Examiner's Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level

In Psychology (WPS03) Paper 1

Applications of Psychology

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General Comments

There were few blank pages and the majority of candidates attempted to answer all questions. Knowledge and understanding was demonstrated by the majority of candidates.

Option A was the preferred choice of the majority of candidates and many candidates had a good working knowledge of key studies and concepts within criminal psychology. Option B, health psychology was chosen by a minority of candidates. Whilst they had a good working knowledge of key factors and theories in health psychology, they needed to revisit the taxonomy of the questions, often providing responses that did not address the question.

Candidates would benefit from an improved understanding of the mathematical components of the examination. Where calculations are required to two decimal places, three and four places should not be given as this is incorrect.

The contextual questions elicited a number of good responses. Candidates endeavoured to apply the scenarios in their writing. It is important that they understand however that just mentioning for example the name given in the stem is not application, they must apply appropriate concepts or theories in order to achieve the AO2 marks.

The longer response questions requiring AO3 appeared to challenge students at the lower end of the grade boundaries. In many cases a detailed knowledge and understanding was given and in levels based marking would have enabled the candidate to achieve level 2 and level 3. However, the AO3 judgements and assessments were not made and this restricted the candidates to level 1 and the bottom of level 2 at best. Higher level responses demonstrated an awareness of the requirements of the question and assessments and judgements were made, citing appropriate evidence, research and studies.

Paper Summary

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

- When indicated in the question, candidates need to relate their answers carefully to stimulus or scenario material and embed this constructively into their answers, not just stating the name as used in the scenario. This will allow them to effectively use the A02 applied skill element of some questions.
- Candidates need to develop further A03 justification in some of their answers; when assessment is required, a judgement should be made, citing appropriate research and studies in support of the statements.
- Candidates need to understand the mathematical requirements of the paper and ensure that they have a working understanding of decimal places.
- Candidates need to understand the taxonomy of the question. When asked to explain using a theory, it is important to apply the theory using key components and not just describe the theory, which does not answer the question.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Q01

Question Introduction

The better candidates were able to apply the taxonomy, explain, suggesting what would happen if a continuous relationship does not occur rather than describing Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation. Few candidates used the findings from Bowlby's (1944) study in justification.

Examiner Tip

When asked to explain, candidates should not just provide a description of the study/theory but suggest how the findings from a theory or study can be applied.

Q02a

Question Introduction

Candidates need to understand the difference between research design and research methods.

Q02b

Question Introduction
Candidates were required to calculate the number of children that gave correct/incorrect answers in Condition B of the data. The majority of candidates calculated this correctly.

Q02c

Question Introduction

The majority of the candidates correctly calculated the chi-squared from the data but did not always gain marks as the calculation was not given to two decimal places.

Q02d

Question Introduction

Many candidates did not understand the requirements of the question. The command verb was to explain using Vygotsky's zone of proximal development…, but many only described the zone of proximal development and failed to suggest how this was linked to the conclusion of the study. This was an AO2 and AO3 question so no marks were available for description of a theory.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to develop an awareness of how theories can be applied to a scenario and then justified.

Q02e

Question Introduction

Many candidates were unable to access the one mark as they described a point from the scenario but did not suggest why the change would be an improvement to the study.

Examiner Tip

When asked to suggest an improvement to a study, candidates need to choose an aspect of the study and suggest how changing it will improve for example, validity, reliability, generalisability.

Q03

Question Introduction

Some candidates were able to describe Skinner's theory of language development. A number of students, however, only described Skinner's behaviourist theory without reference to language development, (AO1). As this was a levels based question it was important to apply the theory to the scenario (AO2). Some students were able to use the key terms of positive reinforcement and punishment in relation to the scenario, therefore demonstrating AO2 application. Many students, however, confused the principles of reinforcement with the principles of classical conditioning and were unable to demonstrate the correct application of processes and techniques and were restricted to level 1 of the levels based mark scheme.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to ensure that they apply the correct scientific ideas and processes to the scenario in order to have access to full marks in a levels based question.

Q04

Question Introduction

The question required candidates to assess whether research into attachment could be considered scientific. The question required the candidates to provide knowledge and understanding of research used in the study of attachment and the most common study used was Ainsworth's Strange Situation and some candidates also used Bowlby's 44 Juvenile Thieves. Most candidates however only described the conclusions of the studies and therefore demonstrated isolated elements of knowledge and understanding.

Most candidates provided a limited attempt in addressing the question as to whether it could be considered scientific. Many candidates focused on issues such as whether the studies were generalisable or ecologically valid but did not go on to assess whether these made the research scientific

Many candidates could not demonstrate an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding and an assessment as to whether the research into attachment could be considered scientific and were limited to Level 2. The most common responses evaluated research into attachment but did not assess whether they could be considered scientific, so failed to address the question.

Candidates would have benefitted from being able to review the elements of what need to be considered in assessing what makes/does not make Psychology scientific. The key features of empiricism, objectivity, control, hypothesis testing and replication should have been assessed in respect of the research into attachment.

As a level based question it is important to note that an A01/A03 response was required which needed to show an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding versus assessment and conclusion. Those candidates who scored well on both skills were able to demonstrate accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of the features of attachment research. Candidates were also able to demonstrate AO3 assessment in making a judgement as to whether the features described could be considered scientific, offering supporting evidence.

Q05

Question Introduction
The majority of candidates were able to achieve the full two marks for this question. They were able to provide two valid statements that explained what was meant by the term criminal psychology.

Q06a

Question Introduction
Many candidates were able to identify a reason for using closed questions and apply this to the scenario. Some candidates were able to justify the reason, but some did not apply it in relation to the scenario, thus providing a generic response.

Examiner Tip

The explanations must make detailed reference to the scenario in order to gain marks. Generic responses score zero marks.

Q06b

Question Introduction

Most candidates did not address the question and provided responses that were appropriate to structured interviews as oppose to unstructured interviews and were therefore unable to explain how the unstructured interview described in the scenario could be made more reliable.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from re-visiting the difference between unstructured and structured interviews.

Q06c

Question Introduction

Some candidates were able to identify a relevant improvement in relation to the scenario and justify it accurately, suggesting for example that the improvement would increase representativeness to a wider group of offenders. Many candidates chose to suggest that increasing the sample size would improve generalisabilty. This is a generic response and was not be appropriate to the scenario and so they were unable to achieve any marks.

Q06d

Question Introduction

This was a question that required a conclusion to be given from the data shown in the scenario. Many candidates were unable to achieve the mark as they did not provide a conclusion but repeated the results from the study.

Q06e

Question Introduction

On the whole, candidates demonstrated their knowledge self-reporting questionnaires. They were able to identify the weaknesses and gain one mark. However, candidates did not always justify the weakness and were therefore unable to access the second mark. The better answers linked the weakness to validity, reliability or generalisability.

Q07

Question Introduction

Many candidates were able to demonstrate mostly accurate knowledge and understanding in respect of anti-social personality disorder and achieve level 2 for the AO1 element of the response. Most candidates were not able to demonstrate an assessment of whether anti-social personality disorder was a credible explanation of crime and anti-social behaviour. They were able to state the findings from relevant studies but did meet the AO3 level requirement of assessing whether these findings were credible, meaning that they could not progress through the levels based marking.

Examiner Tip

Where the requirements of the question are to assess, candidates need to make a judgement as to whether the research/studies used provide a credible explanation as oppose to detailing the findings of the research.

Q08

Question Introduction

Many candidates had an accurate knowledge of the factors that can affect jury decision-making. Candidates were able to describe the factors, giving examples. The AO1 component was for many at the top of level 2 towards the bottom of level 3. Few candidates however were able to successfully evaluate jury decision-making in terms of objectivity. Many candidates described the studies that could be used to evaluate jury decision-making but did not state whether the findings of the studies suggested whether it was objective or not. Therefore, whilst the AO1 was at level 2 or level 3, candidates could not progress through the levels as the AO3 showed some development only.

Q09

Question Introduction

All candidates were able to accurately state what the term 'health psychology' meant for one mark. Candidates that could elaborate on the statement for example, suggesting that treatments could be developed, gained the second mark.

Q10a

Question Introduction

Candidates were able to successfully provide an AO2 identification in relation to the scenario in respect of closed questions. Some candidates were able to access the second mark by justifying the identification point.

Q10b

Question Introduction

Many candidates did not achieve well on this question. They were required to explain how unstructured interviews could be made reliable in respect of the scenario. A common response was to suggest using an alternative method as oppose to improving the existing method and so did not achieve any marks.

Q10c

Question Introduction

Few candidates were able to achieve two marks for this question. The question required an explanation of how generalisability could be improved in respect of the scenario but many candidates provided a generic explanation so did not meet the AO2 requirement of the question.

Q10d

Question Introduction

Many candidates were able to achieve two marks of the four by identifying two ethical issues in respect of the scenario. They were, however, unable to achieve the further two marks for justification as they did not explain why for example they were an ethical concern or how they could be addressed.

Q10e

Question Introduction

Some candidates provided a description of CBT rather than explain why it was/ was not effective in relation to the scenario so were not able to achieve any marks. In order to achieve the marks, it is important to relate the explanation to the scenario.

Q11

Question Introduction

Some candidates were able to provide a detailed knowledge and understanding in respect of the role of hormones on stress. The knowledge and understanding was further supported by evidence which was successfully applied in the assessment of whether it was credible explanation for stress, this enabled the candidates to achieve Level 4. Some

candidates demonstrated very limited knowledge and understanding and did not make an assessment as to role of hormones in relation in stress and were restricted to level 1.

Q12

Question Introduction

Many candidates appeared to have a good working knowledge of Holmes and Rahe's stress scale. A number of responses were able to describe the scale, giving pertinent examples and therefore demonstrated mostly accurate knowledge and understanding. AO3 points were, however, very limited. Many candidates could cite supporting evidence in respect of the scale but were unable to offer any further points of evaluation in suggesting whether it was an objective measure. If a balance of knowledge and understanding and developed lines of arguments with a conclusion is not made, then scores are likely to remain in level 1 and possibly level 2 at best.