



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback
Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary GCE
PSYCHOLOGY (8PS01)

PAPER 01: Social and Cognitive Psychology

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Introduction

The examination structure provided a range of question types over two main sections, social psychology and cognitive psychology, with a final extended response requiring candidates to address a theme that occurs in both social and cognitive psychology. Good psychological knowledge and understanding was demonstrated by many candidates and it was clear that they had a very good working knowledge of the topic areas. There were very few unanswered questions and many of the questions were attempted in some detail which benefited the candidates. Candidates should be reminded to write only within the spaces provided and not around, above and below or use arrows and asterisk to indicate that there is additional information elsewhere. Additional paper should be used whenever extra writing space is required.

Candidates showed particular strengths in evaluating the working memory model (Baddeley and Hitch, 1974). Mathematical skills were demonstrated well and candidates were able to access the full range of marks for questions requiring these skills. Areas of improvement to consider would be questions that require an AO2 application, simply stating a name from the scenario does not constitute application. Candidates should use elements of the scenarios in their identification and justification points. Without this application, responses are generic and therefore not creditworthy.

The remainder of this Examiners' Report focuses on each individual question and gives specific examples with the aim of highlighting areas of good practice and illustrating some common errors, which can be used to help prepare candidates for future 8PS0/01 examinations.

1a

This is an AO1 question and candidates were required to define 'the autonomous state' as used in agency theory. Most candidates suggested that it was acting on your own free will and gained one mark. Many candidates did not gain a second mark as they did not give an example or go on to explain that it also involved taking responsibility for one's own actions.

1b

Many candidates were able to identify the strength and gain one mark using Milgram's study and the Holocaust as a way of explaining how people went into the agentic state and thus followed orders. However, many responses did not justify the identification point, giving answers that were weak or vague and not achieving the AO3 mark.

ET: AO3 justifications can be evidence from alternative studies or real-life applications and these need to be applied to the identification point to gain the full mark range.

1c

This is an AO1 and AO3 question where candidates were required to identify an improvement that could be made to Milgram's research. Overall, candidates were unable to achieve the full two marks on this question as they suggested improvements

that would have negated the purpose of the research or have completely changed the study, for example: remove the verbal prods, gain informed consent.

ET: In a question that requires a suggested improvement, it is important that the suggestion does not fundamentally change the study in question as this is not creditworthy.

2a

This is an AO2 question and the candidates were required to write a closed question that would be appropriate to ask in relation to the scenario. Many candidates did not achieve the one mark as they wrote a question in which the likely response would have been yes or no, however, they did not gain credit as they did not provide the option of yes/no.

2b

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates. They were required to write an open question that would have been appropriate to ask in relation to the scenario. Suitable open questions were given, with the preferred option of adding why to the end of the question.

2c

This was an AO2/AO3 question in which the candidates had to identify two reasons for using both an open and closed question, in relation to the scenario and justify both question types. This question was answered generically by the majority of candidates and therefore was not creditworthy. Many candidates demonstrated a knowledgeable understanding of open and closed questions and their relevance in respect of qualitative and quantitative data. However, these were not related to the scenario in any meaningful way.

3a

This question required candidates to identify a conclusion from a set of data, demonstrating skills at AO2 and AO3. Many candidates simply re-stated the results and did not make inferences from the data about the in-group preference the results implied about the bakery workers. Many candidates thought that all the supermarket workers were being asked their opinions and therefore did not grasp the context of the question.

3b

This question was a mathematical question in which candidates were required to convert the data shown in the table. This question was answered well and the majority of candidates were able to achieve the full two marks available for the conversion.

3c

Candidates were required to use social identity theory in relation to the scenario for AO2. Candidates generally showed a good understanding of social identity theory and many were able to apply the theory appropriately to the stem. A number of candidates did not access many or any marks and this was due in general to a lack of application in respect of the theory to the stem material.

4

This question is an extended open response which is targeting a balance between AO1 and AO3 skills and is assessed using the level mark bands for 'evaluate' which meant describing the use of sampling techniques and evaluating them when researching social psychology.

Many candidates did not provide accurate knowledge of the sampling techniques, often confusing opportunity and random sampling. As a result of the limited description, knowledge could not be considered accurate or thorough making it difficult to achieve the higher mark bands. In respect of the AO3, evaluate element, many candidates did not make developed statements that related the sampling techniques to social psychology. The responses often gave a generic elaboration of the sampling techniques. A common mistake in supporting evidence was to suggest the Milgram used an opportunity sample as oppose to a volunteer sample.

ET: In a question that requires the candidates to evaluate an issue in respect of social psychology, it is important that the elaboration points focus on this area of study. Generic assertions mean that candidates can only be credited for the descriptive elements of their response and are therefore restricted to the lower mark bands.

5a

This was an AO1 question where candidates had to identify two features of the 'short-term memory store' as used in the multi-store model of memory. Most candidates answered this question well, referring to capacity and duration. On occasions, some candidates referred to encoding. Common reasons for not accessing the full marks were giving answers as following: capacity small, capacity 7-9 and duration very short.

5b

This was an AO1 and AO3 where candidates had to identify and justify two weaknesses of the multi-store model of memory. Some candidates were able to suggest that the model was incomplete or oversimplified but did not expand on the identification point and so did not gain credit. The justification points were not well made by the majority of candidates.

5c

This question required candidates to identify a strength of using case-studies of brain damaged patients when researching memory. Many candidates addressed the question

by referring to specific case studies of brain damaged patients and explaining their benefits but did not relate these to researching memory.

ET: When giving a strength in respect of a methodology ensure that it is related to the area of study in question, for example memory in this case in order to access the full range of marks.

6a

This is an AO2 question where candidates had to give a fully operationalised dependent variable for the practical investigation they carried out in respect of cognitive psychology. The majority of candidates gained one mark as they gave a partially operationalised dependent variable, for example the number of words recalled. Some candidates did not achieve the second mark as they did not develop the dependent variable sufficiently or they explained what a dependent variable was.

6b

Candidates were required to identify two improvements they could have made to their practical investigation in respect of cognitive psychology. Most candidates were able to identify improvements for research using appropriate methodologies, however these were not related to cognitive psychology, laboratory experiments or memory and did not gain credit. A number of candidates clearly identified and justified an improvement to their procedure which was clearly conducted in respect of cognitive psychology.

ET: Candidates need to make it clear that procedures used in their practical investigations are relevant for the approach in the question, for example the requirement is to carry out a laboratory experiment that would collect quantitative data in the cognitive approach.

7a

This was a mathematical question that required candidates to calculate a percentage from the data set in respect of the scenario. This question was answered accurately by the majority of candidates and they achieved the full mark.

7b

Candidates were required to compare two sets of results in respect of the data given in the scenario. The majority of candidates were able to gain one of two marks by correctly identifying why the results of the groups of patients would be compared. A number of candidates were able to go on to gain the second mark by explaining the significance of the control group as a baseline/benchmark.

8

This was an AO2 question in which candidates needed to apply their knowledge of procedures that could be used in field experiments in relation to the scenario. Most candidates were able to achieve two out of a possible four marks by suggesting where the field experiment could be carried out and the type of story that could be used. Some candidates did not clearly demonstrate that it was a field experiment and/or failed to

reference comparison of results or changes over time, so did not achieve the final two marks.

9

This question is an extended open response which is targeting a balance between AO1 and AO3 skills and is assessed using the level mark bands for 'evaluate' which meant describing working memory model using their knowledge of the processes and evaluating it by providing a balanced evaluation and drawing an informed conclusion from the evaluative points made.

Many candidates provided accurate knowledge of the model by describing the function of the central executive, phonological loop and visuospatial sketchpad worked according to this model. The candidates that provided detailed and accurate descriptions were able to achieve the higher mark bands.

Many candidates gave detailed evaluations citing and applying supporting evidence well. The more able responses were able to form a conclusion for the evaluative points made and were therefore able to fully describe and evaluate the working memory model.

Some candidates described and evaluated the model but the responses were superficial and lacked detail and this did not allow them to access the higher mark bands.

In an 'evaluate' question it is important to achieve a balance between the descriptive requirement and evaluative requirement of the question together with providing a balanced conclusion if candidates are to access the higher mark bands.

10

This is an evaluate question AO1/A)3 that required candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding and evaluate the classic studies of Sherif et al. (1954/1961) and Baddeley (1966b) in terms of reliability and validity.

Candidates were required to provide a balanced answer in respect of both studies. The knowledge and understanding would be demonstrated through their understanding of the studies themselves. Sherif et al was better answered in that candidates usually demonstrated accurate knowledge and understanding and could usually restrict their evaluation to reliability and validity. Baddeley was not always answered well, many candidates were not able to accurately demonstrate knowledge, giving generic descriptions of laboratory experiments. The evaluation was also generic and did not use specific examples from the study to justify its reliability or validity. Some candidates were also confused as to what constitutes validity and what constitutes reliability.

ET: To achieve level 3 and 4, candidates could have suggested how in respect of Sherif, triangulation could improve reliability or validity by linking this to the points made for AO1. For Baddeley, it could be suggested as to how the word order, familiarity of the words improved reliability and validity.

Paper performance

Based on the performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Strengths and weaknesses of studies should give specific details of the study in question and justify why that is a particular strength and weakness for that study. Generic points should not be given.
- Where a scenario is given, responses should apply to the scenario, just giving a name is not sufficient to demonstrate application.
- Candidates should ensure that responses in respect of improvements are relevant to the actual scenario and not changing the study.
- When describing a practical investigation, it should be clear that it is either in respect of the social or the cognitive approach.
- When writing a procedure, candidates should give sufficient detail to allow replication. Areas of design, participants, materials and the actual procedure should be clearly linked to the scenario.