



General Certificate of Education

Psychology 1186

Specification B

Unit 1 (PSYB1) Introducing Psychology

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - June series

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Unit 1: (PSYB1) Introducing Psychology

General

Overall candidates' performance on the paper was comparable with performance in the January series. Those who had prepared well achieved good marks across all three sections of the paper.

In response to issues arising in the January series, candidates were provided with additional space for their answers to the questions requiring extended writing (questions 1d and 2d). This space was used effectively by some candidates to provide more detailed evaluative points rather than simply providing a 'shopping list' of points as was the case in January.

Centres are asked to remind candidates that they must use black ink or black ball-point pen. Answers written in blue pen and even in pencil in some cases are particularly difficult to read when scanned.

Section A: Key Approaches and Biopsychology

Question 1

- (a) Candidates were generally able to name an appropriate defence mechanism with denial and repression being the most common answers. Descriptions of the defence mechanisms varied in accuracy and detail. Very often candidates would simply reiterate the term as part of the description. In relation to the stem, most candidates provided a plausible suggestion of how the defence mechanism could help somebody to cope with the breakdown of a relationship. Very few candidates offered their own example as part of the answer.
- (b) (i) Many candidates scored one mark here by providing an appropriate definition of the term.
- (b) (ii) The majority of candidates chose to describe the process of classical conditioning with reference to Pavlov's experiment and many achieved full marks. Some responses referred to Little Albert and again, where the process was described fully, achieved both marks.
- (c) The majority of responses showed a good understanding of both the biological and behaviourist approaches and many candidates showed an ability to apply this knowledge to a novel source ie Jake's aggression. The biological approach tended to be better explained than the behaviourist approach. Here, a number of candidates provided a basic account of how this behaviour would be simply 'learnt from the environment' without any further expansion as to how.

- (d) For the majority of candidates, the description of methods used to investigate cortical specialisation was better than the evaluation. Poorer responses tended to provide quite common sense descriptions of the methods as well as demonstrating inaccuracies in their understanding of scanning techniques – quite often, EEGs were presented as a method of scanning and hence scored no marks. Better informed candidates could, for example, distinguish between different scanning techniques, explain the different types of neurosurgery and outline the rationale behind post-mortem studies. Evaluation points tended to focus on quite simplistic statements pertaining to cost and time. Better evaluation points focused on the ethical considerations, problems of cause and effect and issues of generalisability.

Section B: Gender Development

Question 2

- (a) This question differentiated well. Many candidates scored only one mark by providing an appropriate measure of androgyny - Bem's sex-role inventory was the most common response. Better candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding that androgynous individuals should score highly on *both* masculine and feminine traits.
- (b) (i) Responses to this question were variable. Better answers gave a broader description of the SLT explanation of gender and used appropriate psychological terminology. Weaker answers tended to provide a 'shopping list' of terms, or did not refer to gender development. Where this occurred, candidates' marks were limited to two out of the three available.
- (b) (ii) The majority of candidates scored only one mark for this question. Candidates were able to identify an appropriate limitation – most commonly in relation to biological factors but had difficulty in explaining why this was a limitation. Better responses tended to focus on what SLT could not explain and, in doing so, provided candidates with material they could elaborate for the second mark.
- (c) Many candidates scored three marks here by identifying the appropriate definitions of Kohlberg's stages of gender development.
- (d) Many candidates performed well with a number of responses scoring in the top band. Here, clear associations were made between different biological factors eg chromosomes and hormones, and evidence was used to support or refute the theory. There was an explicit focus by candidates on gender development throughout the answer. Alternative theories/research were used by candidates in a comparative way. Average answers had a number of features in common that prevented them from accessing the top band: quite often there was too much focus on the physical differences between males and females rather than the psychological – this was the case where candidates referred to the atypical sex chromosome syndromes; evaluations tended to be brief; evidence was provided but not used in an appropriate way and finally, evaluations were made of the biological approach in general rather than the biological approach to gender development.

Section C: Research Methods

Question 3

- (a) The majority of candidates scored both marks by correctly identifying and interpreting the direction of the correlation in relation to both variables.
- (b) Candidates were generally able to provide an appropriate hypothesis. However, common errors were in the phrasing of the hypothesis itself – too many responses were written as an aim or a question rather than a predictive statement. A number of candidates included reference to the key variables but did not phrase their hypothesis in terms of a ‘relationship’ or ‘correlation’.
- (c) This question differentiated well. Some candidates clearly understood differences between an experiment and a correlational study and hence, scored both marks. For full marks, it was not enough to say that an experiment can establish cause and effect. It was necessary to make the differences between the two methods explicit.
- (d) Again, this question was a good differentiator. Where candidates were able to offer an appropriate advantage eg in relation to ethics, very few could outline why this was an advantage for the second mark.
- (e) Many candidates scored both marks for this question. A few responses provided a definition of random sampling rather than explaining how it would be achieved within the study itself.
- (f) (i) Most candidates were able to state what is meant by a pilot study.
- (f) (ii) Many candidates were able to provide sensible reasons as to why a pilot study was used in this case.
- (g) The responses to this question were variable. Where candidates stated that a strength of structured interviews was the use of pre-set questions, marks were only given if this was clearly in relation to an advantage. On its own, it is simply a description of the method. In addition, a common error was to assume that structured interviews *only* use closed questions.
- (h) The most common ethical issues in relation to this study were consent and confidentiality. Better responses included expansion as to how or why this was an ethical issue in relation to the study. Weaker candidates simply provided an issue, but failed to explain the issue in relation to the study, thereby limiting marks to just one out of the three available.
- (i) (i) Many candidates were able to show an understanding of what is meant by a case study.
- (i) (ii) The majority of candidates were able to outline a limitation of conducting a case study with lack of generalisability being the most common response.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website: <http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html>