AQA

General Certificate of Education

Psychology 1186
Specification B

Unit 1 (PSYB1)   Introducing Psychology

Report on the Examination
2010 examination - June series

Unit 1: (PSYB1) Introducing Psychology

General

Some good responses were seen this series where candidates had clearly been well prepared. Top band answers that were concise, detailed and coherent were seen in a number of scripts which was pleasing. As in previous series however, there are a number of general points for centres to note. First, it is imperative that candidates do not write beyond the allocated space in their answer booklets; where candidates wish to continue an answer or re-write an answer because they have made a mistake, then additional space is provided at the back of the answer booklet. Candidates must also label their answers clearly. Some expertise was required by many examiners where candidates had simply written a response but had not indicated which question they were answering. As stated on the front of the examination paper, black pen or ink is to be used as it is extremely difficult to read responses where candidates have not adhered to this requirement. Finally, it was noted by many examiners that answers to a number of extended writing questions – both 1(d) and 2(d) – were merely rote-learned and thus failed to address the specific requirements of the question set.

Section A: Key Approaches and Biopsychology

Question 1

(a)(i)   This question differentiated well between candidates. Where candidates clearly understood the term self actualisation, some excellent responses were seen. However, a number of candidates focused solely on the concept of self and issues associated with self-esteem, thereby limiting marks.

(a)(ii)   Many candidates failed to take note of the instruction to explain **one** problem with the concept of self actualisation. Many answers merely listed several problems thereby limiting marks. Better answers focused on the problem of measurement or achievability.

(b)(i)   The majority of candidates were able to identify an appropriate model used by cognitive psychologists, with the information-processing model being the most popular.

(b)(ii)   This question differentiated well between candidates. Better answers focused on the use of models to represent and help understand the processes involved in memory, for example. Poorer answers simply suggested that the 'models showed how the brain worked' or similar.

(c)(i)   Most candidates were able to provide an appropriate definition of a defence mechanism.

(c)(ii)   The most popular defence mechanisms were repression and denial. However, the outline of these mechanisms was at times confused. Credit was given to candidates who used an appropriate example as part of their outline. A number of candidates rather worryingly provided a biological fight or flight response which obviously was not creditworthy.

(d)   Some good answers were seen in response to this question with clear focus on appropriate knowledge, evidence and evaluation. These answers were detailed, coherent and expressed clearly. However, there are still some misconceptions regarding the behaviourist approach. As an example, some candidates stated that the behaviourist approach *only* studies animals and then went on to contradict themselves by describing the success of token economy programmes in prisons. Confusion was also seen with regard to the principles of both operant and classical conditioning. Perhaps because the question specifically asked candidates to refer to classical and operant conditioning in their answer, some candidates completely neglected the more general features of the behaviourist approach, for example, research methods. This meant that a number of answer were quite limited in scope.

Section B: Gender Development

Question 2

(a)   Many candidates were able to provide a correct definition of sex-role stereotyping by referring to expectations/attitudes/beliefs. However, many candidates focused on Abbie as part of their answer, with no mention of Jemima, thereby limiting marks.

(b)   Some candidates scored well on this question by making appropriate reference to methodology of Martin and Halverson's study. However, some candidates described the aim, results and conclusion which the question did not require.

(c)(i)   The majority of candidates identified Mead's study as an appropriate study of cultural variation. However, a number of candidates incorrectly identified Imperato-McGinley's study of the Batista Boys or Money's study of Bruce Reimer.

(c)(ii) Many candidates failed to interpret the question correctly. Candidates simply described the method and results of the study hence scoring no marks. Where candidates did evaluate the study identified in (c)(i), some good responses were seen in relation to ethnocentrism.

(d)   This question was not as well answered as 1(d). That said, some good responses were seen in which candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of biological explanations of gender. As in previous series, candidates were able to make appropriate reference to hormones, typical chromosome patterns and atypical chromosome syndromes. It should be noted however, that where many candidates struggled to make useful reference to at least one other explanation of gender development. Many candidates simply described, for example, the psychodynamic explanations without using the information comparison with and/or evaluation of biological explanations. These responses gained few, if any, AO2 marks.

Section C: Research Methods

Question 3

(a)   It is unfortunate that the axis labels for weight were demonstrably inappropriate, however, the question simply required knowledge of the direction of the correlation and a general understanding of what is meant by the term. No in-depth or meaningful analysis of the relationship between the two variables was required. Answers did not

suggest evidence of confusion over axis labels and any inaccuracies that did not occur involved candidates incorrectly identifying a positive correlation. Most of candidates correctly identified a negative correlation and gave an appropriate explanation about the relationship.

(b)   Many candidates scored two marks for this question. They were able to write a hypothesis with correctly operationalised variables. However, candidates scored no marks where the hypothesis was written as an aim or as a question.

(c)   Many candidates were able to state what is meant by a pilot study. However, few related the use of a pilot study to the use of questionnaires in the stem, thereby limiting marks.

(d)(i)   The majority of candidates were able to write an appropriate statement that could be used to assess a person's attitude towards healthy eating.

(d)(ii) Many candidates were able to score two marks for this question in explaining a disadvantage with the use of questionnaires. Some good answers were seen in relation to social desirability bias. However, some responses provided more than one disadvantage none of which were explained, thereby limiting marks.

(e)(i)   The majority of candidates were able to relay what is meant by opportunity sampling. However, some answers were rather vague and were not creditworthy. Candidates must be able to clearly define terms that are stated in the specification.

(e)(ii) The majority of candidates were able to name one other sampling method with random sampling being the most popular choice.

(e)(iii) For those candidates who named random sampling in (e)(ii), appropriate reasons for why this method is better than opportunity sampling were raised. However, a number of candidates simply gave an advantage of the alternative sampling method and failed to link this advantage explicitly to opportunity sampling, again limiting marks.

(f)   As in previous series, candidates had problem identifying ethical issues. A common pattern however, is to fail to link the ethical issue explicitly to the stem. Some candidates gave quite generic answers, thereby limiting marks. That said, there were some good answers in relation to the issues of consent and confidentiality.

(g)   Many candidates were able to state that an experiment measures cause and effect whereas a correlation measures the relationship between variables.

(h)   The discussion of the value of case studies was done well by the majority of candidates. Many responses referred to the value of gaining rich, detailed qualitative data. Candidates were awarded marks for identifying strengths of the case study method, limitations of the method, or for a combination of both.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website: http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html