Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

October 2020

Pearson Edexcel

GCE Psychology 9PS0/02

Paper 2: Applications of Psychology

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

The paper provided a range of question types over two sections, the compulsory clinical section and the topic section where candidates had to choose one topic out of criminological psychology, child psychology and health psychology. The most popular topic was criminological psychology followed by child and then health psychology. There were not many papers that answered either the child or health sections in this series. Many candidates showed good psychological knowledge across all areas, and there were very few unanswered questions, with most candidates attempting all the questions indicating that candidates are managing the time.

Some candidates did not explain strengths and weaknesses across the paper, centres should remind candidates that explain questions need a justification/exemplification. Applying the context within an answer is also missing in some answers. Candidates should be reminded of the fact that A02 questions require application to details given in the context throughout their answer.

Some candidates were able to gain strong marks through demonstrating their psychological knowledge in terms of the requirements of the command word. Other candidates did not always understand the requirements of the command word; candidates should be referred to the taxonomy of command words in appendix 6 of the specification. This was noticeable in some the extended open response questions of 8 marks or above, where there was sometimes isolated knowledge and understanding. The A03 points were sometimes not developed.

The remainder of this Examiner Report will focus on each individual question and specific examples with the aim of highlighting areas of good practice and some common errors which can be used to help prepare candidates for future 9PS0/02 examinations.

Clinical

Question 1
The first question on the paper required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of features of schizophrenia. The best answers were clearly able to describe three features of schizophrenia. There was a range of numbers given for the rates of schizophrenia and some were not clear about whether this related to specific countries or the world. Those who answered about the features of gender and mortality rate were usually accurate. Many answers focussed on symptoms rather than features.

Question 2a
Most answered this AO2 question well, and were able to give an appropriate open question that was clearly linked to the scenario. A few answers gave a closed question and then added How after the closed question. This does not make it an open question.

Question 2b

Candidates had to state why a chi squared was used by applying information from the scenario. Those who knew the reason for using a chi square test got both marks. However, a lot of answers did not provide accurate reasons for using this statistical test.

Question 2c

Those candidates who could accurately read the table were often able to gain both marks for explaining whether the results were significant or not. Some candidates did not read the question carefully and therefore selected the incorrect critical value.

Question 2d

This question assessed AO2 and AO3, so candidates were required to apply the strengths and weaknesses to the scenario as well as explain them. The very best answers were able to do this. In a lot of cases there was a lack of application to details from the scenario, so the answers were generic and could not gain credit. Some answers showed little understanding of what a thematic analysis is, therefore were unable to explain a strength or weakness of a thematic analysis. Candidates should be reminded that if the answer requires them to apply details from a given scenario then just repeating the name is not enough, there needs to be other details from the scenario as well.

Question 3a

Those who knew the study were able to gain at least one of the AO1 marks for stating the correct aim, and several answers gained both marks. A few answers gave the aims of a different study to the one named.

Question 3b

This question required candidates to explain a strength and a weakness of secondary data as it is used in clinical psychology. Very few answers explained the strength and the weakness in terms of clinical psychology so failed to answer the question that was asked.

Candidates should read the questions carefully to ensure they are giving an answer to the question that is on the paper.

Question 4

This essay used the command verb 'discuss' and required candidate to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of neurotransmitters as an explanation of schizophrenia (AO1) and then apply that knowledge and understanding to the context (AO2). The best answers were able to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding and have sustained application throughout, providing a well-developed, logical and balanced discussion using a variety of details from the context. Weaker answers often showed accurate knowledge and understanding; however, the application was often partially developed at best. Some answers also included AO3 points which were not required for this essay.

Candidates should know what assessment objectives are required for the different types of command verb used for essays.

Question 5
This essay required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the validity of classification systems as well as assess the validity of classification systems. The AO1 knowledge and understanding was better than the AO3 assessment. Better answers were able to demonstrate both. Many answers failed to offer assessment which went beyond some development of form, with some answers just making statements about whether classification systems were valid and failing to develop these in any way.

Question 6
The most common disorder was anorexia, closely followed by unipolar depression and finally OCD. There was a range of different therapies, with CBT being the most common therapy written about. Candidates had to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a psychological treatment for their chosen disorder (AO1) and evaluate that treatment (AO3). Very few candidates wrote about a biological treatment showing that they had read the question. The best answers were able to demonstrate accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding and show well-developed logical evaluation that showed an awareness of competing arguments. However, some answers failed to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding and gave very little detail about what was involved in the treatment/therapy that was written about. Other answers failed to provide little or no evaluation

Criminal

Question 7a
Most answers were accurately able to state the aim of their practical. Very few answers gave the aim of a practical from another area of the specification.

Question 7b
The best answers were able to accurately describe their procedure for their criminological practical, and write enough to access all four marks. A lot of answers could have been about any practical that had been conducted throughout the course rather than specific to the criminological practical.

Question 8a
This question was well answered with the vast majority of candidates able to identify the correct sampling methods used by Brie.

Question 8b
There was a range of marks given for this question, with the best answers able to accurately give the title of the graph, label the axes and plot the data. Some answers thought that the data was how likely someone was to commit a crime rather than the perception of the participants. Some answer did not accurately label both axes, often just putting condition A and condition B with no explanation of what those conditions were.

Question 8c
This question required candidates to compare independent groups and matched pairs. A lot of answers failed to understand the demands of the term compare, often giving basic statement describing independent groups and matched pairs but not offering any comparison. Some answers thought matched pairs was repeated measures.

Question 9
There were a range of answers given for this question which required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understating of brain injury and aggression and then apply that knowledge and understanding to the context. The best answers were able to demonstrate accurate and through knowledge and understanding as well as sustained application using details from the context. Some answers were able to provide knowledge and understanding of brain injury in relation to anti-social/criminal behaviour, but they failed to apply this to the context. Others were able to link to details from the context but provided isolated elements of knowledge and understanding.

Question 10
The best answers were able to demonstrate their skills in all three assessment objectives, as required by the question. A range of factors were used including appearance, race, accent and gender. The best answers showed accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding and were able to apply different aspects of the context throughout the essay as well as displaying well-developed logical arguments that led to a balanced judgement. Some answers had AO3 statements that lacked development of form, whilst others demonstrated isolated knowledge and understanding by stating what factors affected jury decision making but not going any further into how or why they did so. Some candidates did not read the question properly and wrote about pre-trial publicity rather than characteristics of the defendant.

Child

Question 11a
Most answers were accurately able to state the aim of their practical. Very few answers gave the aim of a practical from another area of the specification.

Question 11b
The best answers were able to accurately describe their procedure for their child psychology practical, and write enough to access all four marks. A lot of answers could have been about any practical that had been conducted throughout the course rather than specific to the criminological practical.

Question 12a
This question was well answered with the vast majority of candidates able to identify the correct sampling method used by Brie.

Question 12b
There was a range of marks given for this question, with the best answers able to accurately give the title of the graph, label the axes and plot the data. Some answer did not accurately label both axes, often just putting condition A and condition B with no explanation of what those conditions were.

Question 12c
This question required candidates to compare independent groups and matched pairs. A lot of answers failed to understand the demands of the term compare, often giving basic statement describing independent groups and matched pairs but not offering any comparison. Some answers thought matched pairs was repeated measures.

Question 13
There were a range of answers given for this question which required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understating of a non-biological explanation of autism and then apply that knowledge and understanding to the context. The best answers were able to demonstrate accurate and through knowledge and understanding as well as sustained application using details from the context. Some answers were able to provide knowledge and understanding of a non-biological explanation of autism, but they failed to apply this to the context. Others were able to link to details from the context but provided isolated elements of knowledge and understanding.

Question 10
The best answers were able to demonstrate their skills in all three assessment objectives, as required by the question. The best answers showed accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding and were able to apply different aspects of the context throughout the essay as well as displaying well-developed logical arguments that led to a balanced judgement. Some answers had AO3 statements that lacked development of form, whilst others demonstrated isolated knowledge and understanding by stating what effects day care may have, but not going any further into how or why they did so. Some candidates did not read the question properly and wrote attachment theory rather than the effects of day care.

Health

Question 15a
Most answers were accurately able to state the aim of their practical. Very few answers gave the aim of a practical from another area of the specification.

Question 15b
The best answers were able to accurately describe their procedure for their health psychology practical and write enough to access all four marks. A lot of answers could have been about any practical that had been conducted throughout the course rather than specific to the criminological practical.

Question 16a
This question was well answered with the vast majority of candidates able to identify the correct sampling methods used by Brie.

Question 16b
There was a range of marks given for this question, with the best answers able to accurately give the title of the graph, label the axes and plot the data. Some answers did not accurately label both axes, often just putting condition A and condition B with no explanation of what those conditions were.

Question 16c
This question required candidates to compare independent groups and matched pairs. A lot of answers failed to understand the demands of the term compare, often giving basic statement describing independent groups and matched pairs but not offering any comparison. Some answers thought matched pairs was repeated measures.

Question 17
There were a range of answers given for this question which required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understating a learning theory and addiction to alcohol and then apply that knowledge and understanding to the context. The best answers were able to demonstrate accurate and through knowledge and understanding as well as sustained application using details from the context. Some answers were able to provide knowledge and understanding of a learning theory and addiction to alcohol, but they failed to apply this to the context. Others were able to link to details from the context but provided isolated elements of knowledge and understanding.

Question 18
The best answers were able to demonstrate their skills in all three assessment objectives, as required by the question. The best answers showed accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding and were able to apply different aspects of the context throughout the essay as well as displaying well-developed logical arguments that led to a balanced judgement. Some answers had AO3 statements that lacked development of form, whilst others demonstrated isolated knowledge and understanding.