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**Examiners' Report**  
**Principal Examiner's Feedback**

**January 2022**

**Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level**  
**In Psychology (WPS04) Paper 01**  
**Clinical psychology and psychological skills**

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January 2022

Publications Code WPS04\_01\_2201\_ER

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## General Comments

Across the paper, candidates showed basic understanding of key terms and some theoretical concepts, along with some good mathematical skills, especially in descriptions of constructing a bar chart.

Difficulties tended to be in the long answer questions 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, few justified their arguments and evaluations, and very little supporting material was seen in the 20-mark essay.

Application for AO2 responses was good for some candidates, however it remains an area that posed problems with some candidates giving generic responses or simply using the name of a person in the stimulus rather than applying their knowledge to the stimulus material they are presented with.

A concern remains that some candidates appear to be conducting practical investigations that do not meet specification requirements or ethical considerations. Candidates must conduct a content analysis of secondary data. Centres are directed to the specification instructions to ensure that the practical investigations meet requirements:

*8.4.1 One practical research exercise to gather data relevant to topics covered in clinical psychology - a content analysis that explores attitudes to mental health. This practical research exercise must adhere to ethical principles in both content and intention.*

## Paper Summary

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

- 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.
- In the unseen 'key question' essay, candidates should apply their understanding of psychology from the course to the context in the given scenario, they should not just copy the information they are presented with as this is insufficient to show application of their knowledge and understanding.
- Within their extended open responses, candidates should give balanced arguments and exemplified points which lead to making informed conclusions or judgements (where appropriate to the taxonomy used) in relation to the question content.
- Candidates should write in full sentences in responses that require detailed information in the answers. Bullet pointed lists of key terms or brief phrases are not appropriate, particularly in the extended open response questions.
- 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.

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

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### **Sections A and B: Clinical Psychology**

#### **Q01a**

##### **Question Introduction**

This question assessed knowledge and understanding of one symptom and one feature of the chosen mental health disorder. Some candidates were able to identify an appropriate symptom, with few candidates able to describe this symptom well. Few candidates were able to give a feature of their disorder, often providing a second symptom. Where good answers were seen they were usually in relation to demographics, such as proportions of males and females, age of onset or diagnosis rates in a population.

##### **Examiner's Tip**

Features of a disorder may include demographic data in relation to cases, such as how many individuals within demographic groups may be diagnosed with the disorder; features associated with onset, such as the most common age or gender of onset; or data around the incidence of the disorder in society, for example changes over time, or percentages of individuals diagnosed in a given population.

#### **Q02a**

##### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to calculate a fraction. Most candidates achieved the mark for this question, and where errors were seen it was often due to not giving the answer in the lowest form.

##### **Examiner's Tip**

Mathematical skills of computation, expression and presentation of data assess a range of skills, and candidates should ensure that they follow the direction given in the question.

## **Q02b**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to calculate a percentage. Most candidates achieved this mark.

## **Q02c**

### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to explain two conclusions using the data provided. Most candidates achieved marks for this question, some were able to interpret the data and give the conclusion. Errors were usually due to a misinterpretation of the information.

## **Q02d**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to explain one weakness of Mitchell using a questionnaire in his study. Some candidates achieved the AO2 here for identifying a weakness applied to the scenario of Mitchell's research, although the AO3 justification of how or why this was a weakness was not always evident in candidates' answers. A number of candidates gave generic responses that were not related to the scenario.

## **Q03a**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to explain one strength of family therapy as a treatment for schizophrenia. Where candidates achieved a mark they were usually able to identify the strength and support this with how or why it was a strength for the AO3.

## **Q03b**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to analyse the use of drug therapy for schizophrenia. Some good responses were seen here where candidates gave both for and against responses to present an analysis, often supported by evidence. Where candidates made errors, it was often by giving a descriptive account of drug therapy rather than an analysis of this.

## **Q04a**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to describe abnormality using Figure 1. Most candidates achieved well on this question, demonstrating a good understanding of the distribution of abnormality.

## **Q04b**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to explain one weakness of statistical infrequency. Most candidates were able to access marks on this question, demonstrating a good understanding of the limitations of this.

## **Q05**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to describe the results and/or conclusions of the practical investigation. Many achieved well on this question. There were a proportion of responses where candidates had conducted inappropriate practical investigations and centres are reminded to meet the specification requirements of a content analysis using secondary data. It is not appropriate to undertake primary research with mental health patients, such as interviews or observations, and it is not appropriate to use diagnostic criteria to determine whether an individual has an eating disorder or depression.

## **Q06**

### **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 the function of neurotransmitters as an explanation of schizophrenia.

There were some good responses seen which was pleasing. A number of candidates utilised research evidence for and against the role of neurotransmitters, with a few developing their evaluations with alternative explanations, reductionism, the wider nature versus nurture debate and genetic predispositions.

Where the responses achieved lower marks, it was often due to multiple inaccuracies in the AO1 understanding of neurotransmitters. It was evident in some responses that the candidates did not know the role of neurotransmitters in relation to schizophrenia.

Some of the responses related solely to the effectiveness of drug treatments instead of evaluating the function of neurotransmitters.

### **Examiner's Tip**

Extended open response questions for 16 marks require candidates to engage in depth with the content being assessed. Their responses should link to the question presented and they should avoid generic, simplistic content presented in list like, or bullet pointed form.



## **Sections C, D and E: Psychological Skills**

### **Q07a**

#### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to explain how a researcher may attempt to overcome order effects when conducting psychological research. While some candidates achieved well on this question, it was evident in responses that did not achieve marks that the candidates had misconceptions of order effects and what these are.

### **Q07b**

#### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to explain how a researcher may attempt to overcome social desirability when conducting psychological research. While some candidates achieved well on this question, it was evident in responses that did not achieve marks that the candidates had misconceptions of social desirability, often confusing this with demand characteristics rather than a response bias.

### **Q08a**

#### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to give one closed question Daisy could use in her questionnaire. Most candidates gave a closed-ended question, and the main error seen were when candidates gave questions that were not closed-ended.

### **Q08b**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to identify the sampling technique in the scenario. Most candidates were able to accurately identify this.

### **Q08c**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for the data gathered by Daisy. Where candidates were able to calculate this they achieved well.

### **Q08d**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to interpret their Spearman's rank correlation coefficient in terms of the strength and direction for Daisy's investigation. Many candidates did not perform well on this question, often giving statements of significance instead of the strength and direction.

### **Q08e**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to explain one weakness with Daisy using a correlational research method. Many responses were generic and did not relate to the scenario. Candidates would benefit from practice on scenario questions to enable them to apply their understanding to the stimulus material presented in an examination.

### **Q09a**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to describe how Wayne could carry out his non-participant covert observation. Some candidates achieved well here. Where errors were seen it was often in generic responses about what an observation was rather than how Wayne might undertake this. Confusion was often seen when candidates referred to what he may record in his data collection, failing to include non-helping behaviours as part of the observation.

## **Q09b**

### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to explain one strength of Wayne using observation to investigate the pro-social helping behaviour of males and females. This was answered well by some candidates, but on the whole, many were unable to achieve AO3 as they did not exemplify or justify their strength here.

## **Q10**

### **Question Introduction**

This was a discuss AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO2 application question that required candidates to discuss the key question of the key question of whether psychological knowledge can help explain the onset and symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. They should give an equal emphasis between their underpinning knowledge/understanding and an application to the context of the given key question in their answer.

Some candidates were able to approach this question using relevant and accurate aspects of their psychology course content, for example from cognitive psychology, although some candidates only made basic reference to these ideas and did not develop the link in the scenario especially well.

Some candidates discussed causes of mental health disorders such as schizophrenia and gave a description of these rather than addressing the question posed.

Overall, only a few candidates were able to select appropriate theory/concepts/research relevant to the key question, and many gave limited understanding in the points they made from their chosen content.

### **Examiner's 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 actual 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 chunks' from the material presented to them.

## **Q11**

### **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 centred on the issue and debate of assessing how far psychological research has met ethical considerations. The question required candidates to demonstrate AO1 knowledge and understanding, and AO3 assessment points.

A few candidates responded well to this question with coherent and broad responses that presented arguments about ethical considerations including the BPS, HCPC and Animal ethics along with supporting evidence and wider issues and debates between the need for understanding behaviour versus the morality of harm or distress, but this was rare in responses. Some candidates supported their points with reference to some of the core studies, but very few gave a balanced responses showing that research can be ethical and tended to focus on unethical research. Very few attempted to assess ethical considerations as a whole and instead tended to focus on human participation. Limitations were seen in many responses where candidates gave descriptive content about an unethical study, rather than the breadth and depth from across the course to debate how far ethical considerations have been met.

### **Examiner's 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. 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 from across the course and accurately utilise these for the specific direction of the question taxonomy to give a balanced response.

