



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2020

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Subsidiary 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.

From the two option units, Option A was the preferred choice of a majority of the candidates.

Whilst Option A continues to be the preferred choice by the majority of candidates over Option B, there was a marked improvement in the quality of the essays in both the option sections.

Candidates would benefit from an improved understanding of Vygotsky's theory in respect of being applied to a scenario. Whilst there was some accurate descriptions of the key features such as zone of proximal development this was not applied to the question being asked. It was a four mark strength and weakness question and candidates did not score highly in this.

There was a marked improvement in the application of the skill 'assess' in the question in cited a number of appropriate studies of attachment and many gave examples from the studies to assess whether these points made it ethical or not. Some candidates would benefit from revisiting their understanding of applying appropriate theories and concepts to scenario based questions. Marks are being lost in the two and four mark questions when descriptions are being provided but not being linked to the scenario rendering the response as generic.

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

Candidates need to review their understanding and application of the theories of: Vygotsky as it is important to be able to apply the theory to the required scenario. Candidates need to understand that when explaining a strength or a weakness of a sampling method that it needs to be linked to the scenario in order to be creditworthy.

Candidates would benefit from revisiting the requirements of the questions by reviewing the taxonomies and working through how to apply these, particularly in respect of AO3.

Question 1 (a)

Many Candidates demonstrated an awareness of the premise of ethnographic fieldwork but confused this with naturalistic observations. The difference between naturalistic methods and ethnographic methodologies needs to be clear to be creditworthy.

Question 1 (b)

It was clear that many candidates were familiar with the procedure and findings of the study by Punch (2002). The question however required candidates to justify one strength of the study and many candidates did not identify a strength, providing simply a description of the study.

Question 2 (a)

This question was answered well by a majority of the candidates. There was a good understanding of random sampling and this was applied appropriately to the scenario.

Question 2 (b)

Many candidates did not answer this question well. The question required candidates to explain a weakness in respect of Marcus using a random sample. Many candidates provided generic responses which were not creditworthy. Some candidates were able to achieve one of the two marks by relating the identification point to the scenario but not providing an exemplification of the point.

Question 2 (b)

A number of candidates demonstrated an understanding of the requirements of using a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test however these were not related to the scenario and therefore provided a generic response that was not creditworthy. A number of students were able to link the design, data and test to the scenario with examples of each.

Question 3

The question required candidates to give a strength and a weakness of Vygotsky's theory of development in respect of children's social development within a classroom setting. The majority of candidates were able to give thorough descriptions of Vygotsky's theory including key features, however, they did not identify why this was a strength in terms of social development.

Examiner Tip:

In a strength and a weakness question, a clear identification point in relation to the scenario needs to be made in order to credit what are often very detailed descriptions of a theory or study.

Question 4

Candidates generally answered this question well demonstrating accurate knowledge and understanding and with a good understanding of Piaget's stages of development. Candidates were able to choose elements of the scenario and relate them to the correct stage of development. A common error however was to suggest that Betsy lacked object permanence which was not appropriate as she was in the pre-operational stage and the scenario suggested that she was behaving in an egocentric way. A number of candidates answered this well and were able to achieve the top of Level 3 for their responses.

Question 5

Many candidates were able to provide a description of studies of attachment. Some students suggested studies such as Watson and Rayner (1920) but these were not creditworthy when used as an example of study of attachment. There was an improvement in the required skill of 'assessing' and a growing number of candidates made a move to making a judgement on whether the studies used could indeed be considered ethical.

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 highly on both skills were able to demonstrate accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of how the application of an ethnographic approach to research had improved understanding in developmental psychology.

Question 6 (a)

Candidates were able to make an attempt at providing a description of the 'race effect' for one mark. The second marking point was often a repeat of the first so was not creditworthy.

Question 6 (b)

Many candidates gave a detailed description of a cognitive interview but did not use elements of the scenario to suggest how this would improve the investigation meaning that they achieved one mark from a possible two.

Question 7 (a)

Candidates were required to give a directional hypothesis from the information contained in the scenario. Many candidates did not make use of the data in the scenario and therefore provided a partially operationalised hypothesis.

Question 7 (b)

Candidates were required to calculate the range from the data and this was executed very well by the majority of candidates.

Question 7 (c)

Many candidates found it difficult to define what was meant by the level of probability, often repeating the equation but not explaining it.

Question 7 (d)

The majority of candidates were able to suggest one improvement that could be made to the study of stress, however this was not often justified and so one of two available marks was achieved.

Question 8 (a)

Many candidates were able to give a detailed description of CBT but did not go on to say why this was a strength and so did not achieve a mark.

Question 8 (b)

The question required candidates to give both a strength and weakness for CBT in respect of Adam. The weakness was well done by many candidates as they identified an appropriate weakness and used elements of the scenario to justify the point. The strength was not on the whole quite as well done as candidates gave a detailed description of CBT often using elements from the scenario but then failed to identify why this was a strength.

Examiner Tip:

When a question requires a strength and/or weakness in relation to the scenario, it is important to identify the strength or weakness in addition to using elements from the scenario to justify it.

Question 9

The question required candidates to evaluate social learning from the media as an explanation for crime and anti-social behaviour. Many candidates were able to use theories from social learning and apply these in respect of the media, using supporting studies that also linked to crime and anti-social behaviour. By linking these aspects candidates were able to access Level 3. Some candidates were able to describe social learning theories and give findings from studies but did not address the question as this was not linked to the media and therefore were restricted to the lower mark bands.

Question 10

Many candidates demonstrated an accurate description of weapon focus, giving examples of the effects on the witnesses. A large number of candidates also provided supporting or negating evidence that was applied to the reliability of eye-witness testimony, meaning they were able to achieve the higher mark bands. Some candidates gave a brief description of weapon focus and gave detailed descriptions of studies, however, did not relate these to the reliability of eye-witness testimony which meant they were restricted to the lower mark bands.