



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

Psychology B

PSYB3

(Specification 2185)

Unit 3: Child Development and Applied Options

Report on the Examination

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Unit 3: (PSYB3) Child Development and Applied Options

General

Many capable responses were seen and few sub-sections were left blank. Strong students tailored their material precisely to the question, whereas the less able seemed unable or unwilling to select appropriately. Rambling, poorly focused discussions were frequently evident. Attention to the nuances of the question set is an important examination skill, and there were many occasions where students whose subject knowledge was not in question nevertheless failed to excel because discussions were poorly focused or contained information of doubtful relevance. Use of evidence continues to be an issue for some students who might achieve better marks if they clearly explained the relevance of studies in relation to the question.

Once again, quality of written communication severely hampered performance in a considerable number of cases. Not only was specialist vocabulary often used inappropriately but, even the most basic English was poor in many instances. Although it was sometimes possible to infer meaning it should be stressed that the job of examiners is to assess what is actually written and not to credit what they believe the student might have been thinking at the time.

Section A Child Development

Topic: Social Development

This was a popular choice and some very capable responses were seen. Most students chose a suitable study for question 01, although often the outline of the study was minimal. Sometimes the whole answer was rendered useless because the data were described in numerical terms, for example, 'the number of boys and girls who...' Responses to question 02 tended to show a good awareness of strengths/limitations, although a surprisingly high percentage of students wasted time by covering both. It was relatively rare to see full-mark responses on this question because application to children's friendships was often omitted. Answers to question 03 varied enormously and were often very long; there were many rambling and vague allusions to possible confounding variables but relatively few succinct answers based on the problems of establishing cause and effect. Most responses to question 04 were founded on Ainsworth's Strange Situation, with much less frequent references to the Adult Attachment Interview and the Attachment Q-sort. Unfortunately, many discussions lacked focus on the 'way of measuring' and consisted largely of criticisms of Ainsworth's theory. Where students presented specific studies of attachment such as Harlow or Schaffer and Emerson, these were credited only if they were made relevant to the question, which mostly they were not.

Topic: Cognitive Development

Most students gained at least one mark for question 05, although lots of responses were extremely vague with no clear indication of exactly what would happen in a science lesson. In better responses, a relevant concept such as scaffolding or peer tutoring was briefly explained and then applied in a fairly concrete way. A huge variety of studies appeared in responses to question 06 and most did indeed involve the collection of quantitative data. Studies were usually outlined in considerable detail and explanations of quantitative were mostly appropriate. Responses to question 07 showed a good awareness of

strengths/limitations, although time was wasted by those students who offered both. Unfortunately, application to children's friendships was rare. In question 08, descriptions of Piaget's theory of cognitive development were usually very detailed although, in weaker responses, Piagetian terminology was often used inappropriately. General evaluation seemed to present few problems, except where students focused on methodological issues rather than theory. Comparisons with nativist explanations were usually quite cursory, although better students commented on issues such as object permanence, language and culture and brought in more general debates for example, determinism.

Topic: Moral Development

A number of students provided general criticisms of the psychodynamic approach in answer to question 09, for example, stating that the theory was not testable. Such answers gained no credit as the question required application to moral development. Various studies were used effectively in answers to question 10 and most did involve the collection of qualitative data. Unfortunately, in the rush to explain how the data was qualitative, some students seemed not to notice that an outline of the study was also required. For question 11, most students gained marks for the strength or limitation although often both were presented, indicating some misreading of the question. Full-mark answers were relatively rare, mainly because students omitted application to the study of moral development. Most answers to question 12 were based on a stage theory, with Kohlberg, Piaget and Eisenberg the most usual choices. For good marks here it was necessary to maintain focus on theory and many lengthy methodological discussions gained little credit because they were not linked back to the question.

Section B Applied Options

Topic: Cognition and Law

Most students could choose an appropriate study for question 13, although just occasionally, studies with no obvious relevance to any explanation for face recognition were presented. In such cases, students were then unable to access credit in question 14. Also unsuccessful were those students who simply stated that their chosen study 'related to' holistic or feature theory without offering any explanation of the nature of that relationship. Most responses to question 15 scored well; 3 and 4 mark answers were quite common. Most successful answers to question 16 focused on the cognitive interview, although more general strategies such as 'avoiding leading questions' were also credited. Weaker responses were those where students answered a rather different question and discussed 'factors affecting eye-witness testimony'. In such cases, credit was fairly minimal. Material on line-up procedures gained credit as long as it was used to address the question set.

Topic: Schizophrenia and Mood Disorders

Many answers achieved full marks for question 17, although the briefest responses that simply stated bipolar involved mania whereas unipolar did not, gained just one mark. Answers to question 18 were often very poor indeed, being either largely generic descriptions of a type of treatment or extremely vague descriptions of a plausible study, for example, comparing an unspecified drug with placebo for an unspecified time. A further large proportion of students left question 18 blank altogether. Responses to question 19 were often strong with most students referring to normalisation as the key reason. Question 20 elicited some extensive and detailed description, with many students achieving full AO1 marks. Extended discussions covered effective use of evidence, implications, reductionism and comparison with other explanations.

Topic: Stress and Stress Management

Questions 21, 22 and 23 did not discriminate as virtually all students gained full marks. Answers to question 24 were, however, much less consistent, with a fair number of students choosing studies of stress that did not involve investigation of social support, for example, the Frankenhauser saw mill study. Given the straightforward nature of question 26, and the fact that behavioural therapies are named on the specification, it was very surprising to see a low level of performance; there appeared to be a widespread lack of understanding of the term 'behavioural' evident in those answers where therapies/treatments were clearly cognitive. Evidence was also quite rare to see. In all, this was the least well done of all of the 12-mark questions on this paper.

Topic: Substance Abuse

Question 27 was often well done, with some accurate descriptions of the Prochaska model and sound application to the case of Nadine. Not uncommonly, answers consisted of excessively detailed outlines covering each stage of the model in some depth, all of which was not necessary for the outline marks. Question 28 was probably not one that could have been anticipated and evidently created problems for a large number of students. Answers varied both in content and appropriateness and more than one difference was rare to see. Most responses here consisted of a series of freestanding definitions (of prevention, treatment and dependency) without the necessary links. Better students started their answer to question 29 by specifying their chosen substance and those who focused on alcohol tended to achieve the higher marks. Weaker responses were those where material on more than one substance was presented, with examiners left to disentangle the information and award credit to the student's best advantage. Such muddled and unfocused answers invariably resulted in limited credit. Sometimes a student specified a chosen substance but presented evidence for a different substance.

Topic: Forensic Psychology

Taken together, questions 30, 31 and 32 discriminated surprisingly well, with question 31 being the least well answered of the three. A number of students appeared not to have understood what was meant by 'ways of measuring crime' as their answers were totally inappropriate, for example, 'offender profiling' was a fairly common wrong answer. Creditworthy answers to question 33 were most usually based on community service, tagging or restorative justice. Some responses could not be credited as what was offered could not have been used as an alternative to custodial sentencing, for example, behaviour modification which could only take place within an institution. Many discussions were simply a list of evaluative points; more effective were those where there was reasoned explanation as to why the alternative was better than prison. The majority of students could offer useful outlines for question 34, however, little effective comparison was in evidence. More usually each explanation was evaluated separately in turn. As a consequence, many students who ought to have done better were limited to a maximum of six marks.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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