



General Certificate of Education

Psychology 1186

Specification B

**Unit 2 (PSYB2) Social Psychology,
Cognitive Psychology and Individual
Differences**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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Unit 2: (PSYB2) Social Psychology Cognitive Psychology and Individual Differences

General

Candidates coped well with the new style of the examination and the majority were able to follow the requirements of the rubric appropriately. Fortunately, very few candidates attempted to answer all six questions. Once again, the majority of candidates failed to fill in the numbers of the questions they had attempted at the front of the answer booklet.

Most candidates were able to pace themselves through this examination and there were far fewer examples of unfinished responses to the last question – usually question 5 or 6. Responses to questions were more appropriate in length and candidates did seem to understand that the number of marks available provides an indication of the amount of writing required.

Overall, candidates' performances on the paper were comparable with the standards seen in previous sessions for PSYB2. In particular, responses to the short answer sections were often very good. However, descriptions of studies were poorer and not always accurate, including invented details of procedure or results. Question popularity seems to have settled into the following order: 1, 3, 5, 6, 2 then 4.

Candidates are reminded that quality of written communication is assessed in this unit and vague, inaccurate or ambiguous expression can limit the marks awarded in the 10-mark questions. In addition, there were some appalling spelling errors, especially for specialist terminology. In some cases it was not always possible to understand what was written and it did seem as though candidates had only ever heard psychological terms and never seen them used in text.

It was noticeable that some candidates had a very limited understanding of the experimental method and found it extremely difficult to access the AO3 marks allocated to this material in questions 1 and 2. It seemed to be the case that some centres have not prepared their candidates for this type of question.

Responses to questions worth 10 marks were slightly formulaic with regard to AO2 marks. Candidates are again reminded that credit is awarded for explanation or discussion of evaluative points rather than a list of possible points. Some responses were limited to a series of unexpanded comments relating to ecological validity, ethical and methodological issues. While these can be valid points they must be developed and applied to the particular topic, research or researcher under discussion.

The opportunity for centres to access the enhanced analysis for their entries for this component for the first time will provide detailed breakdown of candidate performance for each part question and should inform teaching.

Section A: Social Psychology

Question 1

- (a) Candidates did not always distinguish between types of conformity which could provide explanations for the behaviour seen in the scenarios. Weaker answers suggested that the behaviour in both cases was due to majority influence because the individuals had 'friends.'
- (b) Generally this was not well answered and there were many vague answers in which the IV was the 'conditions' and the DV was 'how the participants behaved/what the researcher measured.' The advantages and disadvantages of using independent groups often produced responses that concentrated on possible advantages and disadvantages of using an experimental method rather than commenting on the advantages and disadvantages of the design. Those that did discuss independent groups design rarely expanded on their points, meaning they did not access all 4 marks. Some were just confused and suggested independent groups meant 'participants on their own,' or that participants 'could be compared.'
- (c) This question produced some excellent responses with some candidates providing a wide-ranging discussion of the issues and how these were evident in social influence research. There were responses in which candidates produced generic comments about methodological and ethical issues with no reference to social influence. Candidates should try to develop the points they make for example, when candidates were trying to explain why deception was necessary in studies, they did not have a full explanation and produced responses like the following '...but it was necessary for Asch/Milgram/Michaels to deceive the participants.'

Question 2

- (a) Some candidates focused their answers on stereotypes and often referred to a schema as a 'collection of information.' In part (ii) candidates often gave examples of stereotypes which could possibly gain one mark but there seemed to be an absence of the concept of setting up expectations.
- (b) This section was slightly better answered than the comparable section in question 1. However, there were still difficulties with the concepts of IV, DV and experimental design.
- (c) This question was not well answered by most candidates. There were some confused answers based on attribution biases or the structure of attitudes. Many candidates went no further than describing functions and adding examples of behaviour to illustrate these. Few were able to define the knowledge function correctly and some definitions were limited – the adaptive function to help us adapt – and so on. Candidates rarely discussed how a knowledge of functions might help psychologists to explain how attitudes might be changed/be resistant to change, or how attitudes might serve more than one function, or how stereotyping might be explained by an understanding of the knowledge function.

Section B: Cognitive Psychology

Question 3

- (a) This was generally well answered.
- (b) Several candidates confused proactive/retroactive interference with anterograde/retrograde amnesia or applied each type of interference incorrectly to the scenarios. Some candidates focused on whether or not Debbie and Dave had 'rehearsed' the information.
- (c) Some candidates provided excellent answers describing dual task studies of working memory with accuracy. Others gave a confused or partially incomplete description, or provided descriptions that related to the multi-store model or levels of processing.
- (d) Most candidates scored some marks here with very few writing about the wrong model. There were varying degrees of accuracy with regard to features of the model – coding, capacity and duration. Evaluative comments tended to be weaker often only commenting that the model is too simplistic; or a good basis for other models, or has lots of research to support it or making comparisons with other models but failing to use this as evaluation of the multi-store model.

Question 4

- (a) Some candidates described monocular cues rather than naming them. Others did not identify monocular cues that were in the figure. Candidates found it difficult to explain why the people in the figure were perceived to be a similar size and rarely based their answers on size constancy.
- (b) This was well answered.
- (c) Most candidates described the Navon study and scored well on this question.
- (d) Candidates seemed to struggle to describe Gregory's theory accurately. When they attempted to support their answers with reference to evidence, they did not explain how the evidence either supported or refuted the theory. There was some reasonable evaluation referring to infant studies.

Section C: Individual Differences

Question 5

- (a) Many candidates were able to score all 3 marks for this question.
- (b) Most responses scored two or three marks, often with Watson and Rayner, although other research was quoted too. Candidates did find it difficult to identify the participant in the case studies – Little Hans for Albert and *Hands*, and *Arthur* also made an appearance. Suggestions for problems with research into phobias sometimes focused on problems with the theories rather than with research.
- (c) This was often poorly answered with responses such as ‘repeating a behaviour’ or ‘thinking about something all the time.’ Other answers that were not creditworthy include ‘obsessive thoughts’ and ‘compulsive behaviours.’
- (d) There were some excellent answers that described accurately and then evaluated two therapies. Others involved extremely muddled responses in which approaches that were named were not then described, for example, naming *cognitive* but describing *psychodynamic*. In behavioural therapy candidates sometimes suggested ‘locking people in a room with their OCD.’ Descriptions of cognitive therapy were often very vague. Candidates did not always know how therapists attempt to change the way an obsessive compulsive client might think. There were lots of inaccuracy in comments about drug therapy. Some candidates were clearly discussing treatments for phobias throughout.

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates scored 3 marks here.
- (b) The majority of candidates were able to make the link between brain abnormalities in people with autism, however most failed to gain the mark for understanding that these abnormalities are correlated/matched in location to specific autistic deficits. Some candidates described a problem with MRI scans rather than a problem with the explanation.
- (c) Most candidates tackled this question well with excellent descriptions of the ‘Smartie-tube test.’
- (d) This was fairly well answered with most candidates accurately describing the two explanations. A number of candidates failed to gain more than a couple of AO2 marks and the credit that they did receive tended to be for use of evidence.

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>