



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
June 2011**

**Psychology B**

**PSYB3**

**(Specification 2185)**

**Unit 3: Child Development and Applied Options**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **Unit 3: (PSYB3) Child Development and Applied Options**

### ***General***

Most candidates selected topics appropriately and indicated the question numbers correctly in their answer booklets, although many failed to adhere to the instruction to leave at least two lines between their answer to each question. As in previous series, the most popular option topics were Schizophrenia and Mood Disorders and Forensic Psychology. Some of the unanticipated extended writing questions posed difficulties for those candidates who were keen to present pre-prepared responses but were unable to tailor their material to a more searching and specific question. The consequences for performance will be discussed separately in relation to the relevant questions, but it is worth noting that candidates who can think on their feet and use what they know to construct a well-focused answer are always going to be better able to access the higher mark bands. Not surprisingly, those who take a general 'write an essay on...' approach are likely to do far less well. In questions 10 and 15, both of which required candidates to focus on differences between theories, candidates often seemed to misinterpret the question as a general comparison question and offered lengthy discussions of similarities.

Finally, it was more than ever apparent this series that candidates were struggling to present accurate and coherent responses. Often the quality of written communication was so poor that meaning was woefully obscured. As experienced teachers themselves, examiners were frequently distressed to see how candidates, who had presumably been well prepared, offered content which was located in the right area, but in written expression which was so impoverished that what actually appeared on the page was not sensible and therefore not worthy of credit.

### ***Section A Child Development***

#### **Topic: Social Development**

Most candidates could offer a consequence of privation, although often three or four were noted with none of them elaborated. Answers to questions 02 and 03 tended to be very well done. Genie was the basis for most answers to question 04, with the Koluchova twins also in evidence. Although most candidates identified a relevant case for the first mark, many failed to 'discuss' for the other two marks, instead presenting long, detailed descriptions of the case. Many responses to question 05 were poorly focused, often because candidates chose to write about sex differences in friendship. There was also a tendency to misunderstand the question as being about friendship in general, rather than children's understanding of friendship. Whilst the difference might have seemed insignificant to candidates, it did mean that those who wrote mainly about number of friends and play patterns changing with age did not focus on the issue of understanding sufficiently to access the top mark band.

#### **Topic: Cognitive Development**

The concepts of assimilation and accommodation again presented problems. Many answers were muddled at best and some were just the wrong way round. Answers embedded in examples were credited. Most candidates correctly identified class inclusion in question 07, although rather fewer could offer two suitable questions for question 08. Common incorrect answers were 'How many bricks are there?' and 'How many red bricks are there?' Answers to question 09 tended to be well done, with issues such as wording of questions and task

unfamiliarity forming the basis of some good responses. Occasionally, candidates gave detailed descriptions of Piaget's methods but failed to identify the source of confusion explicitly, with the result that credit was limited. Good answers to question 10 were rarely seen, not least because many candidates seemed unable even to describe the information processing approach to cognitive development. Responses often consisted of generalised descriptions of the information processing approach in psychology, without even the slightest reference to cognitive development. Alternatively, answers began with a statement about the computer analogy, followed by lengthy expositions of Piaget's and/or Vygotsky's theories. Fortunately there were some candidates who dealt very well with the question, offering sound descriptions, particularly of Siegler's work, and well-considered discussions with the emphasis on differences between information processing and other approaches.

### **Topic: Moral Development**

This was the least popular topic in Section A. Answers to question 11 were usually well done with many scoring full marks. Responses to question 12 did not always score high marks, with some candidates unable to recognise how Eisenberg's dilemmas were more realistic and within the range of people's own experience than those used by Kohlberg. Perhaps because of the 'discuss' instruction, some candidates tried, usually in vain, to argue that Kohlberg's dilemmas were better than those used by Eisenberg. Whilst most candidates could identify the stage of moral reasoning shown by Andy, far fewer correctly identified the 'punishment stage' in respect of Jack's comment. Some candidates scored no marks because they identified levels rather than named stages. Whilst the majority of candidates could explain why confidentiality was a problem in the study described, some failed to gain the mark because they simply outlined the issue without offering any application. Answers to question 15 were generally reasonably well done, although the instruction to explain how Piaget's work differed from at least one other theory was sometimes ignored. As noted in the general introduction, explaining differences is not the same as comparing. Candidates who failed to focus on differences could not access the higher mark bands.

## ***Section B Applied Options***

### **Topic: Cognition and Law**

This topic continues to be a popular option, and, as in previous series, responses tended to be of a good standard. Most candidates gained marks for knowledge of the two line-up procedures and could explain the implications of both for accuracy and reliability of identification. A small but significant minority of candidates confused the two, which meant that it was then very difficult to award any marks for this question. Question 17 tended to be quite a good discriminator in that most candidates could explain the term, but rather fewer addressed the second part of the question, neglecting to offer explicit differences between flashbulb memories and ordinary memories. Answers to question 18 varied enormously. Some candidates scored very highly here with responses that were well organised and used evidence appropriately in the discussion. At the lower end of the scale answers were quite muddled, especially where candidates tried to draw conclusions about what Capgras and Prosopagnosia cases show regarding face recognition. Descriptions of studies sometimes lacked accuracy; with terms such as recall, recognition, identification, knowing and seeing used interchangeably and therefore inappropriately in some circumstances.

## **Topic: Schizophrenia and Mood Disorders**

Candidates who failed to gain full marks on question 19 normally did so because they referred to symptoms that were not behavioural, for example 'delusions of power'. Most candidates fared reasonably well on question 20, with a variety of problems gaining credit. Unfortunately some answers consisted merely of lists of several problems, none of which were discussed. The stem sentence in question 21 was included on the paper to deter candidates from simply stating that SAD was due to lack of exposure to daylight, however several answers consisted of nothing more. Better candidates referred to the role of biological mechanisms although there was widespread confusion amongst candidates who suggested that exposure to light (rather than darkness) stimulates the production of melatonin. Question 22 tended in the main to elicit quite poor responses, many of which consisted of discussion of the biological and/or socio-cultural explanations of schizophrenia. It was quite rare to see good descriptions of the cognitive explanation and even those answers which were focused on cognitive psychology often strayed into discussions of mood disorders.

## **Topic: Stress and Stress Management**

Approximately half of the candidates could correctly name two types of social support; most usually these were B, instrumental support and D, esteem support. Unsuccessful candidates tended to try to match the comments to problem-focused or emotion-focused strategies. Some candidates left question 24 blank but many were able to explain that the presence of other people in times of stress can sometimes be a hindrance rather than a help. Question 25 was a good differentiator, not least because some candidates chose to describe non-behavioural techniques. At the other end of the scale there were some excellent detailed descriptions of biofeedback and systematic desensitisation. Some candidates strayed pointlessly into discussion and evaluation. Answers to question 26 were credited in respect of the technique described in question 25 so even those candidates who had not gained credit in question 25 could still gain a mark for a relevant problem. Question 27 enabled stronger candidates to use what material they had to produce organised and well-constructed discussions. Some of the top end responses were a pleasure to read. Candidates could gain at least some marks through reference to research, although sometimes these answers lacked focus on illness. As an example, candidates sometimes referred to the Friedman and Rosenman research into stress and personality type, but omitted critical information about links to illnesses such as CHD and cancer.

## **Topic: Substance Abuse**

Candidates who described Prochaska's model in common sense terms without naming any of the stages were limited to two marks. For full marks it was also essential to explain the cyclical nature of the model, something that a fair number of candidates failed to include. Most candidates identified fear arousal correctly in question 29, although a significant number did not gain the identification mark because they referred to the technique as 'shock tactics' instead. Unfortunately, some candidates appeared to have misread the question and offered long descriptions rather than discussion. Better responses discussed the inverted U theory with explanations about effectiveness supported by references to evidence. Most candidates recognised question 30 as a trigger to discuss biological explanations and alternatives. There were some excellent discussions in which candidates debated the extent to which biology and other explanations might account for substance abuse. It was also interesting to see how this question triggered some discussion of the implications of this debate, for example, whether or not people who abuse substances might be culpable or able to change their behaviour.

## **Topic: Forensic Psychology**

Candidates did not always seem to understand the need to include psychological material in their answers to question 31. Many responses simply paraphrased the stem or offered common sense speculation about reasons why people might turn to crime. The more successful answers were those where candidates clearly outlined learning theory concepts such as identification, modelling and reinforcement, which they then linked to some aspect of the stem. Answers to question 32 were often limited for one of two reasons. Firstly, as has happened on previous occasions, less astute candidates offered no outline of the procedures involved in social skills training, instead referring to its general purpose. Secondly, and again not unusually, there was widespread confusion between social skills training and anger management. It should be noted here that evaluation marks are only awarded where candidates justify their evaluative point. For example, it is not sufficient to simply state that the technique is effective, not effective, quick, time-consuming, long-lasting, short-lived, expensive or cheap without any explanation or justification. Question 33 elicited some good responses in which candidates showed knowledge of offender profiling procedures and were able to discuss its usefulness in the light of evidence. Stronger candidates cited empirical studies in which the ability of trained profilers was compared with that of various other control groups. It was less heartening to see answers where 'evidence' consisted of nothing more than rambling accounts of lurid case details. Attempts to keep focus on the question were laudable, although sometimes this meant that candidates with sparse knowledge reiterated the Mario's and Robbie's sentiments repeatedly throughout.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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