Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel GCE Psychology
Paper 01 Social and Cognitive
Psychology (6PS01)

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Paper Introduction

Generally most candidates had a good attempt at all questions, which was pleasing. This was for the most part a re-sit paper being in its last year of presentation, so it was hoped that the quality of the responses would reflect this in the marks achieved.

The ability to read the requirements of the questions had on the whole improved and there were less generic responses than in previous presentations. These skills however were not used by all and so, many responses were not creditworthy as they had not related the answers to the stem material or research was anecdotal as oppose to published works.

It was clear that candidates had the knowledge and a number took the opportunity of applying their knowledge learned in units 3 and 4 in the application questions. Some candidates did write too much in response to some questions, particularly Q10 and 12b and this meant that they were pressed on time when answering the 12 mark question.

The paper was however, answered well as there was a good mix of short answer and essay length questions. There were far fewer unanswered questions than in previous series which was a fitting end to the legacy papers.

Q08

A number of candidates did not read the instructions and only put a cross in one box instead of two.

In the main, candidates who correctly chose to responses gained both marks.

Q09

A number of candidates did not read the instructions and only put a cross in one box instead of two.

In the main, candidates who correctly chose to responses gained both marks.

Q10

Many candidates struggled with this question and did not make an obvious link to the concepts in the question. They were able to successfully describe either the processes in Social Identity theory or the agentic state in Milgram's theory but did not apply it to the scenario in the stem. This limited the marks to 2 out of 5. For those students that did understand that the theories and concepts had to be linked, full marks were possible.

Q11a & b

This question required the students to describe Godden and Baddeley's (1975) study. It was clear from the responses that the students knew the procedure very, very well. In fact it could be said in too much detail, because they forgot that a describe question is not only about the procedure and needed to include the aim, results and conclusions to access the full range of marks. The aims and the conclusions were on the whole not very well done. The results section often yielded incorrect findings and it was expected that the students would be accurate in this respect. The majority of students did not achieve full marks for this question,

These were relatively straightforward questions which were answered well by many candidates who had obviously learned the details of the study. Many were also able to provide evaluative answers linked to reliability and generalisability. Although marks were lost when not reading the questions sufficiently in 11b where ethics or validity were evaluated.

In an evaluate a study question, make sure that you understand whether you are evaluating all areas or just specific ones such as reliability and generalisability. You must also include examples from the study in your answer.

Q12

This question tested the ability of all candidates. It was clear that a number of students did understand the scientific requirements of the course, being able to create a hypothesis and operationalise it, describe a procedure, evaluate the issues and suggest ways it could be improved. However the

many candidates were unable to access the second mark in 12a because as expected 'operationalisation' seemed quite a tricky concept to grasp. 12b often produced better answers but many candidates confused procedures with findings / conclusions etc and it was difficult to untangle some of the responses. In 12c it was very clear which candidates understood the scientific approach. Those that could clearly identified and explained how they controlled participant and situational variables. However, a vast majority also cited the independent variable which whilst not wholly suitable was allowed as it was of course controlled. A number of candidates erroneously used the dependent variable.

Q13a

This true or false question in respect of Milgram's agency theory was well answered. The vast majority of students gained the full 4 marks.

Q13b

13a and 13b were a good measure of who understood agency theory but could also apply it successfully. In 13b it was clear that candidates knew the studies of Hofling, Milgram and Meeus and Raaijmakers well. However whilst stating these as research evidence they often failed to explain why they could be used to explain the Agentic or Autonomous state and therefore could not access the full range of marks.

Q14

The candidates who read what the question required were able to access the marks available. Unfortunately many did not seem to read carefully and failed to access the marks even though they appeared to have good knowledge of the key issue that they had studied. This question asked for description only and there were no marks available for evaluation. A small number of students also confused the key issues and tried to describe the Cognitive approach.

Q15

There were many competent answers and a significant few were able to fulfil the requirements to access Level 4. Those candidates that achieved Level 3 described levels of processing well and applied it to the scenario, they also evaluated it well but did not apply this to the group of friends and could not therefore access level 4. There were of course a number of candidates who were unbalanced in their response, providing either description or evaluation and restricted themselves to level 2.