



General Certificate of Education

Psychology 2186

Specification B

**Unit 3 (PSYB3) Child Development and
Applied Options**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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Unit 3: (PSYB3) Child Development and Applied Options

General

Candidates had two hours to complete their answers on this paper, instead of one and a half hours on the former equivalent paper, PYB4. As had been hoped, increasing the available time appears to have operated to enable better candidates to produce three full answers rather than running out of time on the third question. For some weaker candidates however there was evidence to suggest that they had continued to write simply because they had time, but such dogged perseverance sometimes acted to disadvantage those candidates whose answers became long, repetitive and very confused. For some it would probably have been better to have stopped writing sooner. All candidates should be encouraged to spend some time planning their answers before they start to write and should be advised that a longer answer does not automatically mean a better mark.

More so than on the old PYB4 paper there was strong evidence to suggest that some centres/candidates had simply rote learned extensive amounts of text-book material and lists of evaluative points which they then reproduced in the exam. As a result, candidates from whole centres produced almost identical 12-mark answers with the same points in exactly the same order. Evaluation points were often not explained or developed at all and therefore attracted little credit. Such scripts tended to make for a dull and predictable read, and although they attracted respectable marks, top band marks tended to be awarded to those candidates who showed evidence of some wider reading in their insightful and thoughtful discussion.

The short-answer questions seemed to work well and on the whole appeared to offer quite good discrimination. Unfortunately candidates from some centres appeared to be unaware that the instruction to 'Briefly discuss...' meant that the answer should include brief evaluation and not just description. The AO3 questions in Section A seemed to discriminate well.

Question 1

The Strange Situation provided the basis for most answers to part (a)(i) and full marks were awarded here only where the crucial element of 'a stranger' was included in the description. Alternative ways of measuring attachment such as the Adult Attachment Interview were rarely seen. Creditworthy answers to part (a)(ii) varied enormously with many issues accepted. Answers focused on the issue of immediate distress of the child or lack of informed consent did not attract credit. Most candidates gained at least one mark for part (b), although answers were often much longer than they needed to be. Part (c) proved to be a demanding question with candidates often failing to focus on consequences directly. Large numbers of candidates failed to make any distinction between privation and deprivation, with some responses based entirely on Bowlby's maternal deprivation hypothesis and the 44 juvenile thieves study. Awareness of the Romanian orphan research by the ERA team was often fairly flimsy, with very many candidates apparently unaware of any of the team's research beyond the initial 1998 findings of developmental catch-up.

Question 2

Most candidates appeared to have understood the stem of the question although not all candidates could provide a satisfactory answer to the question about the dependent variable. For part (a)(ii) the second mark was only awarded where there was an explanation of why the proposed outcome would occur. The question on adaptation discriminated well, with marks awarded to those candidates who correctly related the stem to Piagetian concepts. Part (c) answers usually showed a reasonable understanding of Vygotsky's work, although a considerable number of candidates showed confusion by conflating their descriptions of the zone of proximal development and scaffolding. A few candidates also failed to realise that they needed to present the 'other approach' as part of their discussion of Vygotsky; there were some completely free-standing descriptions and evaluations of another approach, usually Piaget and less frequently Nativist theory or Siegler. It is important that teachers explain to their candidates that questions are worded thus in order to trigger a second approach as a vehicle for evaluation of the theory or approach under discussion.

Question 3

This was the least popular question in Section A. Answers to part (a) quite often failed to gain full credit because differences were largely implicit. Such answers usually constituted a lengthy description of the characteristics of each stage without any explicit differences. For example, a candidate might say that reasoning in the realism stage was based on amount of damage but not say how the relativism stage was different. A surprising number of candidates could not identify distributive justice for (b)(i) and referred instead to 'sharing'. In part (b)(ii) maximum marks were reserved for those answers which included an exploration of the reason why children are unable to give their own informed consent ie because they could not be deemed to be able to fully understand what it is they are consenting to. Some excellent answers to part (c) were seen although there were also a number of stereotyped responses with evaluative points listed rather than fully developed.

Question 4

Part (a) usually included sound description but a number of candidates did not provide any discussion or evaluation and so did not gain more than two marks. Creditworthy evaluation was most usually in the form of supporting evidence. Part (b) answers showed variable knowledge of the features of the cognitive interview which was surprising given that it is clearly named on the specification. Not all candidates managed to make effective concrete links to the scenario of a bank robbery; some went no further than a generic explanation of how/why the stated feature operates to enhance eye-witness recall. There were some very effective answers to part (c) where candidates clearly identified factors such as leading questions, emotion and context, then proceeded to outline relevant evidence and make links to the stem material. Since this is an evidence-based area most evaluation came from evaluation of the research and application to the stem. Weaker answers included a great deal of loose application with identification of factors largely or almost entirely implicit and little reference to evidence.

Question 5

Answers to part (a) usually attracted at least two marks, although some candidates confused mood and schizophrenia, and others failed to offer any discussion. Most candidates seemed aware of the different sub-types of schizophrenia and could think of a problem associated with diagnosis. Answers varied enormously for the discussion aspect of part (b) with some candidates focusing on problems for the clinician and others considering the issue from the point of view of the patient. References to the Rosenhan study often formed the basis of a useful brief discussion. The fairly specific focus of part (c) meant that less well-informed candidates could think of relatively little to say and resorted to frequent repetition. Weaker evaluations centred almost exclusively on the issue of side-effects but more thoughtful candidates considered the nature of the disorder, the needs of patients and the wider context in which drug treatment occurs. Very few marks, if any, could be awarded in the unfortunate cases where the candidate confused medication used to treat schizophrenia with drugs used to treat mood disorders.

Question 6

This was not a very popular question and on the whole it was not answered very well. Parts (a)(i) and (a)(ii) were competently addressed in the main although some outlines were brief in the extreme. A common error in part (b) was to use problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies as personal variables. Such answers were not given credit. Good answers used personality type, hardiness and locus of control and some very effective applications to the stem were seen. As with question 4(b) however, not all applications were given in concrete terms; candidates who simply provided general explanations as to the effect of a personal variable in a stressful situation without relating the answer specifically to bullying at work did not get the application marks. Part (c) was probably the worst answered question on the whole paper. Accounts of the cognitive approach to stress management were often very poor and there was frequent confusion with behavioural approaches such as systematic desensitisation. Desperate candidates who knew little or nothing about the cognitive approach simply provided a lengthy account of the 'other approach' without tying it to the discussion at all.

Question 7

Most candidates were able to identify two prevention techniques. For the application to be valid, the outline had to clearly relate to teenagers in a secondary school setting. Some applications were of the technique in general and therefore neither concrete nor specific enough to gain credit. Answers to parts (b)(i) and (b)(ii) were usually good except where candidates failed to give an example of how dependence might be demonstrated or where there was confusion over the two types of dependence. Part (c) responses varied enormously both in content and quality. Many excellent answers were seen but a fairly common error was to give more than two explanations. In such cases candidates were credited for the best two. Candidates who used biological and socio-cultural explanations tended to score the highest marks.

Question 8

This question was usually well answered. It was pleasing to see that most candidates knew something of the stage-based processes involved in anger management and could describe two or more stages adequately. Part (a)(ii) was not always well answered, especially where there were brief references to 'cost' and 'time' without any expansion. Many candidates could name relevant features of Eysenck's criminal personality such as neuroticism and extraversion, although guesswork was often evident in answers referring generally undesirable traits such as 'hostility' and 'aggressiveness'. Extraversion and psychoticism were usually linked sensibly to offending, although not all explanations were appropriate, especially in the case of neuroticism. Most answers to part (c) were based on alternatives such as fines, community service, tagging and restorative justice, although some candidates evidently misinterpreted this as a question about treatments for offending. Better responses used references to support assertions, considered the chosen alternatives in relation to the aims of punishment and offered contrasts with custodial sentencing. Many weak discussions were anecdotal and had little discussion of a psychological nature.

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>