



General Certificate of Education

Psychology 1186

Specification B

Unit 1 (PSYB1) Introducing Psychology

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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Unit 1: (PSYB1) Introducing Psychology

General

Overall, performance this series was variable. Where candidates had clearly been well prepared by centres, a number of excellent responses were seen across all three sections of the paper. However, examiners noted that quite a number of candidate responses did not adhere to the question requirements; producing heavily descriptive responses in the extended writing sections, leaving little time for evaluation and discussion as a result.

In terms of administration, there are a number of points to make in relation to the process of on-line marking. First, it is absolutely essential that candidates write their responses in black pen. Candidates must also make sure that they write their response in the space allocated in the answer booklet. Writing in the margin, underneath the allocated space and using arrows to direct an examiner elsewhere in the paper is not acceptable. Where candidates make a mistake or wish to continue their response beyond the allocated space, they should use the additional sheets provided by AQA. If additional sheets are used, then candidates must make sure that they write their centre number, candidate number and the question number(s) clearly on each sheet.

Section A: Key Approaches and Biopsychology

Question 1

- (a) Relatively few candidates were able to provide a correct definition of the term. A number of candidates misinterpreted the question, referring incorrectly to unconditional positive regard or the behaviourist principle of reinforcement, hence scoring no marks. Despite this, there were some good examples of how a parent might place conditions of worth on his or her child.
- (b)(i) Candidates demonstrated an understanding of the term evolution by referring to points such as gradual changes over time in a species, natural selection, survival of the fittest. Marks were not awarded however, where candidates simply reiterated the term as part of their answer.
- (b)(ii) The question required candidates to provide an example of one human or non-human behaviour. Some good responses were seen in relation to sexual selection and the rooting reflex. Candidates were awarded full marks as long as they provided a response that clearly addressed how this behaviour had resulted from evolutionary processes. Unfortunately, a number of candidates gave physiological examples, as opposed to examples of behaviour thus scoring no marks.
- (c)(i) Responses to this question were fairly disappointing. Where candidates clearly knew what a post-mortem procedure involved up to two marks was awarded. Often, candidates gave quite a general response and failed to refer to the processes involved in a post-mortem procedure thereby limiting marks.
- (c)(ii) The majority of candidates were able to provide one other method used to investigate cortical specialisation and explain this method accurately.

- (d) The majority of responses to this question were purely descriptive. Candidates clearly knew some basic assumptions of the behaviourist approach but spent too much time describing Pavlov's and Skinner's experiments and the case study of Little Albert. One mark was available for description of relevant studies, so overall, where candidates produced a lengthy, descriptive answer, marks were limited. Although not required by the question, it was pleasing to see how a number of candidates attempted to bring in another approach in psychology as part of their evaluation.

Section B: Gender Development

Question 2

- (a) Many candidates were able to state that androgyny refers to an individual who possesses a balance of both masculine and feminine traits. However, the examples often referred to roles rather than behaviours, hence limiting marks.
- (b)(i) Candidates were able to name an appropriate syndrome with Turner's and Klinefelter's being the most popular choices.
- (b)(ii) Many candidates were able to provide an appropriate feature of the syndrome named in 2(b)(i). Both behavioural and physiological responses were credited.
- (b)(iii) Many candidates provided an explanation that referred to the comparison between typical and atypical chromosome patterns and then linked this to the nature-nurture debate in psychology. These answers tended to score full marks. However, there were a number of responses where candidates simply provided more of a commonsense answer thereby limiting marks.
- (c)(i) Some good answers were seen with detailed reference to the method provided. However, a number of candidates gave quite superficial answers and/or did not provide sufficient detail of a recognisable gender study to enable examiners to award marks for methodology.
- (c)(ii) Where candidates gave an appropriate outline of the method in 2(c)(i), some relevant strengths and limitations were provided. However, a number of candidates misinterpreted the question requirements and provided general conclusions to the gender study. This was not required and hence scored no marks.
- (d) Overall candidate responses to this question were disappointing. It was not uncommon to see answers that focused solely on describing Kohlberg's stages of gender development. Having said this, many candidates were able to describe these stages accurately this series which was pleasing. For those candidates who provided better answers, reference was often made to gender schema theory in addition to Kohlberg. Discussion tended to be quite limited. Where candidates were required to refer to at least one other explanation of gender development, this was met with varying success. Commonly, candidates saw this as a cue to merely describe other explanations. Whilst limited credit was given for this, centres are again reminded to steer candidates to use other explanations as a vehicle for evaluation of the explanation or theory under discussion.

Section C: Research Methods

Question 3

- (a) Candidates tended to score full marks for this question with an appropriate statement of what the mean scores showed as well as a clear comparison of values.
- (b)(i) Most candidates were able to state what is meant by standard deviation. A number of responses referred to the range, scoring no marks.
- (b)(ii) Responses to this question were quite disappointing. Where candidates understood what is meant by standard deviation in (3)(b)(i), good responses were seen, with references to consistency of scores or variation of scores. However, a number of responses simply stated that one standard deviation value was higher/lower than the other, hence scoring no marks.
- (c) This question differentiated well between candidates. Those candidates who were well prepared to answer this type of question provided a hypothesis with a clearly operationalised IV and DV. However, as is the case in previous series, some candidates provided an answer that was either not fully operationalised or not even worded as a hypothesis. It was common to see candidates' hypotheses written in the style of an aim or a question.
- (d) Most candidates were able to state that the experimental design was independent measures/groups. In terms of the advantages of this type of design some good responses were seen, with reference to the elimination of order effects, for example. Some candidates incorrectly referred to the experimental design as repeated measures or matched pairs. Here, candidates were not penalised for providing advantages appropriate to these experimental designs, scoring up to two marks out of the three available as a result.
- (e)(i) The majority of candidates correctly identified the sampling method as opportunity sampling.
- (e)(ii) Most candidates gave appropriate disadvantages of opportunity sampling. As in question 3(d), where candidates had incorrectly stated the sampling method as say, random sampling in 3(e)(i), they were not further penalised in this question if they gave appropriate disadvantages of a random sampling method.
- (f) It was pleasing to see that this question was answered far better than in previous series. Most candidates were able to state an appropriate EV, say how it would affect some participants and not others, and explain how this would therefore affect the overall results. The most common EV's were a participant's ability to speak Spanish and the layout/type of classroom.
- (g) This question differentiated well between candidates. The majority were able to write a debrief containing creditworthy points including the purpose of the study, reference to ethics and thanks to the participant for taking part. However, a number of candidates incorrectly gave the results of the study which did not receive credit. Some candidates wrote a debrief that included pointers as to things that should be included in a debrief rather than a verbatim script for a debrief limiting marks overall.

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>