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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel

GCE Psychology 9PS0/01

Paper 1: Foundations in Psychology

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Introduction

The examination structure provided a range of question types over five sections, with the final extended responses requiring candidates to address issues and debates. Many candidates demonstrated some basic psychological knowledge and understanding in this examination.

Most candidates made attempts at all questions, which was very positive to see. However, some candidates did not respond to the later essay questions and may benefit for future series in practicing timing.

Application remains a general area for improvements for the AO2 questions, although this has developed since the previous examinations, some candidates are giving generic responses that are not applied to the context giving generic answers.

There was some evidence of confusion with regards to the 8-mark essays where Discuss was used, with a number of candidates presenting an 'Evaluate' response, it would benefit candidates to understand the requirements of the taxonomy words and question types.

Most candidates completed the mathematical calculations reasonably, however, there remains some confusions with regards the use of critical values tables and reasoning for the choice of a statistical test.

It would benefit candidates to focus on the methodology in relation to the question, for example in Question 6 very few candidates answered the question given in relation to social psychology, instead giving rote learned strengths and weaknesses.

The remainder of this Examiner Report will focus on each individual question with the aim of highlighting areas of good practice and some common errors which can be used to help prepare candidates for future 9PS0_01 examinations.

Question 1a

There was some confusion between prejudice and discrimination evident in a number of answers, with students often giving a description of discriminative actions rather than prejudiced beliefs. A number of candidates gave underdeveloped responses that did not demonstrate understanding.

Question 1b

Few candidates were able to explain the impact of personality in this question, with minimal links between personality and prejudice being evident. Where candidates did achieve marks the responses usually referred to authoritarian personality, although the link to prejudice was quite basic and very little AO3 justification was seen.

Question 1c

Few candidates were able to explain the impact of culture in this question, with minimal links between culture and prejudice being evident. A number of candidates confused prejudice and discrimination. Very little AO3 justification was seen.

Question 2

Most candidates were able to show some good application of realistic conflict theory to the scenario given in the question and fewer generic responses were seen here than in previous exams which was a positive. At times this was underdeveloped and as a result some students did not achieve all the marks available here. A few candidates confused realistic conflict and social identity theory in their answers.

Question 3

A large number of the responses to this question demonstrated some good understanding of questionnaires, although not many responses were linked to the field of social psychology research. Very few candidates made direct links to social psychology, instead giving points about the use of questionnaires in a more general sense.

Question 4a

Some candidates achieved well on this question. Where difficulties were seen it was largely due to generic responses that were not applied to the scenario. Some candidates were able to make the link between Saima and a classroom schema, but often did not develop this description sufficiently for a second mark.

Question 4b

A number of the responses seen were generic here. Where some AO2 application to Saima was present, the strength or weakness was rarely justified to achieve the AO3 mark available.

Question 5a

This question was poorly answered, with few candidates understanding what a stratified sample is or how you would gather a stratified sample of the high school students. Many candidates described volunteer sampling or opportunity sampling here.

Question 5b

Few candidates were able to give the correct statistical test here.

Question 6

Overall, candidates found this question very challenging. Very little evidence was seen of understanding of the multi-store model, with limitations also evident in the evaluations. There was often confusion between the multi-store model and working memory, and where supporting evidence was used the links to the theory were limited, with a number of confusions seen in any case study evidence that had been used in evaluative points.

Question 7a

Some candidates were able to achieve all four available marks for their calculations. Where candidates failed to achieve marks, it was often the application of the formula that was inaccurate.

Question 7b

A few candidates were able to identify the correct lowest level of significance in this question. A number of students were unclear as to the use of critical values tables and gave generic, rote learned statements of significance.

Question 8

Some candidates were able to give a strength and weakness of an adoption study, but overall this question was poorly answered. Many candidates referred to a twin study, and a number of candidate responses contained limited details and generic points rather than a specific strength and weakness of the adoption study they had learned.

Question 9

Some candidates were able to make connections between hormones and the scenario, however the understanding of hormones was weak, with little understanding shown of these. A number of candidates evaluated the role of hormones rather than undertaking a discussion of these and how they may explain Rachel's aggression in the scenario given.

Question 10a

Few candidates were able to apply the Scientific Procedures Act (1986) to the scenario given, but this was often limited. Some candidates gave generic responses here, and there were a number of candidates who were unclear about animal research in psychology and the considerations that may need to be taken into account.

Question 10b

A number of candidates achieved partial marks here, although some candidates were able to give a fully operationalised directional (one-tailed) hypothesis for this question.

Question 10c

Some candidates were able to identify a strength of the research in terms of reliability which was usually applied to the context, however very few were able to develop this to justify how or why this was a strength in terms of reliability.

Question 10d

Some candidates were able to give an improvement that was in relation to the context, but few were able to develop this for the AO3 mark to say how or why this was an improvement to the validity of the research. A number of candidates gave a weakness as opposed to an improvement.

Question 11

Some basic understanding of the classic study by Watson and Rayner (1920) was seen, but this was often quite limited in responses and more often than not the responses were generic points. This was particularly evident in the evaluation skills, where very limited generic statements about generalisability or reliability were often used.

Question 12

Overall the responses to this question were quite basic. It was evident that candidates were unsure at times what constituted a practical issue. A number of candidates presented an evaluation of their social psychology investigation rather than a discussion of the practical issues they had considered in the designing and implementing of the social psychology investigation.

Question 13

Some good responses were seen for this question. Candidates often drew from their understanding of the key questions, along with a wider application such as the treatments for phobias. It was common to see application to dyslexia, eye-witness testimony, teaching children, amnesia, media violence, and fear of flying. Where student often struggled here it was with the underpinning knowledge of the theoretical aspects of cognitive and learning theory, and there was often only a vague or basic link to the actual psychological knowledge that is being then used for society. The evaluative skills were also underdeveloped at times, with candidates not always supporting their points, for example little supporting research evidence was seen here.

Recommendations for future students

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

- Some candidates may still benefit from a deeper understanding of the mathematical components in the specification, for example, working on the skills of explaining the choices for statistical tests.
- Candidates should clearly apply their understanding of psychology to the context in a given scenario, they should not just give a name or single word as this is insufficient as an application skill
- Generic points should be avoided, candidates should be able to give specific responses that are clearly linked to the question content and taxonomy, for example when giving a strength of a study it should be clear how this relates to the specific study in the question.
- 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, but this must be clearly connected to the concept they are evaluating or expanding.