



General Certificate of Education

Psychology 2186

Specification B

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

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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Unit 3: (PSYB3) Child Development and Applied Options

General

The continuous numbering system was used for the first time this session and seemed to create few problems. The majority of candidates selected topics appropriately and indicated the question numbers correctly in their answer booklet. The most popular topic areas were Schizophrenia and Mood Disorders and Forensic Psychology. Notably, few candidates seemed prepared to respond to methods questions in the Child Development topics; this was particularly evident for questions on the experimental method in the Social Development section. Extended writing responses to the stem questions for Schizophrenia and Mood Disorders and Forensic Psychology suggested that weaker candidates relied far too heavily on the content of the stem in their answer, focusing almost entirely on application at the expense of description and evaluative discussion. It should be noted that such stems are intended to act as a cue to candidates to provide psychological material (theories, explanations etc) and, although the stem should be referred to in the answer, it should not become the whole focus for the discussion.

Section A Child Development

Topic Social Development

Most candidates gained some marks on 01 although quite a number failed to refer to Schaffer's work, and simply stated the likely outcome of the study described in the stem. Answers to 02 were surprisingly poor with large numbers of candidates seemingly unclear about the term experimental design. Given that relatively few candidates had answered 02 correctly, it was not surprising that answers to 03 were also poor in the main. In contrast, many candidates gained full marks on 04 with most successful answers focusing on the intensive versus extensive nature of girls' and boys' friendships. Part 05 was rarely well answered. Very few top band answers were seen. Many candidates seemed unable to focus on interactions. Often answers covered a whole range of issues in relation to attachment and deprivation but scarcely mentioned infant-caregiver interactions. It was sad to see many answers where candidates described and evaluated Ainsworth's research but entirely failed to link it to sensitive responsiveness and therefore missed out on possible credit. It was not unusual for candidates to present Lorenz's work on imprinting in greylag goslings and Bowlby's study of 44 juvenile thieves as studies of infant-caregiver interaction.

Topic Cognitive Development

Answers to 06 rarely referred to the cultural aspect of guided participation, although marks could be gained in a number of different ways and reference to culturally based skill/activity was not necessary to gain full marks. Question 07 yielded excellent answers based on varied and sometimes fascinating cultural activities in relation to 'family celebration'. Most responses to question 08 correctly identified the concrete operational stage. Answers to 09 varied considerably, with weaker responses giving very general criticisms of Piaget's work (eg problems with use of the clinical interview) and better answers relating their criticism specifically to Piaget's work on conservation, for example, the problems associated with asking the same questions twice. Question 10 evidently took some candidates by surprise. Many answers were remarkably short and focused primarily on Piaget and Vygotsky. There were, however, some excellent descriptions and analyses of Baillargeon's work, as well as some fairly wide-ranging and thoughtful answers in which candidates considered various aspects of Nativist theory including face and depth perception in infants and Chomsky's ideas about an innate capacity for language.

Topic Moral Development

Although this was the least popular topic area in Section A it was often well answered. Most candidates gained two or three marks on question 11, usually with reference to the moral comparison technique. A small number of candidates erroneously based their answer to 11 on the Heinz dilemma or the birthday party dilemma. Evaluations tended to be quite thorough in 12, and again it was common to see two or three marks awarded for this question. Weaker evaluations consisted of cursory and inadequately explained criticisms about lack of ecological validity. Answers to question 13 tended to be good, although they were sometimes much longer than was necessary given that the question was worth only two marks. Question 14 yielded a number of top band responses from those candidates who focused explicitly on contributions, although even in the better answers there was a notable tendency for candidates to spend much longer on description than was necessary. In less strong responses it was quite common to see evaluative comments simply stated rather than developed and presented in the context of the answer as a whole. A minority of candidates confused Kohlberg with Piaget or Eisenberg.

Section B Applied Options**Topic Cognition and Law**

Question 15 differentiated well in that most candidates could gain some marks for showing knowledge of reconstructive memory and/or repression theory, but rather fewer could coherently explain the nature of the debate. Answers were sometimes entirely one-sided, explaining for example that such memories were likely to be false and the product of a memory having been implanted, yet failing to explain the alternative possibility that the event might really have happened but the memory had for a long time been repressed. There were some excellent answers to 16, with post-event contamination and poor source monitoring as their basis. On the other hand, there were a considerable number of answers to 16 that gained no marks because the content was entirely anecdotal. Question 17 was probably the best scoring of all the 12-mark questions. Answers often included detailed knowledge of evidence and quite high level analysis. Although this was an 'and/or' question, most candidates seized the opportunity to demonstrate what they had learned and offered discussions of both composite systems and line-up procedures. Just occasionally an otherwise excellent answer was limited to eight marks because evidence was omitted. A small minority of candidates seemed to have the impression that artists' sketches are a type of composite system.

Topic Schizophrenia and Mood Disorders

Candidates who based their answer to questions 18 and 19 on token economy systems usually performed well. There were, however, large numbers of candidates who gave the wrong answer to question 18, citing all manner of non-behavioural treatments such as drug therapy, CBT, ECT, counselling, community care and even lobotomy. In such cases, candidates could still gain credit for 19 if they correctly evaluated the treatment they had given in their answer to 18. Most candidates gained two marks for question 20, although vague non-behavioural symptoms such as low mood, negative outlook etc did not gain credit. The stem worked well for question 21 in the sense that the majority of candidates were cued into the biological and cognitive explanations for depression. Generally speaking the descriptions were sound, although evidence was not often seen and there was sometimes a fairly flimsy understanding of twin and adoption studies. Several candidates explained the principles of concordance but strangely did not actually refer to any specific study of depression. Most disconcerting of all was the tendency to base the whole of the discussion on the stem rather than on the explanations themselves. Although it is indeed necessary to refer to the stem for top band marks, it is still important to present detailed evaluations of the explanations.

Topic Stress and Stress Management

Answers to question 22 often showed accurate, detailed knowledge of the biological systems involved in stress although weaker responses indicated a very limited understanding and shaky grasp of specialist terminology, evident in paragraphs which seemed to consist of the right words in the wrong order. On the whole though, the question differentiated well in that even less well-informed candidates could gain at least some marks through reference to the sections of the autonomic nervous system and most were able to explain the links between stress and illness. Many candidates gained full marks for question 23 by clearly stating a type of social support, most usually instrumental, and giving a sensible example eg a neighbour might baby sit. Unfortunately a number of responses did not appear to refer to any identifiable type of social support. Question 24 yielded quite capable answers in the main although the choices sometimes did not facilitate candidates in their comparisons. It was much easier to gain credit for comparisons if the two ways of measuring stress were quite different, for example, a self-report measure and a physiological measure.

Topic Substance Abuse

It is fair to say that questions 25, 26, 27 and 28 together differentiated well. Some candidates named each stage correctly, others got no marks at all and most got some marks. The most common wrong answer for any of these questions was 'denial'. A wide range of studies was accepted for answers to question 29, although studies of treatment which did appear fairly frequently were not credited. Studies of tolerance were accepted only where the candidate was able to make a link to the biological dependency explanation; many answers used Siegel's study of situational cues affecting levels of tolerance without any attempt to present it in the context of an explanation, thus gaining no credit. Answers to question 30 varied enormously, both in scope and in quality of response. Aversion therapy proved the most common treatment, although a good many candidates also referred to covert sensitisation and various self-management programmes. Candidates frequently oversimplified and overstated the connection between Alcoholics Anonymous and religion, arguing that only people who believed in God could attend meetings and only believers could derive any benefit.

Topic Forensic Psychology

Most candidates managed to gain one or two marks for 31 although a few clearly misunderstood this as a question about Sheldon's somatotypes. Question 32 differentiated well with only properly elaborated answers gaining marks. It was quite common to see a simple statement that the approach was an 'oversimplification' or that it was 'based on 36 serial killers' without any further explanation. Question 33 tended to yield answers which were well illustrated by examples, although a few candidates evidently misconstrued this as a question about measuring crime. As for 21, the stem for 34 worked in the sense that it cued candidates into the various explanations, although the same problem of focussing almost entirely on application at the expense of evaluation meant that there were fewer answers featuring high level discussion than might have been expected. It was often the case that answers to 34 lacked rigour, leaving one with the distinct impression that the candidate had enjoyed studying forensic psychology but had not sufficient detailed knowledge of the topic to do themselves justice.

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>