Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Pearson Edexcel

GCE Psychology 9PS0/03

Paper 3: Psychological Skill

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The Autumn 9PS0/03 examination was part an exceptional series that was represented by a very small number of students. The performance of these students is summaries below, with advice on how to improve in further series, but may not be representative of a full cohort that would take the usual summer series examination.

Question 1a

Students were required to make an accurate conclusion related to extraversion based upon the data and then support this with evidence. There was a mixed performance, with only the best responses giving both a relevant conclusion and evidence to support it.

Question 1b

Students were required to make an accurate conclusion related to openness based upon the data and then support this with evidence. Similar to Q1a, there was a mixed performance, with only the best responses giving both a relevant conclusion and evidence to support it.

Question 1c

Students needed to identify a strength of collecting quantitative data and then fully justify this for the study. Performance was split on this question, with the majority of students either giving a relevant strength which was fully justified in context or gaining no marks for not giving a relevant strength or giving a generic response.

Question 1d

For this question, students were required to identify two strengths of using an unstructured interview and then fully justify this for the study. The majority of responses were either generic or inaccurate, which scored 0 marks, or gained two marks for either one strength fully justified in context or two identified strengths for the study.

Question 2a

Students needed to describe how the researchers could have used a random sampling technique of the study. The majority of candidates either gave a generic response or inaccurate, which scored 0 marks, or achieved two marks for a developed response in context.

Question 2b

This question required students to identify a weakness of using random sampling and then fully justify this for the study. The majority of students struggled to give a relevant strength in context, with most giving a generic response or an inaccurate strength so scored zero marks.

Question 2c

For this question, students needed to make an accurate related to the navigation strategies used based upon the data and then support this with evidence. Almost all students were able to give an appropriate conclusion from the graph, with the majority also able to go on to support this conclusion with evidence.

Question 2d

Students needed to complete the table to calculate the chi-square value in this question. There was a mixed performance, with some students not calculating all values to two decimal places as stipulated in the question, and others making errors in calculation or rounding. The majority were able to gain full marks for correctly calculating all values and rounding all values to two decimal places though.

Question 2e

This question required students to give two appropriate improvements that could have been made to the study, and then fully justify how they would have improved the study. Performance was varied, with most able to give at least one appropriate conclusion and then justify it or give two conclusions but without full justification. Very few were able to give two fully justified, relevant improvements for the study.

Question 3a

For this question, students needed to identify a relevant weakness of the study in terms of validity and then fully justify this for the second mark. The majority of candidates were able to achieve both marks with a relevant fully justified weakness in the context of the study. Some responses did not fully justify the weakness given, so only achieved one mark. Some responses were generic and/or inaccurate so gained no credit.

Question 3b

Students needed to apply evolution and natural selection to the study for the AO2 credit, and then were required to provide justification or judgement using research evidence in terms of how far evolution and natural selection could account for the findings of the study for the AO3 marks. Performance was at the lower end in general with students really struggling with the demands of this question. Very little or no research evidence was used by students and application was limited to one or very few ideas related to the study. Some responses were left blank too.

Question 4

For question 4, students needed to show knowledge and understanding of the two classic studies named in the question, and analyse, interpret, and evaluate these to make judgements and reach conclusions about them in terms of nature and nurture. Student performance typically ranged across levels 1-3 with a variety of marks awarded. Students always showed knowledge of the studies, but only the better responses did so in greater detail. The AO3 content varied, from very little or no rewardable AO3 to a variety of points across both studies with detail and accurate judgements made. The best responses made frequent judgements about the extent to which the two studies could be considered more nature or nurture and also showed accurate and detailed understanding of the studies. These responses also had more AO3 than AO1 material. The weakest responses showed isolated or basic understanding of the studies with errors, and showed either no evaluation or superficial evaluation of them in terms of their nature and nurture focus. A minority of responses were blank.

Question 5

Question 5 required students to select relevant knowledge from their course and respond to the scenario in an appropriate way, using AO1, AO2, and AO3 content. Most commonly students achieved level 1 or level 2 in this exam series, with a variety of marks awarded. Typically students showed some relevant knowledge and applied this to the scenario to various levels of success. Some also used evaluative (AO3) material, but this was less common to see. The responses who scored level 3 or above included content from all the AOs and used a variety of psychological concepts and applied these to the scenario in a relevant and appropriate way. They also used strengths and weaknesses to support or refute how far social psychology could account for the scenario provided. Weaker responses focused on limited aspects of social psychology and usually erroneously attempted to apply psychological concepts from social psychology to the scenario, with little or no attempt at AO3.

Question 6

This question required students to show knowledge and understanding of both cultural and gender issues in psychological research (AO1) and analyse, interpret, and evaluate their ideas to form appropriate judgements regarding cultural or gender bias. Student performance typically ranged from level 1 to level 3 with only very few achieving level 4 or beyond. It was common to see students showing a limited attempt at both cultural and gender issues, without offering any development or depth to their arguments, so scored in the lower mark range. Superficial arguments were made with limited research evidence to support the points being presented. The best responses showed accurate and thorough understanding of both cultural and gender issues, correctly highlighting possible forms of bias using examples. They also gave developed arguments that considered these forms of cultural and gender bias in the psychological research they had studied on the course, leading to appropriate judgements and conclusions. These responses were imbalanced, with greater AO3 than AO1 content. The weakest responses gave isolated knowledge and tended to recycle points they had used earlier from other questions, with little consideration given to any cultural or gender issues.