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Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Psychology (WPS04)
Paper 1 Clinical Psychology

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General Comments

Candidate entry for the June 2018 series was similar to that of the June 2017 series and as such the range of responses seen was on a similar distribution to this previous cohort entry.

Across the paper, candidates showed good understanding of key terms and some theoretical concepts. There was some good understanding of the contemporary studies. It was disappointing that candidates did not use their understanding of experimental methodology to make comparisons as directed, but instead gave strengths/weaknesses of each method, often achieving poor marks here.

Concerningly there were some unethical practical investigations given in candidate responses. Centres are reminded to revisit the specification content for guidance on the method and nature of the practical investigation and ensure all practical investigations adhere to ethical requirements.

Difficulties tended to be in the long answer questions where few justified their arguments and evaluations, and very little supporting evidence was seen. Here, candidate responses were often limited to lower level mark bands as a result of limited understanding of specific content coupled with a lack of developed AO3 material.

Application for AO2 responses was an area that again posed some problems for some candidates. Where generic responses were given candidates did not achieve well, and it is recommended that candidates practice their application to stimulus material to demonstrate their ability to draw on their understanding of content and show how this would apply in each context.

Paper Summary

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

- Candidates would benefit from developing their skills to make comparisons (similarities and differences), for example this could be between methodology, explanations of mental health disorders or studies.
- Candidates should review the taxonomy expectations within the specification to aid them in understanding the key requirements of the questions and the distinctions between these, for example the differences between describe and explain in shorter questions.
- Within their extended open responses, candidates should give balanced responses and exemplified points which lead to making informed conclusions or judgements (where appropriate to the taxonomy used) in relation to the question content.
- When attempting the unseen key question, candidates should clearly apply their understanding of psychology to the context in the given scenario, they should not just replicate the information they are presented with as this is insufficient to show application of their knowledge and understanding.
- Generic points should be avoided, candidates should be able to give specific responses that are clearly linked to the question content and taxonomy, especially in scenario based questions.

- Where candidates are expanding their points, the use of evidence and supporting/contesting concepts could aid them in exemplifying their knowledge and understanding as appropriate.
- Candidates should focus on the specific direction of the question to avoid going off topic, particularly in the extended essay questions.

The remainder of this report will focus on specific questions from the examination.

Comments on Individual Questions

Sections A and B: Clinical Psychology

Q1

Question Introduction

This question assessed knowledge and understanding of the HCPC standards. Candidates could achieve up to two marks for their description of what is meant by 'fitness to practise'. Most candidates achieved a mark on this question, usually with a focus on physical or mental fitness of the practitioner. Few gave a fully developed description in order to access the two marks available.

Q2

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to explain one reason for a peer review in relation to Melissa's research about drug treatments for schizophrenia. Some candidates achieved marks here, but many did not apply their answers to the scenario. A number of candidates were not aware of the purpose of a peer review.

Examiner Tip

With application questions, candidates should use their understanding in relation to the content of scenario they are given.

Q3

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to explain three strengths and/or weaknesses of the procedure used in their chosen contemporary study for either Anorexia Nervosa or Unipolar Depression. Common errors were seen where candidates gave generic responses that were not related to any particular study, for example reliability of a naturalistic experiment without any reference to any content from a study. Further difficulty was noted in candidates who did not fully understand the contemporary study they had learned.

Candidates could give any combination of strengths and/or weaknesses in relation to the procedure, and only three were needed to access the six marks. Several students gave more than three points and are likely to have limited their time across the paper by giving more content in their response than was required.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should focus their answers on the element of the study being assessed, for example in the case of Q3 the question was about the procedure, so strengths/weaknesses of aims, results, conclusions would not be creditable.

Q4

Question Introduction

Most candidates were able to give two features of a positron emission tomography (PET) scan. Where candidates did not achieve marks, it was often from giving generic points that could be any scanning method and did not show understanding of the

features of a PET scanning method, for example 'a computer image is generated' or 'the patient lies on a table'.

Q5

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application of knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question requiring candidates to explain how a second clinical diagnosis using the ICD may improve/increase the reliability of Daichi's original diagnosis of schizophrenia. Most candidates responded well here, although where they struggle was usually with the application of their response to the diagnosis of schizophrenia and/or ICD to make the diagnosis.

A few candidates gave responses that discussed validity rather than reliability, and some talked about the reliability of the process of diagnosing Daichi (for example methodology of using an interview) rather than the reliability of the diagnosis of schizophrenia itself.

Q6(a)

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to complete the chi-squared using the data in the table provided and to give their answers to two decimal places. Many demonstrated good skills here and achieved well. For those who did not achieve higher marks it was often an error with their calculations during the process, thus many achieved at least one mark here.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should ensure they follow the guidance in the question with mathematical skills, for example the number of decimal places required in their answers is a skill they should be able to demonstrate.

Q6(b)

Question Introduction

Most candidates were able to give the critical value by reading the information from the tables provided at the front of the paper. Correct answers followed the mark scheme and where errors were seen in this question it was often misreading the table, usually referring to the column for a two-tailed test.

Q6(c)

Question Introduction

This was an AO3 maths question requiring candidates to justify with reference to the data, whether the result was significant. Candidates were required to use the chi-squared data to determine that significance and the data for the calculated and critical value was required to answer this question. Most candidates achieved the mark for this question and the only common error seen was where they made a generic statement of significance rather than justifying significance with reference to the data.

Q7

Question Introduction

This was an AO3 question requiring candidates to suggest three improvements that could be made to the research by Rosenhan (1973). Candidates could improve any aspect of the classic study by Rosenhan, but the improvements needed to be specific to the study and realistic. Often weaknesses were given rather than improvements, and these were not creditable. In addition, candidates very often misunderstood the participant sample, believing these to be the pseudo-patients rather than the sample of hospitals.

The points must improve the study and not make it weaker, for example some candidates suggested informing staff in the hospital to improve ethics and where it was clear the candidates were suggesting only the management are informed this was accepted for a mark, however it would not improve the study to inform all the nurses on the ward.

Further common responses included diversifying the sample of hospitals used e.g. different/more USA states or a different country; and changing the demographic of the confederates/pseudo-patients e.g. ethnic groups or increased number of women.

Examiner Tip

Improvements should be realistic, Rosenhan could not sample every hospital in the world or even in the USA, but he could have sampled one hospital in each state of the USA or made a comparison to some hospitals in Japan or the UK.

Q8(a)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 question requiring the candidates to describe the procedure of their practical investigation in clinical psychology. The procedure must follow the methodology of a content analysis to explore attitudes to mental health. Some candidates had not completed the content analysis practical as directed by the specification, of which some were unethical and/or inappropriate for students.

The better candidates have given a comprehensive account of their practical investigation and have achieved some strong marks. Where candidates struggled they have often described a thematic analysis rather than a content analysis or muddled the two approaches.

Q8(b)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 question requiring the candidates to describe the conclusion(s) from their clinical practical investigation. Where candidates understand conclusions, this question was answered clearly and accurately, however these were unfortunately in the minority.

Most candidate gave the results of their practical investigation (for example, saying how many time negative stereotyping was seen in each film about mental health, or how many positive phrases were counted in medical sources compared to non-medical sources) as opposed to their conclusion(s) about attitudes to mental health

(for example, that the portrayal of mental health disorders in mainstream media has become less negative over the past 40 years).

Examiner Tip

Centres are reminded that the practical investigation must adhere to ethical principles in both content and intention as directed by the specification.

Q9(a)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 maths question requiring candidates to identify which form of therapy had the highest success rate over the eight-week period from the line graph in Figure 1. Most candidates achieve the available marks on this question.

Q9(b)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 maths interpretation and application question requiring candidates to describe why Marianne and Harrison initially believed that there was little or no difference between drug therapy alone and combined drug and family therapy by using the data in Figure 1. Candidates were able to draw information from the first three weeks of the data and make an accurate link between the data and the statement.

Most achieved well on this question, however a few candidates claimed there was no difference in scores between drug therapy and combined, which was an inaccurate interpretation as the treatment impact was parallel but scores themselves were different between the groups.

Q10

Question Introduction

This question was an extended open response question for 16 marks, assessed using the levels-based marking criteria. The question required candidates to evaluate issues of validity and culture in the diagnosis of mental health disorders.

Some of the responses did not engage with the taxonomy of 'evaluate' and in these cases candidates often presented some knowledge and understanding of validity and culture without evaluating these in terms of the diagnosis of mental health.

Several candidates presented two distinct essays, one half about validity and another half about culture, without connecting the two or engaging in arguments about how there is a link between validity and culture, and that one can influence the other. The style of two separated responses did not always give rise to logical chains of reasoning, instead presenting disjointed content.

Most candidates have attempted evaluations in their responses, some commented that there was 'evidence to show' without giving any actual psychological supporting evidence. However, some were able to give specific research evidence to evaluate whether validity and culture were an issue in the diagnosis of mental health.

At the lower end of candidate responses, it was common to see candidates discussing reliability instead of validity and/or discussing definitions of mental health disorders, such as deviation from a social norm or failure to function adequately.

Concluding points were not always evident, whether throughout or at the end, and many candidates presented their response without logical reasoning or understanding of competing arguments when attempting this question presented.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should present exemplified arguments and draw from a range of evidence or concepts to justify their points in extended essays. Logical chains of reasoning should be presented to show competing arguments, and these should draw to conclusions or judgements based on the evidence they have utilised in the response and in answer to the specific features of the question presented.

Sections C, D and E: Psychological Skills

Q11(a)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application question where candidates were required to describe how Elijah could have designed his interview questions about experiences of flying. Where candidates did not achieve well, they often gave generic points about interview questions and did not apply their response to the use of these in relation to the scenario.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should ensure they very clearly apply their understanding to scenarios when these are used in order to achieve the AO2 marks.

Q11(b)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question. Candidates were required to give one strength of using qualitative data to investigate people's experiences of flying and justify/exemplify why this was a strength. Where candidates did not achieve well, they often gave generic strengths about qualitative and did not apply their response to the use of these in relation to the scenario

Examiner Tip

Candidates should always exemplify and justify the points they make when responding to explain taxonomy questions. Candidates may benefit from working through the taxonomy command words given in the specification as part of their examination practice.

Q11(c)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 question where candidates were required to suggest how Elijah could have analysed his interview responses to generate quantitative data to find any

similarities between those who are fearful of flying. Most students did talk about thematic analysis but very few contextualised this in relation to the scenario and did not achieve as well as they could have.

Q12

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 mathematical question where candidates were required to draw a histogram to represent the data in Table 3 about the number of times that ten students followed the instructions of their teacher during a one-hour lesson. Credit was given for the title, plotting of bars and labelling of the axis. Most candidates achieved a mark for the title, but very few candidates plotted a histogram, with most plotting a bar chart for each participant score.

Q13

Question Introduction

This question was assessing AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 exemplification / justification. Candidates were required to compare the use of field experiments with the use of laboratory experiments in psychological research. As per the taxonomy direction, there must be at least one similarity and one difference to access full marks.

Candidates often gave points about a field experiment as a first paragraph and then points about a laboratory experiment as a second, these were often presented as strengths and/or weaknesses of each method, with very few making the comparison points required by the question. The responses to this question were overall quite limited.

Some candidates confused a field experiment with a naturalistic experiment, and very few engaged with the element of comparing the use of these in psychological research.

Examiner Tip

Comparisons should include at least one similarity and one difference. Where candidates are required to exemplify, they should state the similarity/difference and exemplify this, in the case of Q13 in relation to conducting psychological research.

Q14(a)

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to describe one reason why Sebastian may have used an independent groups design in this study, therefore it was AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO2 application to Sebastian's study. Generic answers did not access the AO2 mark but could access AO1.

Some candidates restated that 'he had two groups of children' or 'recall groups were immediate or after interference' which was simply copied from the scenario given to the candidate and did not demonstrate why he used an independent groups design. The most common answer was to reduce order effects.

Q14(b)

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to suggest one weakness with the opportunity sampling technique used by Sebastian in this study, therefore it is AO2 for the identification of a weakness of the sampling in relation to Sebastian's study and AO3 for suggesting how or why this is a weakness. Some candidates achieved well on this question, stating what was weak about the sample from one local primary school, such as lack of cultural differences or all within a limited age range, and how this made his sample weak. Where candidates did not achieve well, this was often due to generic responses.

Q14(c)

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to state one improvement Sebastian could make to the interference task in his study, therefore, answers were required to relate to the interference task. Some candidates stated a simple change to the interference task, for example making it last longer, without this showing how it is an improvement. Better responses made suggestions such as 'using a verbalising interference task to prevent the children's rehearsal'. Where candidates did not achieve well, they often made a suggestion that was not related to the interference task, for example changing the sample size.

Q15

Question Introduction

This was a discuss AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO2 application question that required candidates to give an equal emphasis between their underpinning knowledge/understanding and an application to the context of the given key question in their answer. Candidates were able to approach this question using any relevant and accurate aspect of their psychology course content, many used social learning theory.

Overall, some candidates were able to select appropriate theory/concepts/research relevant to the key question, although some gave limited understanding in the points they made from their chosen content. Most candidates were able to apply some of their understanding to the scenario given that underpins the key question.

Some candidates discussed social learning theory, but were limited in their ability to apply their understanding to the novel context of the key question, instead their focus became aggression rather than risk taking behaviour. Few candidates engaged with content from the biological approach and therefore did not fully address the question.

A few candidates copied large chunks from the scenario rather than engaging with this and developing their answer to show how their understanding from their course can be connected to the stimulus material.

Examiner Tip

The key question used in this section of the examination will require candidates to select appropriate content and apply these areas of their understanding of psychology to explicitly discuss the key question presented. They should draw on the stimulus

material given and any relevant knowledge and understanding from across their studies and not simply 'copy' from the material presented to them.

Q16

Question Introduction

This was an extended open response essay worth 20 marks that addresses a key issue and debate in psychology. The topic of content was whether a reductionist approach in psychology can provide a full explanation of the complexities of human behaviour. The question required candidates to demonstrate AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 evaluation points to evaluate whether reductionism can fully explain behaviour or not.

Some candidates responded well to this question, although for the most part many candidates were unable to evaluate in their responses and gave a response that was more knowledge of how topics in psychology were reductionist, or not, as opposed to an evaluation of whether this can fully explain behaviour or not.

Most candidates found this question challenging, and their argument about reductionism was often limited to describing how biological, clinical and cognitive psychology are reductionist. Very few candidates discussed reductionism versus holism in terms of methodological approaches, and fewer took their response back to the question of whether this can fully explain human behaviour.

There was limited use of research from across the course to exemplify where reductionism was evident, for the most part the candidates described a piece of research but failed to address whether this could fully explain behaviours.

Examiner Tip

Extended open response questions of 20 marks in this section require candidates to draw on a range of content from across their studies of psychology. They should select the appropriate content in order to address the question being asked and it may be worth candidates practicing question techniques in order to ensure they are confident with strategies to respond to the specifics of a 20-mark question.

Candidates do not need to describe every element of content they have studied, but rather they should actively select what is an appropriate range of points and accurately utilise these for the specific direction of the question taxonomy.

The levels based mark scheme weighting in 20 mark questions is heavier for AO3 content, therefore, the focus of candidates should be the taxonomy used, for example Evaluate, Assess or To what extent? As opposed to the AO1 underpinning knowledge and understanding.