question where AO2 skills are required. For example, when discussing effectiveness they could have suggested that this means Rhian's concerns that it "may not work" might be contradicted by research evidence.
- Q.8** There was a failure by many candidates to fully engage with this question. Unfortunately, some candidates appeared to have misread this question and described Myers and Diener's findings rather than evaluating the study itself. Answers gained credit for either evaluating Myers and Diener's methods (e.g. potential researcher bias in the use of a literature review) or by evaluating the methods of the individual studies included (e.g. the subjective nature of well-being and potential validity issues in the use of a questionnaire). The best answers were able to include examples from the research to illustrate each point made and also explain why each one was a strength or weakness.
- Q.9** This question was generally well answered. Most candidates were able to identify appropriate strengths of the biological approach referring to concepts like its scientific nature and useful applications. Better answers were able to explain fully why these are a strength of the approach as well as using examples from the approach to provide context and make it more specific. Some candidates stated examples (e.g. Raine) but did not always use these effectively to illustrate the strength (e.g. objective nature of brain scans used in the study).

### **Summary of key points**

In assumptions and relationships questions, candidates would benefit from ensuring that they explain as well as describe key concepts from each approach (AO1 – Q.1, Q.6).

Candidates should be clear on the distinction between findings and conclusions of classic evidence, and ensure they are able to accurately describe each one depending on the requirements of the question (AO1 – Q.2b).

In compare and contrast questions, candidates should include evaluative comments as well as explaining the similarity/difference (AO3 – Q.5).

Candidates would benefit from more practice of AO2 skills to ensure they fully apply their knowledge to the requirements of the question (AO2 – Q.7).

# PSYCHOLOGY

## General Certificate of Education

Summer 2023

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

## UNIT 2 – USING PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

### General Comments

Overall, candidates were well prepared with very few non attempted questions. The attempt rate was high on all questions, with questions 8 (c) and 9 (a) being particularly popular. It is encouraging to see that candidates are confident with questions on sampling and measures of dispersion.

Areas for improvement remain focused on more challenging aspects of the specification; self-reports (Q.3) and levels of data (Q.4). Quality of handwriting was poor in comparison to last year and centres should encourage candidates to use the extra lines at the back of the booklet if they find the constrained space provided is not long enough for their response. Careful labelling of this additional material is also recommended. Teachers of candidates whose writing might not be legible when responding under examination conditions should seek advice from their centre's examinations administration staff.

Additionally, candidates should be reminded to use the number of marks as an indication of how much detail is required in their response. Much like the advice given last year, where the question is applied to a scenario/context (AO2) and there are more than two marks available, it would be prudent to ensure there is more than one link to contextualise any response given.

### Comments on individual questions/sections

**Q.1** This year, contemporary debates were reintroduced, focusing specifically on the use of conditioning to control children's behaviour. Whilst the attempt rate was high, answers given, on the whole, were generic and not tailored to the question, which specifically focused on the negative ethical, social and economic implications of conditioning children. Many candidates included information given in major texts for this topic, 'Supernanny' (aka Jo Frost) and her naughty step featured heavily, as did the use of conditioning in schools. Both of these are acceptable and encouraged, along with the use of conditioning for vulnerable children, which was seen less frequently. Centres should ensure that candidates are encouraged to discuss these themes using terminology associated with the approach (positive/negative reinforcement and punishments) or by using psychological research in these areas to improve the quality of answers.

Responses invariably had either; a strong discussion of ethics, social and economic implications, allowing access to higher bands for AO3, but then lacked depth and detail relating to psychological research or terminology for AO1, or the reverse was true, where answers were descriptive, but did not create the to-and-fro one would expect of a debate, or hook into the question stem.

A partial explanation for this could be that a significant number of candidates would describe conditioning techniques that they have experienced in their own lives e.g., detentions, pocket money for chores, sitting on the naughty step etc., but they would not use any psychological terminology or research on which these techniques are based/supported or, when they did, they did so inaccurately. This meant that answers tended to be quite generic.

Alternatively, there were examples of brilliance, where candidates actively engaged with the quote and created arguments and conclusions about the purpose of conditioning and who it really benefits, adults and wider society (economically and socially), or the children who are conditioned, but these answers were less common.

A worrying number of candidates just described research into conditioning e.g., Skinner's rats, Pavlov's dogs and Watson and Rayner's research with little Albert, without making them relevant to the question in any way. This did not receive any credit. This was also true for the influence of peers on children's behaviour. Centres should note that we have never credited observation and imitation of role models (social learning theory) such as peers in this debate, as they are not forms of conditioning used to 'control' children's behaviour and so are not relevant.

**Q.2** This question was well attempted and was accessible to a large number of candidates. Most candidates were able to explain and give an example of 'stress, anxiety, humiliation or pain' in psychological research. A large number of candidates failed to achieve higher scores as they did not fully explain what this ethical issue was, or how it might arise, before moving on to their example. Most candidates chose to use Milgram as an example of this ethical issue, but other studies were perfectly acceptable and also credited accordingly. For example, a considerable number described how the issue occurred within Watson and Rayner's research. Where candidates did not use named research, they often found it hard to give enough detail in their hypothetical example to gain access to the top band, even when their explanation of the issue was strong.

**Q.3 (i) and (ii)** Candidates found part (i) of this question, which asked them to describe the features of self-reports, difficult. A significant number of candidates incorrectly described volunteer sampling, whilst others rehashed the question giving answers such as 'when a researcher reports what happens in a study themselves'. Neither of these received credit. Most candidates who scored one mark did so by naming methods that are used to collect self-reported information. If they related this to collecting the thoughts and feelings of the participant, they then went on to score a second mark and so on.

Part (ii) was one of the least accessible questions on the paper. It was however attempted more frequently than part (i), suggesting that candidates were 'having a good go'. Part of the problem here stemmed from a misunderstanding of what self-reports are, hence, they were unable to give appropriate strengths/weaknesses. Where candidates did know what self-reports were and gave responses, they often failed to receive credit because they stated that self-reports are 'quick and easy'. This response is only creditworthy if a comparison is made to other methods that might be more time consuming, and even then, one might argue that a semi-structure interview, which could be used to collect self-reports, is neither quick, nor easy.

Centres are encouraged to get candidates to use research methods terminology to evaluate methods e.g., focusing on reliability/validity of methods, so that they are more likely to gain credit when used accurately.

- Q.4** Candidates continue to struggle with levels of data. This year they were asked to define interval data, which they appeared to find more difficult than selecting which level was appropriate to describe data used in a scenario. This was one of the least accessible questions on the paper. When candidates did know what interval data was, they often got two marks by elaborating with an example like temperature. Although an example was not required, it was an easy way to elaborate their response to provide the 'detail' needed for full marks. Those who commented that there was no true zero also gained additional credit where they had explained that the increments between values were equal in interval data.
- Q.5** This question was well attempted and showed that candidates generally have a good understanding of what happened in Milgram's research. Most candidates focused on the fact that it was a volunteer sample and that even though they were deceived they 'agreed' to take part in a study that they believed to be on punishment and learning. This type of response would achieve two out of three. To get the final mark they needed to contextualise more deeply e.g., by mentioning that they volunteered after seeing an advert in the Newhaven newspaper, or alternatively by talking about another reason that Milgram might have claimed he had valid consent e.g. the fact that 84% of participants said they were either 'glad' or 'very glad' to have taken part, implying that their consent became fully informed retrospectively.
- Q.6** Although the attempt rate wasn't quite so high for this question, it was very pleasing to mark, with almost all candidates who attempted it gaining at least two marks. The most common responses focused on Kohlberg's sampling technique, pointing out that it was androcentric, with better answers going on to talk about the difference between male and female morality using examples such as Gilligan's research. Those candidates that also talked about his procedures, e.g., the fact that the dilemmas were hypothetical and hence lacked ecological validity, often gained scores in the top two bands. Good answers with depth and strong contextualisation could access full marks by talking about the impact of only two 'choices' that Kohlberg made, but the majority who gained top band scores talked about three different elements of Kohlberg's research. Quite unlike historical trends, the question on Kohlberg was more accessible than the question on Milgram. The examining team were genuinely impressed by the standard of these answers on the whole.
- Q.7** This question was pure evaluation, that did not have to be contextualised. In some ways this made it more difficult for candidates to gain the second mark. Many answers were descriptive, saying what semi-structured interviews were, rather than evaluating them. Those who were able to make a relevant point often struggled to gain a second mark as they did not explain, for example, why asking follow up questions would be beneficial for the research.
- Q.8 (a)** Often when candidates gave a correct response the only discriminator between one and two marks was how they phrased their question. To gain full marks it needed to be clear that candidates were measuring student 'perceptions', rather than requesting factual information in the questionnaire. Therefore, we were looking for words such as 'think', 'believe' etc. to ensure that perception of peers' revision was being measured by the question posed. For those who did attempt it, and who understood the question, they often scored full marks. A score of one was relatively rare.

- Q.8 (b)** This question had one of the highest attempt rates on the paper suggesting that this question was one in which candidates felt most confident. The mean score was, however, lower than expected. This is partially due to the problem with using quick/cheap/easy as advantages, which are not credit worthy unless compared to a slower/more expensive/harder method. The second issue was that candidates rarely contextualised their responses, so, even if both points were correct, they still could only score 2/4. Much like advice given in previous series, in scenarios questions, if candidates are unsure whether they need to contextualise or not, they should do so. They will not be penalised if they contextualise, and it was not required by the question.
- (c) (i)** This question had one of the highest attempt rates of all questions with almost every candidate attempting a response. There was lots of rehashing of the question here e.g. 'where a researcher chooses participants randomly... by pulling names out of hat'. This would gain one mark for the second part of the response. Ideally in a definition question candidates should be explaining the feature of the sampling technique that makes it unique from others to gain full marks e.g. saying that everyone has an equal chance of being selected.
- (ii)** Again, well attempted, but slightly more accessible than part (i). Of the three marks available, two were for explaining how a random sample is collected e.g. where you might find the sampling frame and how you might select people from it. The answer also needed to be contextualised. Contextualisation that was acceptable included locations where the psychologist might have gained a list of A level candidates (e.g. local colleges) and how they would have selected their sample of 20 candidates from that list (e.g. placing names of students on registers of those colleges into a random name generator and generating 20 participants from it who can be asked if they would like to participate).
- (d)** Candidates generally either got all of the marks on this question, or none. Many of the answers given were non-directional or null hypotheses and so scored zero. Where a directional hypothesis was given, that accurately reflected the purpose of the research (based on the original scenario) it often scored full marks. Some candidates wrote inappropriate hypotheses based on the question they generated in part (a). Candidates should be encouraged to re-read the scenario before writing a hypothesis to refamiliarise themselves with the context provided.
- (e)** This was the first-time candidates had been given a graphical representation and then been asked to create a frequency table from it. Despite this, a significant number of candidates were able to access the majority of the marks. Very few candidates included a table title in either this question or 9 (a) (iii). Whilst certain that candidates are reminded by centres to do this, candidates still appear to forget and lose out on an 'easy' mark.
- (f)** This question required a suggested improvement to the research and candidates were able to come up with relevant ideas. These ideas were, however, not always contextualised, so, scored only half marks. It should be noted that this year we allowed the improvement 'increase sample size', however this was only accepted because the sampling technique used was random sampling, thus increasing sample size would likely make the study more representative.

If the sample had been volunteer, or opportunity, then this improvement would not have been creditworthy. Thus, centres might want to remind candidates that bigger is not always better in psychological research.

- Q.9 (a)**
- (i)** This question was a clear favourite between candidates and markers alike, with the one of the highest attempt rates and lowest standard deviations in the paper. Almost all candidates gaining both marks available for calculating the range. Those who lost a mark invariably did so through erroneous calculation rather than not showing workings, which was very pleasing.
  - (ii)** A considerable number of candidates were able to give a weakness of the range, focusing primarily on anomalous results skewing the overall range. A few candidates explained this particularly articulately by saying that those scores at the top and bottom are more often than not anomalous where the range is large but the standard deviation is low. However, very few candidates contextualised their responses to the scenario, which meant they could not access the second mark. This was a real shame when it was clear that many candidates had the appropriate knowledge needed to access all of the marks.
  - (iii)** Drawing and labelling a bar chart was as popular as ever. Almost all candidates who attempted gained four out of the five marks available. As historically is the case, the only mark lost for most candidates was for not including a chart title.
- (b)** This question required candidates to describe how a stratified sample is selected. Answers did not have to be contextualised, but they were not penalised if they did so. This question was amongst the least accessible on the paper. Far too many candidates described systematic sampling and scored zero. For those who did describe stratified sampling they often only managed to gain marks for the idea of splitting the target population into subgroups. Some gained one additional mark for explaining that they were selected randomly from those groups, but very few candidates explained that this selection would be proportional to their occurrence in the target population.
- (c)** Most candidates who attempted this question got one out of the two marks available, selecting independent groups as the research design. Very few contextualised their answers to gain the second mark.
- (d)** Despite confounding variables being a trickier area of the specification, candidates performed reasonably well on this final question. As a general rule, responses that made it clear that a variable, other than the IV, was influencing the outcome of some/a subgroup/one specific participant gained marks. Most candidates chose variables such as an individual participant having an argument/bad night's sleep etc. which effected their concentration. To get the three marks they needed to explain how the concentration test score might be affected (e.g. gaining a lower/higher score as a result of the confounding variable that wasn't whether they had jogged/done yoga), and it had to be contextualised to the research e.g. explain why this might skew the results of the yoga/jogging group.

Candidates who said things such as 'one of the participants in the jogging group might have a medical condition, e.g. asthma, which meant they were out of breath and wheezing during the concentration test and that they scored more poorly as a result', could have accessed full marks. However, those who said that the jogging group might be more tired from jogging than if they had done yoga, did not achieve any marks because it is not specific to one/some of the participants, but one whole condition of the IV.

### **Summary of key points**

Candidates are to be commended on their attempt rate; few scripts had unattempted questions.

Areas of strength include measures of dispersion, graphical representation and improvements to psychological research, the latter of which has not been so well accessed in past series. It was encouraging to see that, where candidates had used the extra lines, questions had been labelled relatively accurately this year.

Areas of improvement include the need for contextualisation in scenarios questions, where candidates should be encouraged to use links to the scenario that are not already listed in the question stem.

Candidates should use the number of marks available as a guide for how much detail is needed, particularly in extended writing responses (4 marks and higher).

Contemporary debates question was reintroduced this year and there were some exemplary candidate responses across all areas of the paper and centres and their candidates are to be congratulated for their hard work.

# PSYCHOLOGY

## General Certificate of Education

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### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### UNIT 3 – IMPLICATIONS IN THE REAL WORLD

##### General Comments

There was definitely a range of performances this year, across different question styles and assessment objectives. It seems some pupils were underprepared for certain question styles and again accessing top mark bands for Section B remains a big problem for some candidates. Whereas some candidates showed impressive understanding of both knowledge and exam criteria resulting in an excellent performance.

Overall, the good features included improvements in candidates' ability to gauge enough selective information where AOs were set at 5 marks. There were also improvements seen in AO3 preparation, with candidate showing a more thorough level of evaluation with clear context. AO1 explanation questions were, on the whole, done well with clear links to behaviours and use of key terminology.

Method of modification (AO1) questions were not done quite as well, where candidates were not explaining how the method modified the behaviour. Areas of concern also include the standalone AO2 questions. Whereas last year we saw improvements, unfortunately this was not the case this year. These were one of the questions that seemed to cause the most problems, with the application element of them often missed.

As far as the controversies questions are concerned, candidates were still not using much research evidence or included lengthy outlines of the research procedures rather than using the study to address the controversy; the best responses used the research effectively and used the key words in the questions to shape their response. As with previous years, there was some relying on pre-planned answers that missed the focus of the question and instead tended to be a generic 'outlining of ethical issues or comments on how Psychology is sexist' answers. It was very evident that some of candidates did not read the question carefully and, so, did not shape their answer around it.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

###### Section A: The study of behaviours

###### Q.1 Addictive behaviours

- (a) This question asked for the description of the characteristics of addiction. Most candidates had excellent knowledge of the characteristics and were able to identify and describe them in some detail. Most used Griffiths (2005) 6 factors that should be considered for behaviour to become an addiction, but some chose only to include some of these. Another problem that occurred is that some candidates purely define what an addiction is as opposed to focusing on the characteristics.

- Q.1 (b)** This question required AO1 skill only. Some candidates did struggle to with how much to include for 5 marks (often writing far too much), but on the whole this was done far better than Summer 2022. The two methods named on the specification were amongst the most popular answer given: agonist and antagonist substitution or aversion therapy. Stronger answers tended to explain how the therapy modified addiction and included links to Antabuse/rapid smoking or methadone/Naltrexone.
- (c)** Unfortunately, the combination of application and evaluation was an issue with some candidates on this question, with candidates struggling to refer to the statement throughout their answer. This question required candidates to address whether both biological explanations allow for a more detailed approach and therefore every evaluative point needed to be shaped toward this, meaning the reference to the statement needed to be threaded throughout the answer and not just referred to in the conclusion. In addition, the question required both biological explanations to be addressed – when this was not done the candidate could not access the top bands (6-10 marks). In addition, some candidates evaluated biological explanations generally which meant their response was very generic. Finally, conclusions could do with some focus – there were a lot of repetition of the entire answer rather than adding anything new.

**Q.2 Autistic spectrum behaviours**

- (a)** This question required AO1 skill only and the two methods named on the specification were amongst the most popular answer given: Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and Relationship Development Intervention. It had similar issues to Q.1(b) where stronger answers tended to explain how the therapy modified autistic spectrum behaviours and included references to the stages involved in the processes. Weaker answers tended to give a general outline of what happened during the therapy without references to how it corrects the behaviours seen in autistic spectrum behaviours. Some candidates missed that the two were marked separately and tended to overwrite on one and underwrite on the other.
- (b)** This had a similar structure to Q.1(c) and had some similar issues that occurred in that question. This was also a combined skills question, application and evaluation. There was clear issue with candidates struggling to refer to the statement throughout their answer. This question required candidates to address whether both biological explanations fully explain autistic spectrum behaviours and the reference to the statement needed to be threaded throughout the answer and not just referred to in the conclusion. This question also required both biological explanations to be addressed – the most popular seen was amygdala dysfunction and genetic predisposition, however, there were times when some candidates only referred to one of these meaning they could not access the top bands (6-10 marks). In addition, some candidates evaluated biological explanations generally, which meant their response was very generic. Conclusions here proved a problem also, as they included a lot of repetition of the entire answer rather than adding anything new.

### Q.3 Bullying behaviours

- (a) This was a 5-mark AO1 question that required an outline of the characteristics of bullying behaviours. Those who did this well focussed on the five features of bullying behaviour as outlined by Dan Olweus (1993). However, some candidates spent too long giving generic definitions of the word 'bullying' and did not focus on the features/characteristics.
- (b) The question asked for AO1 skills, to describe any one individual differences explanation of bullying behaviour. There was some confusion seen between the social explanation and the individual differences explanations. Where relevant information was used most described the narcissistic personality. Many students were able to explain this with the required depth and range with clear links to bullying behaviours. However, some candidates gave good outlines of the narcissistic personality but failed to actually relate it to bullying behaviours.
- (c) This was another combined AO question that required candidates to evaluate (strengths and weaknesses) the use of one of the named methods of modifications with relation to the scenario. Where this was done well, candidates used their evaluative points and engaged with information from the scenario, such as Mr Dale being new to the role as Head of Year 7 and, therefore, CAPSLE which was easy to use and or low cost would be ideal for him starting out. Well written conclusions came to some sort of close as to whether the chosen method would be beneficial for Mr Dale. Candidates who scored lower AO2, generically name-dropped 'Mr Dale' throughout the answer rather than engage with the scenario.

### Q.4 Criminal behaviours

- (a) Unfortunately, this was one of the worse performing questions on the paper. This is an application question that generates AO2 marks. It required candidates to apply social psychological explanations to modifying criminal behaviours. Therefore, those that did this well gave an outline of the general or specific ways that social psychologists explain criminal behaviours and then made an explicit link between this causal explanation and the way it could be modified e.g. Gender socialisation theory suggests that criminal behaviour is caused via the way males are socialised in our society, expectations and role models. This could be applied to the method of modifying known as the 'Man Up Project', here males are socialised differently to try and reduce their criminal behaviour via exposure to more feminine strategies or expose them to less aggressive role models. Unfortunately, this type of answer was rarely seen and instead there were many answers that would outline a social explanation and a method of modification but with no application between the two e.g. Gender socialisation theory suggests that criminal behaviour is caused via the way males are socialised in our society – expectations and role models. This could be applied to the method of modifying known as restorative justice which involves both victims and offenders meeting and atone for wrongdoing. Here there is no application of how restorative justice actually helps modify criminal behaviour that is caused via male socialisation.
- (b) This question required both AO1 and AO3, this was done much better this year, where most candidates included both skills and were better prepared at understanding how much to include to in this type of question.

Most candidates used Eysenck's personality theory, but some unfortunately spent too long outlining these types without reference to criminal behaviour. The AO3 in this question was done well. Candidates seem far better prepared to use both depth and context in their points, however some did use far too many evaluative points considering this AO was out of 5 marks.

- Q.4 (c)** This question also required both AO1 and AO3, however, the same issues arose as with question 4(b). Stronger answers tended to explain how restorative justice modified criminal behaviour and prevented reoffending. Weaker answers tend to outline what happened during restorative justice but failed to address how it modified the behaviour. With regard to AO3, stronger answers included fewer points that were explained and clearly linked to restorative justice as opposed to lots of generic evaluation.

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

- (a)** Another question that required both AO1 and AO3, where most candidates included both skills and were better prepared at understanding how much to include to in this type of question. Most candidates used the psychodynamic explanation, but some unfortunately did not link this to schizophrenia or omitted lots of key terminology. The AO3 in this question was done well. Candidates seem far better prepared to use both depth and context in their points, however, again, some did use far too many evaluative points considering this AO was out of 5 marks. In addition, the question required both strengths and weaknesses and some candidates missed this.
- (b)** This question also required both AO1 and AO3, however, the same issues arose as with question 4(c). Weaker answers tended to miss how the use of antipsychotic drugs led to a reduction in schizophrenic symptoms, how they worked/modified the behaviour and instead presented lots of information on prescription criteria and dosage. In addition, there was opportunity for a lot of key terminology in this answer which was massively missed in some answers. With regard to AO3, stronger answers included fewer points that were explained and clearly linked to antipsychotic drugs as opposed to lots of generic evaluation.
- (c)** Candidates had difficulties responding to this question as well. Many were able to correctly identify a social explanation and even a method of modifying but were unable to apply it. Instead, they wrote a description of the explanation and then separately a description of the method of modifying, with no explanation of how it would correct the behaviour. The best answers chose a method of modifying which was clearly linked to an explanation and gave detail regarding how the cause was tackled within the method of modifying.

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

- (a)** Overall, most candidates used two separate biological explanations with a large variety of key terminology included. The knowledge on this answer was impressive and candidates seemed well prepared. Some areas that caused problems were where candidates did some brilliant outlines of the biological explanations but made little/no reference to stress.

- Q.6 (b)** Quite a few candidates did not respond to this question or only vaguely answered indicating a lack of knowledge. For some, it was evident that the points were very generic and lacked key reference to stress inoculation training. Others may have included one or two well written points but not able to go much further than that.
- (c)** Many candidates confused social psychological and individual differences explanations to begin with. However, many that were able to correctly identify an individual differences explanation and even a method of modifying were unable to apply them, instead many wrote a description of the explanation and then separately a description of the method of modifying with no explanation of how it would correct the behaviour. The best answers chose a method of modifying which was clearly linked to an explanation or the explanations and gave detail regarding how the cause was tackled within the method of modifying. An example of this was using the Hardiness Personality explanation and the outline of the '3 C's' which make people more resilient to stress. Then using Hardiness training to outline how people could be taught to be hardier and therefore become more resilient to stress.

## **Section B Controversies**

### **Q.7 Ethical costs of conducting research**

There were a few disappointing things seen; pre-learnt essays that did not address the question, such as long descriptions of studies without engagement with the question, or answers with no reference to research/theories or approaches at all. Some answers tended to just outline different unethical studies but failed to link these to the evaluation of the use of ethical guidelines in psychological research, missing the key point of the question.

The debate should have been centred on the benefits of ethical guidelines which could include that the individual's well-being deserves the same consideration as the possible benefits to society, then linking this into research such as the cost to Little Albert not given the same consideration as the potential knowledge that came from this study in the form of treatments.

On the other side they then should have considered the costs of ethical guidelines including consideration of studies which would now be impossible to conduct and the knowledge that would be lost or missing due to it. There were also some incidences where candidates used animal studies in these answers, this was not creditworthy for this question.

### **Q.8 Sexism**

Similarly to question 7, there were a lot of pre-learnt essays seen that did not address the question. This led to answers with long descriptions of issues without engagement with the question, instead misinterpreting it to be a generic 'sexism in psychology' question, as opposed to whether psychology will ever be free from sexism.

Many answers did not have any reference to research or theories, it is disappointing that students are still unable to include much appropriate evidence for these answers.

There also needs to be more emphasis on having a balanced argument and both sides of the debate. A large majority of candidates argued how psychology is sexist without any consideration of the other side of the argument and this then had a big effect on the AO3 marks allocated.

### **Summary of key points**

Candidates would benefit from better exam practise with a variety of question styles, including the standalone AO2 question and combined AO2/3 questions in particular.

There needs to be better preparation for controversies essays with a drive to answer the question set using relevant studies/approaches/theories.

In addition, candidates need to ensure method of modifications that are outlined, refer to how it 'corrects' the behaviour and similarly explanation questions need to be linked to the behaviour that they are outlining.

# PSYCHOLOGY

## General Certificate of Education

Summer 2023

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

#### UNIT 4 – APPLIED RESEARCH METHODS

##### General Comments

This year it was impressive to see a high attempt rate across all questions. The personal investigations were interesting, and a variety of investigations were presented. However, the discriminator within the personal investigation responses remains the AO2 skill which is clearly linking their response to their personal investigation.

The use of appropriate terminology within the answers was a substantial improvement on the summer 2022 summer examination. It is worth encouraging the use of the back pages for any extra content to answers, and clearly labelling this, if the space provided isn't sufficient for their response.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1 (a)** Most candidates were able to gain some credit on this question and had a good grasp on how they collected the data for their content analysis. The most successful answers clearly demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the type of media collected and how the artefacts were chosen with clearly operationalised behavioural checklists.
- (b) (i)** This question was an example of where the application to the personal investigation became the discriminator in the mark awarded. What was impressive in this question was the different ways of assessing validity demonstrating a range across all types from face to construct validity. The better answers clearly linked the way of assessing the validity to their content analysis. For example, if using content validity an expert in the field of antisocial behaviour, such as police MET officer, could assess the behavioural checklist and ensure it is fit for the purpose of the investigation. Without application to the research title candidates failed to achieve any credit.
- (ii)** Again, this question was an example of where the application to the personal investigation became the discriminator in the mark awarded. When answered appropriately, candidates mainly discussed inter-rater reliability or test-retest but only the candidates who applied the way of assessing the reliability to the research title gained credit.
- (c)** This question was an AO3 question so a clear link to the investigation was not required. Candidates instead were required to evaluate the use of a content analysis when investigating anti-social behaviour in the media. Responses that had no link to antisocial behaviour in the media could still achieve 2/3 marks, the link to gain a 3/3 marks did not have to be to the investigation just to the general topic of anti-social behaviour in the media.

However, some candidates lost marks on this question for their evaluation of a content analysis, it was clear that some candidates struggled to evaluate one strength and weakness of this research method. A lot of answers evaluated the investigation itself rather than the use of a content analysis. Equally, there were some impressive answers with reference to the topic of anti-social behaviour in the media.

- Q.2 (a)** This was a well answered AO1 question. A large proportion of candidates were able to identify the type of data and use an example from their questionnaire. Some candidates failed to explain the type of data and therefore achieved 2/3 marks instead of 3/3 marks but on the whole, this was well answered.
- (b)** Generally, this was well answered, and candidates were able to describe an ethical issue within the context of the investigation and describe an appropriate way of dealing with the ethical issue. The application in this question to the questionnaire study was good but when candidates didn't achieve 4/4 marks this was largely due to lack of application. In some cases, candidates didn't describe the ethical issue but instead just identified an ethical issue which didn't gain credit but, in these circumstances, marks were often awarded in the dealing with the ethical issue section of the answer.
- (c) (i)** Most candidates were able to correctly identify a descriptive statistic and achieve 1/1 marks on this question which is a noticeable improvement on the summer 2022 exam series. However, some candidates, referred to graphical representation or inferential statistics and these were not creditworthy.
- (ii)** This question is a prime example of the link being a discriminating factor in the mark awarded. A high proportion of candidates were able to fully justify their choice of descriptive statistic but had no link to their research which is represented by the mean score. The better answers fully justified their choice of descriptive statistic with a clear link to their questionnaire study. The key point here is that reference to the personal investigation is key to achieving the higher marks.
- (d)** This question was amongst the least attempted on the paper. It is also evident that this question was amongst the least accessible on the paper. A lot of responses for this referred to inferential statistics rather than the level of significance. There were a substantial number of candidates who did give an appropriate justification of the level of significance, but the answer lacked application to the questionnaire study. The better answers were able to give a reasonable justification of the choice of the level of significance with link to the research. For example, some candidates referred to their questionnaire study on pet ownership and stress as not being critical medical research and therefore didn't require a stringent level of significance such as  $p \leq 0.01$  so they chose  $p \leq 0.05$ , as this is generally accepted in psychology.
- (e)** We saw some impressive answers for this question and candidates were able to provide a reasonable justification of whether the results of the questionnaire allowed the alternative hypothesis to be accepted or rejected. The better answers referred to their inferential statistical test with the comparison of the observed and critical value leading them to either accept the alternative and reject the null or vice versa and elaborating on what that meant for their investigation i.e. what the hypothesis stated.

Some candidates justified the inferential statistical test used without reference to the hypotheses and these answers were not creditworthy.

- Q.3**
- (a)**
- (i)** This question was amongst the most accessible question on the paper. Most candidates were able to correctly identify one type of brain scan.
- (ii)** This was a well attempted question and generally a well answered question. Most candidates were able to gain some credit on this question. The discriminating factor in this question was the level of evaluation. Those candidates who did a generic evaluation of a brain scan e.g. scientific achieved 1/2marks as it was deemed basic. The better answers provided specific evaluation points for the brain scan identified in (a)(i) and there were a lot of strong answers for this question.
- (b)** The better answers provided a reasonable justification of the use of a case study to investigate behaviour with a link to the novel scenario.
- (c)** The key point to make when discussing the efficacy of this question is the question command work was 'how'. This is worth mentioning as candidates who lost marks on this question focused on why another methodology could be used to investigate the effect of M.T.'s brain injury rather than *how* another methodology could be used. The better answers focused on how an alternative method could investigate M.T.'s brain injury for example a longitudinal study could take place over 10 years and M.T.'s speech and memory could be assessed every 6 months using memory and speech tasks to record the progress over time.
- Q.4**
- (a)**
- (i)** This was a well attempted question with most candidates being able to achieve some credit for referring to the familiar or unfamiliar teacher resulting in 1/2 marks. The better answers were able to fully operationalise the familiar teacher being the usual teacher and the unfamiliar teacher being the unknown teacher which resulted in 2/2 marks.
- (ii)** Most candidates were able to achieve some credit for explaining that the DV was operationalised by obeyed and didn't obey the teacher. The better answers were able to provide a reasonable explanation of how the DV was operationalised how many students completed the task (obeyed) and how many students didn't complete the task (disobeyed).
- (b)** Although this question was attempted by most candidates, it wasn't well answered. Candidates are still getting confused between an extraneous variable and a confounding variable. It may be conducive to highlight in teaching notes that answers referring to confounding variables should emphasise that only some participants are affected not all participants. The better answers referred to *some* or *an* individual participant being tired/ill on the Wednesday afternoon and therefore more likely not to complete the task on that day.
- (c)**
- (i)** Candidates either knew the answer to this and gained a mark for correctly identifying the sign test or didn't identify the sign test and received no credit.

- Q.4 (c) (ii)** Candidates who identified the incorrect inferential statistical test in 4(c)(i) were still able to gain credit in this part if they correctly justified with a link to the scenario any of the following conditions: test of a difference, level of measurement, related data. To gain credit in this question each of the three justification points needed to be linked to the scenario. The better answers had three justification points each linked to the novel scenario.
- (d)** This question was well attempted, and most candidates were able to achieve some credit for this question. This was an AO3 question and therefore no application was required. However, we did see candidates who used examples either from the scenario or unrelated to the scenario add detail to their answer. It is important to note this wasn't necessary to achieve full marks and many were able to access the top band by just using a reasonable evaluation point, but it did aid the candidates who had basic evaluation points pushing it into a reasonable evaluation. For example, a strength of an opportunity sample is that the sample is readily available to the researcher e.g. a researcher could use whoever is in the town centre at the time of their study.
- (e)** This answer was well attempted. As this was a 3-mark evaluation question we accepted all strengths or all weaknesses or a mixture of both. Most candidates focused on one strength and one weakness. This was answered fairly well, and candidates were able to gain credit on evaluating the use of a repeated measures experimental design. As this was an AO3 question no link to the novel scenario was required.
- (f)** Most candidates who attempted this question were able to achieve some credit. The better answers linked the improvement back to Milgram and to the novel scenario. Ethics were a popular improvement, as was higher population validity as the study used males and females instead of just males in Milgram's 1963 research.

### **Summary of key points**

It was interesting to read the range of personal investigations and it was clear that a lot of effort had gone into completing them.

The attempt rate was high across all questions.

Appropriate terminology in questions has significantly improved since the summer 2022 examination series for which candidates should be commended for.

There was a considerable improvement in candidate's knowledge and understanding of descriptive and inferential statistics since the summer 2022 series which, again, candidates should be commended for.

The level of application in answers is still disadvantaging candidates. There are candidates who clearly understand the content but are lacking the ability to sufficiently apply their knowledge and understanding which is hindering their performance, particularly in the Personal Investigations.

A focus on the difference between confounding and extraneous variables would be beneficial in improving the quality of answers for this part of the specification.



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