



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2011**

Psychology B

PSYB1

(Specification 2185)

Unit 1: Introducing Psychology

Report on the Examination

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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Unit 1: (PSYB1) Introducing Psychology

General

Candidate performance this series was variable. In both the extended writing questions, a common error was for candidates merely to state evaluative points without really qualifying why the point was a strength or limitation. In order to access the higher mark bands, this issue should be addressed by centres for future examination series. An issue of some concern raised by a number of examiners was the quality of written communication. Whilst it is appreciated that candidates are under time pressure in an examination, they must try their best to convey points clearly. Regarding administration issues, it is essential that candidates write in black ink/ballpoint pen only, as it is very difficult to read responses on a computer screen when they have not been written in blue ink/ballpoint pen. Where candidates use additional sheets, they should state clearly which question is being answered, the centre number, candidate number, candidate name, paper reference (PSYB1) and examination board. It is rather an onerous task for examiners to have to complete this information on behalf of all those candidates who do not label their answers as required.

Section A Key Approaches and Biopsychology

Question 1

- (a)(i) Candidates' responses to this question were variable. There was a requirement to refer to thought/mental processes for one mark. Few answers conveyed the meaning of the term sufficiently clearly. Just referring to 'thinking' was not enough to score a mark.
- (a)(ii) This question was answered well. Many candidates were able to give a methodological problem involved in investigating mediating cognitive factors. Common responses referred to the issues of inference and lack of objectivity.
- (b) Many responses focused on the oral and anal stages of psychosexual development. Candidates were able to explain how an adult might demonstrate a behaviour associated with these stages eg pen chewing and being excessively tidy respectively. A number of responses failed to explain the issue of fixation, hence limiting overall marks.
- (c) This question differentiated well. The majority of candidates provided appropriate definitions of both genotype and phenotype. However, few candidates were able to make an explicit distinction between the two terms eg fixed versus malleable. In relation to the scenario, most responses identified the fact that the twins shared the same genotype and could link the idea of phenotype to the difference in height of the twins.
- (d) The majority of candidates scored in the 'average to weak answer' band. In a number of responses, candidates seemed to produce rote-learned answers in relation to a general question on the behaviourist approach rather than reading the question carefully. In terms of description of the approach, better answers provided a range of features/assumptions. Weaker answers were limited to descriptions of Pavlov's and Skinner's experiments. For the second part of the question, candidates were required to evaluate the research methods used by the behaviourist approach not the approach as a whole. This was met with varying success. Most candidates raised the issue of the use of animals in experimental

research and the fact that the behaviourist approach employs scientific methods in its research. However, few responses demonstrated any further knowledge of research methods beyond these two issues hence limiting overall marks. It was also common to observe candidates offering evaluations in the format of a list rather than qualifying their points as one would expect in a discussion based answer. General evaluations of the approach received no credit as this was not the focus of the question.

Section B Gender Development

Question 2

- (a)(i) The majority of candidates could provide one psychological effect of Turner's syndrome. However, a number of responses focused on physiological effects and hence scored no marks.
- (a)(ii) Candidates answered this question well. Most were able to state that a comparison would be made between individuals with atypical chromosome patterns and individuals with typical chromosome patterns. Reference to the nature-nurture debate/biological approach was necessary for full marks.
- (b) Candidates were able to provide an appropriate definition of identification in relation to the psychodynamic approach. However, muddled responses were commonly seen in relation to social learning theory. As a result, very few candidates were able to make a valid distinction between these two terms eg age at which identification might occur.
- (c) In general, candidates were able to briefly describe an appropriate study in relation to gender schema theory. Common responses focused on Martin and Halverson's study. However, the requirement of the question was to focus on a discussion of the study which was important in order to obtain more than one mark. In the event, very few candidates offered any discussion of appropriate methodological and/or ethical issues.
- (d) Many candidates were able to describe what is meant by nature and nurture in relation to gender. Appropriate reference was made to a number of studies including Money (Bruce/Brenda); Mead (Three Tribes); Imperato-McGinley (Batista Boys) to name a few. However, candidates did not always discuss what these studies showed in relation to the nature-nurture debate hence limiting marks. Where candidates did relate the two concepts to explanations of gender eg biological/social learning theory, points were often merely stated rather than discussed. As in question 1(d), a number of evaluative points were listed without explanation of expansion and these therefore failed to gain AO2 credit. It is essential that candidates qualify evaluative points raised in their responses to the 10-mark questions.

Section C Research Methods

Question 3

- (a) The majority of candidates were able to conclude what the mean scores showed in the table. For two marks, candidates had to justify their response in relation to the direction of the mean scores. Although many candidates did so successfully, a number of responses merely reiterated the two figures in the table, hence limiting marks.

- (b) Many candidates were unable to identify a strength of the mean as a measure of central tendency. Better responses focused on the distortion of the mean by extreme scores.
- (c) Candidates were generally able to sketch an appropriate graphical display of the data. In order to gain full credit, candidates needed to provide a title with an operationalised IV and DV and both axes had to be explicitly labelled. Stating 'Condition 1' and 'Condition 2' on the X axis was not enough to score a mark.
- (d) In comparison to previous series where this type of question has featured, there were some pleasing responses. Many candidates were able to write an appropriate hypothesis with an operationalised IV and DV. Few responses were in the form of an aim, question or what the results showed.
- (e) Most candidates were able to identify the sampling method as opportunity. In relation to the advantage, common responses focused on the time taken to gather the sample. However, a number of candidates stated that opportunity sampling was "easy" which is too vague for credit and not necessarily the case. A number of candidates incorrectly identified the sampling method as random.
- (f) Most candidates were able to identify the experimental design as independent measures. Appropriate reference was made to a limitation of the design regarding the issue of participant variables. Where candidates clearly understood why this was a limitation, they were usually able to relate this correctly to the study. A number of candidates misread the question and offered advantages rather than limitations.
- (g) This question differentiated well. Many candidates could offer two reasons for conducting a laboratory experiment, with control and replicability being the most common responses. For full marks candidates needed to explain their reasons in relation to conducting field experiments.
- (h) The majority of candidates scored two marks for this question. Common points raised were in relation to ethics and the purpose of conducting the research.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.