



General Certificate of Education

Psychology 1186

Specification B

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

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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

General

There were significant issues this series following the move to online marking for the unit. Some candidates seemed unprepared for the new style answer booklets and they did not adhere to the instructions concerning the numbering of responses and the requirement to leave space between responses. These issues did have an impact on administration and therefore on the marking process.

A related issue was that of legibility. It was noticeable that some candidates do not seem able to present their knowledge and understanding in a readable form. It is unfortunate that a proportion of candidates who have followed the first year of an advanced level course did not have the training to write legibly and in coherent sentences. Candidates should be reminded that quality of written communication is assessed in this unit and vague, inaccurate or ambiguous expression can limit the marks awarded in each question. In addition, there were some appalling spelling errors, especially for specialist terminology. In some cases it was not possible to understand what was written and it did seem as though candidates had only ever heard psychological terms, had never seen them used in text and were writing these for the first time.

Overall, candidates' performances on the questions were comparable with the standards seen in previous sessions for PSYB2. An exception to this was in the case of Assessment Objective 3. On the whole, candidates were unable to explain what a quasi-experiment is; what matched pairs means and how using this procedure in the unrelated design study given in the topics of Anxiety Disorders and Autism might be advantageous for the particular investigations described on the paper. Descriptions of empirical investigations were not always accurate and some candidates continue to invent details of research rather than recall accurate detail.

Responses to questions worth 10 marks were again, slightly formulaic with regard to AO2 marks. Candidates should be 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 factor, topic, research or researcher under discussion. This means that candidates should be prepared to explain why they believe that a particular methodological or ethical issue has implications for the factor or bias or explanation or therapy they have outlined. It is also important for candidates to make it clear why evidence they have cited provides support for their argument. In the vast majority of cases, long form answers consisted of a series of descriptive points followed by an outline of a study and the conclusion stated, 'this is/shows support' with no explanation for how or why the evidence is supportive.

Section A: Social Psychology

Topic: Social Influence

Question 1

Many candidates were able to define social facilitation although some omitted any reference to an audience. Sports related examples were sometimes vague.

Question 2

Some descriptions of studies of evaluation apprehension were very thorough and accurate. Descriptions of investigations of social facilitation were acceptable as long as it was made clear at what point the participants became aware their performance was being judged.

Question 3

Candidates struggled to express clearly a problem of studying evaluation apprehension and often presented generic difficulties of conducting research which were not then applied to this particular type of investigation.

Question 4

There were many very pleasing answers to this question although some candidates failed to explain why obedience was affected and only reported the direction of the change in behaviour under the condition identified.

Question 5

Candidates struggled to present answers worthy of top band marks for this question. Many referred to normative and informational social influence as factors affecting conformity and gave elaborate description of these without reference to factors. Some answers began with very long definitions of conformity and unfortunately, descriptions of the research of Asch and Sherif were often inaccurate. Analysis of why the factors had effects on behaviour was often absent or quite weak. Many candidates presented lengthy information about the unethical nature of the studies but were unable to relate this to factors.

Some answers focused on obedience rather than conformity.

Topic: Social Cognition

Question 6

This was generally answered well.

Question 7

Although some candidates presented answers relating to structure rather than functions of attitudes, many were able to provide an adequate description and explanation of one function of an attitude.

Question 8

This was generally well answered with clear descriptions of central traits studies.

Question 9

Candidates struggled to express clearly a problem of studying impression formation and often presented generic difficulties of conducting research which were not then applied to this particular type of investigation.

Question 10

This was often very well answered with some excellent descriptions of biases and the research conducted to illustrate these. Analysis was often effective with good explanations for why the biases might operate in the ways seen in the results of the research. Some candidates found it difficult to disentangle the actor-observer effect from the self-serving bias often missing the point that in the actor-observer effect the same behaviour is being explained for both the actor and the observer.

Section B: Cognitive Psychology

Topic: Remembering and Forgetting

Question 11

Descriptions of procedural memory were often less accurate than descriptions of autobiographical memory. Candidates found it quite difficult to express a distinction point clearly and some referred to procedural memory as 'unconscious.'

Question 12

Descriptions of levels of processing studies were generally quite well done. Some candidates suggested the participants were given a list of words 'to learn' rather than appreciating the incidental learning of the words after answering different types of questions.

Question 13

This was quite poorly answered with many candidates discussing limitations of the **study** they had described rather than the theory itself. Others were unable to state anything other than 'depth is difficult to measure' or the theory is 'simplistic.'

Question 14

There were some very good answers to this question; however, there was also evidence of muddle in many essays. Candidates who chose to describe and evaluate interference often confused retroactive and proactive interference. Lack of consolidation was often poorly described as information failing to move from STM to LTM. Candidates then found it difficult to explain why the concussed football players had recalled information immediately but were unable to recall the same information a few minutes later. Few recognised that this explanation relates to biological disruption. Motivated forgetting was often described as 'forgetting on purpose.'

Topic: Perceptual Processes

Question 15

This was well answered.

Question 16

This was well answered.

Question 17

Some candidates had difficulty expressing an explanation of size constancy in a coherent manner and used the terms *size* and *constancy* in their answers.

Question 18

This was answered quite well and many candidates were able to identify features such as affordances and optical array and provide reasonable explanation of these features.

Question 19

Candidates did not always make it clear which factors they were describing in their answers and some confused motivation and emotion and the evidence related to each of these factors. Many candidates were unable to describe motivation and emotion other than by reusing the same terms.

Section C: Individual Differences

Topic: Anxiety Disorders

Question 20

This was generally answered well with most candidates able to describe features of phobias rather than symptoms. Some candidates merely referred to a 'fear' as opposed to an extreme fear.

Question 21

This was poorly answered with the majority of candidates stating it is an experiment 'only not in a lab.'

Question 22

Candidates could not express their answers clearly here. While many understood the idea of matching for important variables they did not explain the pairing element.

Question 23

This was very poorly answered. Some candidates did not seem to understand that credit would only be awarded if their answers related to **this study** and unfortunately they focused on the need to eliminate order effects. Many candidates stated that the advantage would be that *results could be compared easily* or would be *more reliable*.

Question 24

This was answered reasonably well although some candidates did not focus on the measurement of the results as the number of negative responses and just used the information from the stem that people with phobias *think more negatively*. Some candidates were able to explain the results with good reference to cognitive features of negative self talk or catastrophising.

Question 25

There was a very wide variation of responses for this question. Some candidates were able to provide very good description and evaluation of explanations, especially biological and behavioural explanations for OCD. However, some referred throughout to phobias. Even when research into the acquisition of phobias could have been made relevant – demonstrating how the responses could be learned – many just provided long descriptions and did not attempt to apply the information. There were some attempts to use social learning theory explanations but these were generally quite weak and often referred to as behaviourist explanations.

Topic: Autism

Question 26

This was answered well.

Question 27

This was poorly answered with the majority of candidates stating it is an experiment 'only not in a lab.'

Question 28

Candidates could not express their answers clearly here. While many understood the idea of matching for important variables they did not explain the pairing element.

Question 29

This was not always well answered, however performance was significantly better than for question 23. Again, some candidates did not seem to understand that credit would only be awarded if their answers related to **this study** and unfortunately they focused on the need to eliminate order effects. Many candidates stated that the advantage would be that *results could be compared easily* or would be *more reliable*.

Question 30

This was answered well with appropriate reference to lack of theory of mind. Some candidates did not present the likely outcome of the study, apparently forgetting this part of the question.

Question 31

This was answered quite well with some good description of therapeutic programmes such as aversion therapy and behaviour modification. Candidates used evidence well, remembering to point out clearly how the research did support the programme(s) described.

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>