



General Certificate of Education

Psychology 1181

Specification A

**Unit 1 (PSYA1) Cognitive Psychology,
Developmental Psychology and Research
Methods**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.

Unit 1: (PSYA1) Cognitive Psychology, Developmental and Research Methods

General

Most candidates were well prepared for this paper and many performed very well. Some candidates continue to write more than is required. Full marks can be achieved by writing a well-focused answer within the space provided. Length of answer rarely equated with quality of answer. In many cases material on additional sheets did not add to the original mark. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of reading questions carefully and selecting relevant material.

Most questions seemed to discriminate between candidates. There were some well thought through answers by better candidates, especially to questions which required application of knowledge. Three discriminating factors seemed to be:

- relevant psychological knowledge
- candidates' ability to express themselves accurately in proper sentences rather than jumbled phrases
- the ability to 'stand back' from the question and think it through before putting pen to paper.

Section A: Cognitive Psychology and Research Methods

Question 1

- (b) Many answers used evidence from neurological research or brain injury studies to demonstrate that the strength of WMM lay in supporting studies. Other appropriate answers referred to dual task research and their implications for supporting the model. Weaknesses were less well explained. The central executive was sometimes unjustly referred to as lacking any evidence to support it. Just to say the WMM did not explain LTM was not creditworthy.

Some answers failed to gain full marks as they did not elaborate on the weakness of model which they identified. For example, they simply stated that little was known about the central executive.

A few candidates confused the working memory model and multi-store model

Question 2

- (a) Most answers scored two marks. Very few candidates failed to score at least one mark.
- (b) Candidates generally either answered the question effectively, relating the multi-store model to the stem about Peter, or they failed completely to apply their knowledge as required. Concise, apposite answers scored full marks.

- (c) There were many appropriate and clear answers but also some which identified one issue but then described how a different issue could be dealt with. Some candidates failed to clearly state the issue merely saying how an unnamed issue could be dealt with. Also, identifying 'withdrawal from the study' as the issue and then saying 'Peter should be told he could withdraw from the study' as a way of dealing with the issue, is not going to gain more than minimal credit.

A few candidates offered problems of methodology rather than ethics.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates could identify the real world setting of a field experiment but a substantial number of answers were unclear when referring to the manipulation of the independent variable by the experimenter. It was common for candidates to write that the independent variable was controlled but not to add that it was varied or manipulated.
- (b) Most answers referred to lack of control over extraneous variables as a weakness. Better responses gave an example of an appropriate uncontrolled variable. A few answers inappropriately focused on an ethical issue.
- (c) Substantial numbers of candidates were able to say that the question about 'the man in glasses' was a leading/misleading question and it had been presented because the effect on EWT was being assessed. Some answers incorrectly alluded to its inclusion on the basis of its effect on anxiety.
- (d) A lot of candidates found this question difficult to answer. They did not seem to understand the concept of 'behavioural category' as used in research, nor were they able to write anything coherent about the process of content analysis. Some candidates tried to link their answer to 3(c) but this was not appropriate.
- (e) This was a question which produced polarised answers. Some answers provided accurate detail on one or more studies, to indicate what research has shown about the effect of age of witnesses in the accuracy of EWT. Other answers made general points about research, or just made general points without referring to research. In the latter cases marks achieved did not progress beyond the basic or rudimentary bands. A few candidates failed to gain full credit because they gave detail of procedures of studies but little concerning the findings. Many candidates produced very vague answers (eg saying that children are more easily influenced by leading questions than adults) with little detailed knowledge. A small number of candidates produced irrelevant answers concerning effects of leading questions or anxiety with no reference to age differences.

Question 4

Almost all candidates were able to identify one or more ways to improve memory. Some candidates just named a number of ways but did not outline the processes involved in memory improvement. This question required the candidate to be able to write coherently, and that was often lacking as answers were sometimes lists of examples or parts of memory strategies with no explanation to accompany them. The ability to write clearly and exactly was a discriminator in this question. Although the vast majority of candidates demonstrated some knowledge of methods of improving memory, few candidates gained full marks as explanations of strategies were frequently muddled or unclear.

Section B: Developmental Psychology and Research Methods

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates scored two marks. Some answers were detailed and thorough, indicating candidates had a clear understanding of the concept. A few candidates seemed to find it difficult to write a definition, or just referred to Ainsworth's work on attachment without attempting a definition of the term. Credit could not be given where candidates wrote 'attachment is a bond between things.'
- (c) Most candidates knew something about Ainsworth's studies of attachment. Answers varied in how well they focused on procedural aspects of Ainsworth's work. Describing the attachment behaviour of infants was required in question 5(b) and on its own, would not gain credit in this question.

Question 6

- (a) A large number of candidates scored full marks. Some candidates muddled opportunity and volunteer samples using one for the sampling technique and the other for the explanation. Random sampling produced the usual problems where answers did not identify the sampling frame or suggested the children should be pulled out of a hat. If candidates said 'use a computer' to get a sample it would be helpful if they could give some indication of *how* a computer would be used to select a sample.
- (b) Most candidates referred to children's behaviour in relation to other people and were able to give an example or elaborate on their answer in some way to gain full marks.
- (c) A suitable question was generated by many candidates, although some responses gave questions that were not operationalised, or not appropriate (as they had no link to the questionnaire). A few candidates muddled quantitative and qualitative and penalised themselves in 6(c) and 6(d).
- (d) Similarly to 6(c) many candidates produced an appropriate response although some candidates failed to score by asking questions which would produce categorical answers eg Did your child like going to nursery?
- (e) Social desirability was the favourite example of a weakness. Other good answers included the lack of opportunity to follow up answers in a questionnaire, the possible low response rate and the distortion effect this might have.

Question 7

- (a) Many candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of effects of separation, although a few gave answers relating to the strange situation. Some good answers applied the PDD model to the scenario. A few candidates muddled the requirement to write about disruption of attachment and wrote about maternal deprivation, or privation, instead.
- (b) This part was well answered; candidates usually explored the benefits of increasing emotional care with a key worker, or family member.

Question 8

Most candidates were able to cite specific research into privation, generally Genie and the Czech twins. Some candidates achieved high marks, demonstrating detailed knowledge of procedures and findings of a range of studies. Some produced very detailed and accurate answers relating to Hodges and Tizard and, again, were able to achieve high marks. The quality of description provided by candidates was variable. Some answers were long and rambling, going through the circumstances of case studies and rarely mentioning outcomes or links to privation. Other answers were more succinct and appropriate. Most candidates tried to evaluate the research. Better answers contrasted findings, addressed the methodology of case studies and longitudinal research. Some candidates gave detailed explanations of why privation research could produce differing conclusions. Although some answers were rather formulaic, some were applied well to the specific research outlined. There was some confusion as to whether case studies had mundane realism and/or ecological validity. The term ecological validity was used inaccurately by a number of candidates.

Evaluation tended to be weaker than description. Frequently participants would point out that the twins were younger than Genie when found but then fail to relate this to the implications for reversal of the effects of privation. A few candidates appeared to have little knowledge of studies other than that gained from watching a documentary on feral children. Many candidates wrote very lengthy essays but these tended to gain little, if any, more credit than concise but accurate answers.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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