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# **Examiners' Report**

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2017

Pearson Edexcel International GCE in  
Psychology (WPS02)  
Paper 01 Biological Psychology,  
Learning Theories and Development

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## **General Comments**

Candidates engaged with the majority of the questions showing a lot of psychological knowledge in their answers. There were very few blank pages, and candidates seemed to be able to manage their time well and attempt all the questions including the three essays at the end.

To improve their answers candidates need to be able to justify their answers when it comes to explain questions, as many could gain the identification mark but then failed to offer any explanation. There was also an issue with generic points, especially when it came to strengths or weaknesses of research methods that were in a context, these need to be linked to specifics from the context. Candidates struggled with the justify question, often failing to give two points that justified an improvement. Most candidates said why there was a weakness of the original study rather than elaborate on the reasons for the improvement they suggested.

However, most candidates were able to link answers to scenarios when they were given, including in the essays, though some struggled with aspects of this such as research methods questions that need to be linked to the scenario. It would help candidates to know what the different command verbs expect in the form of an answer, especially those used in essays, as a lot of candidates were limited in what marks they could gain due to lack of conclusion or judgements where they were needed.

## **Paper Summary**

- When questions ask candidates to justify candidates need to offer two points that are justification rather than one descriptive point and one justification point.
- When questions ask candidates to explain candidates need to offer some justification for their answer.
- Focus on what the question is asking so if it is asking for an improvement candidates should not write about a weakness.
- Know the skills involved for the command words that may be used for essays rather than just describing and evaluation.
- Include conclusions or judgement within essays in order to gain the higher levels.

A more detailed analysis of individual questions and answers follows.

## Comments on Individual Questions:

### Q01a

#### Question Introduction

The majority of candidates were accurately able to identify the fact that it was a negative correlation, and then explain this in terms of the number of days absent going up and exam grades going down. The better candidates were also able to state what the negative correlation was so linking both points to the context and gaining both marks. Some candidates failed to explain the point about the days absent going up and exam grades going down so could not access the second mark.

#### Examiner Comment

(a) Explain the type of correlation the researchers found.

(2)

Since the correlation is  $-0.39$ , it suggests that the correlation is a negative correlation. This means that, as one co-variable increases (e.g. student's final examination results), the other co-variable decreases (e.g. total number of days absent of the student).

This gains 2 marks.

1 mark for saying it is  $-0.39$  suggesting it is a negative correlation, the candidate has clearly linked this part of their answer to the context.

1 mark for saying as the students final exam results increase the total number of days absent decreases. This is the reverse of what was written in the context but is acceptable.

#### Examiner Tip

If given figures in a context that is with a question include those figures in answers.

## Q01b

### Question Introduction

The better candidates were able to gain both marks for this question, clearly understanding the reason for using Spearman's rank test. Candidates who gained one mark often did so for stating that Jared was looking for a relationship. They then either left the second reason blank or repeated themselves. A minority of candidates failed to gain any marks for this question.

### Examiner Comment

(b) State **two** reasons why the researchers used a Spearman's rank test.

(2)

- 1 The data is above ~~an~~ ordinal level.  
e.g. Students' final examination results are scores  
that can be compared in terms of amount.
- 2 The researchers wish to find the significance of  
a ~~correlation~~ relationship between results and total  
number of days absent.

This gains 2 marks.

1 mark for saying the data is above ordinal level and 1 mark for saying they are looking for a relationship.

### Examiner Tip

When answering these types of question candidates need to ensure they are not repeating what they have already written using different words, such as saying they are looking for a relationship and then saying they are looking for a correlation.

## Q01c

### Question Introduction

The best candidates were accurately able to state that the results were significant and then use the critical values and the calculated values to gain the second mark. A large minority of candidates failed to score any marks for this question as they thought it was not significant as there was a minus sign in front of the calculated value and therefore said that the critical value was higher.

### Examiner Comment

- (c) Describe whether the results of the researchers' investigation were significant at  $p < 0.05$  for a directional (one-tailed) test.

The critical value table can be found in the formulae and statistics table at the front of this paper.

(2)

For a directional hypothesis, at  $P < 0.05$  level with  $n = 20$ , the critical value is 0.299. Disregarding the negative sign, the researcher's observed value is 0.39. Since  $0.39 > 0.299$ , the results were significant.

This gains 2 marks. 1 mark for saying that 0.39 is more than 0.299, showing that they have accurately read the critical value table and understood that the minus sign can be ignored. 1 mark for saying that the results are significant.

### Examiner Tip

Candidates need to know that when using a calculated value for Spearman's rank that they need to look at the numbers only and ignore the minus sign when deciding if the results were significant or not.

## Q02a

### Question Introduction

The most common hormone described was testosterone. Only the very best candidates were able to gain both marks for this question, as they were able to offer two, different, descriptive points about the effects of testosterone on aggression in males. The majority of candidates gained one mark for saying higher levels of testosterone led to higher levels of aggression, but they failed to add anything else. There was a lot of repetition, saying testosterone affected aggression and then saying high levels of testosterone affected aggression so candidates were limited to one mark.

## Q02b

### Question Introduction

The best candidates were able to gain all four marks. They clearly identified a strength and weakness and then went on to explain both. Most candidates gained two marks, one mark each for the identification of the strength and weakness but they failed to explain why they were a strength or weakness so could not gain the second mark. A very small minority of candidates failed to focus their answer on research into the influence of hormones on aggression and so failed to answer the question that was asked.

### Examiner Comment

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(b) Explain **one** strength and **one** weakness of research into the influence of hormones on aggressive behaviour.

(4)

Strength

Research into hormones is strictly scientific, therefore the data is quantifiable. It is easier to establish relation between IV and DV.

Moreover, it is objective meaning that the ~~data~~ it ~~is~~ is not interpreted by researcher but the levels of hormones give the answer itself.   
 therefore there is small possibility that researcher bias will ~~not~~ occur.

Weakness

Influence of hormones on aggression is significant yet it is a reductionist approach. Aggression may be caused by many environmental factors such as being exposed to aggressive behaviour as a child.

This gains 4 marks.

The strength is clearly identified as quantifiable and scientific, and the candidate goes on to explain this in terms of objective data and no researcher bias.

The weakness is also clearly identified as a reductionist approach and this is also explained in terms of environmental factors such as being exposed to aggressive behaviour as a child.

### Examiner Comment

(b) Explain **one** strength and **one** weakness of research into the influence of hormones on aggressive behaviour.

(4)

Strength

Scientific methods are used in order to test the influence of hormones on aggressive behavior meaning that the results obtained are less likely to be biased or not valid. Such methods include PET scan, CAT and fMRI.

Weakness

We cannot know for sure whether the results obtained are exclusively due to the influence of hormones or if there is a neglected factor influencing the results.

This gains 2 marks, 1 mark for the strength and 1 mark for the weakness. The strength is clearly identified as the use of scientific methods meaning the results are less likely to be biased. However the candidate did not get the second mark as there is no justification about why this is a strength, the candidate just names some methods.

The weakness also gains the identification mark for writing that we cannot know if hormones alone cause aggression or if there are some other factors. However the candidate did not offer a justification for this point.

### Examiner Tip

When asked to explain in a question, make sure that there is some justification after the identification.



### **Q03a**

#### **Question Introduction**

The better candidates were able to gain all three marks for the graph, giving it an accurate title, accurately labelling both axes and accurately plotting the data from the table. Most candidates knew what a scatter graph should look like, there were very few attempts to draw a bar chart. The weaker candidates often gained one mark for the title of the graph, however they often plotted the participants on one axis and the mood score on the other axis.

### **Q03b**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question was well answered with the vast majority of candidates being able to gain the mark for stating a conclusion from the data.

## Q03c

### Question Introduction

The best candidates were able to gain all four marks. They clearly identified a strength and weakness and then went on to explain both. Most candidates gained two marks, one mark each for the identification of the strength and weakness but they failed to explain why they were a strength or weakness so could not gain the second mark. Some candidates failed to gain any marks as they did not link their answer to the context of using self-report questionnaires to gather data on mood.

(c) Explain **one** strength and **one** weakness of using self-report questionnaires to gather data on mood in this investigation. (4)

Strength

Self-report questionnaires are easier to analyse. They are less time consuming in comparison to interview and often we can gather quantitative data from them, which in comparison to qualitative does not have to be so extensively interpreted.

Weakness

Self-report questionnaires doesn't give the researcher an in-depth information about the participant and reasoning behind his answers. For instance, participants may show demand characteristics which can't be noticed through ~~the~~ questionnaire, in interview it could be noted by the researcher.

### Examiner Comment

This gains 0 marks.

Both the strength and weakness are generic, the candidate has not linked their answer back to the context of mood scores so they cannot gain any marks for their answer.

### Examiner Tip

Always read the question carefully and link back to the context if the context is in the question.

## Q04a

### Question Introduction

Most candidates failed to gain full marks for the question, with the majority only gaining two marks for writing two points about the synchronisation of Maria's menstrual cycle. A lot of candidates said that Maria's menstrual cycle would be synchronised, but as this was stated in the question it was not creditworthy. Some candidates included research into the synchronisation of menstrual cycles, but they failed to link that back to the context. A minority of candidates focussed solely on studies that showed menstrual cycles synchronise, but failed to offer any link to the context in their answer and so did not gain any credit.

### Examiner Comment

- 4 Maria found that when she went to university her menstrual cycle synchronised with the menstrual cycles of the female students she lived with.

(a) Describe why Maria's menstrual cycle synchronised with the female students she lived with.

(4)

Maria's menstrual cycle is synchronised because she can smell the pheromones of her fellow female students.  
So if the majority of students have just ovulated she will likely experience that her menstrual cycle is longer than usual, due to the fact that she can smell the pheromones of her fellow female students.

This gains two marks.

The first mark is for saying that Maria's menstrual cycle is synchronised as she can smell the pheromones of her fellow students. The second mark is for saying that if the majority of students have just ovulated then her menstrual cycle will be longer. The candidate then repeats the first point at the end of the second sentence so cannot gain credit for this point again. The candidate has clearly linked the points made to the context.

### Examiner Tip

Link all points back to the context of the question when a scenario is given.

## Q04b

### Question Introduction

The better candidates were able to gain both marks for this question, as they focussed on a psychological symptom during menstruation. The most popular symptom was mood swings, and the second mark was often gained for linking mood swing to the fluctuation in hormones. Some candidates failed to gain any marks as they did not answer the question that was asked, either describing physical symptoms of menstruation or describing psychological symptoms at another stage in the menstrual cycle, such as ovulation.

### Examiner Comment

(b) Describe **one** psychological symptom that may be experienced during menstruation.

(2)

*During menstruation, some hormones' release might be disturbed, e.g. serotonin, thus there might be a symptom of fluctuating emotion, e.g. Maria might become angry for something more easier than she usually does.*

This gains two marks. It gains 1 mark for saying that emotions may fluctuate and then the second mark for further describing this in terms of getting angry. This candidate has linked their answer to Maria, but this was not necessary for this question.

### Examiner Tip

Read the question carefully and make sure the answer is relevant to the question that is asked.

## Q05

### Question Introduction

The vast majority of candidates gained a level 1 or level 2 on this essay. Those in level 1 often failed to give enough evaluation, maybe offering one point of evaluation and they focussed on describing correlations. They also failed to offer any conclusion. Those in level 2 did offer a conclusion, and had more evaluation in their answer, however the conclusion was often superficial, such as stating correlations have strengths and weaknesses. Some candidates did use correlational studies as part of their evaluation, which was good to see. However if candidates do this they must ensure that they focus on evaluating the research methods rather than evaluating the study, as some points about a specific study may not be true of correlations in general.

## Q06a

### Question Introduction

The better candidates were able to engage with this question and describe how a content analysis could be carried out in relation to the context, and they were able to offer four clear descriptive points. Some candidates limited the amount of marks they could gain as they did not write enough different points. The weaker candidates described an observation using children who watched the television programmes, rather than describing a content analysis through the researchers watching the television programmes themselves.

### Examiner Comment

- 6 Researchers were asked to plan a study to test whether children's television programmes showed positive or negative role model behaviour.

(a) Describe how the researchers could carry out a content analysis for their study.

(4)

First, researchers could make ~~a~~ up definitions for 'positive' and 'negative' role model behaviours after a pilot study of watching some <sup>children's</sup> television programmes. Then they could divide into groups to watch and record children's TV programmes on different channels <sup>during</sup> at different time periods of the day and <sup>record how many times</sup> pick out contents showing positive & negative role model behaviours <sup>occur</sup> (eg. helping others or fighting). Then data could be collected and analysed using tallying and thematic analysis to come to a conclusion.

This gains 4 marks. The candidate has focussed on how to carry out a content analysis and has written four clear points all related to the scenario.

It gets the first mark for making up positive and negative definitions, and the candidate also gives examples of these further down the script. The second mark is for the points about the researchers watching the different channels at different times of the day. The candidate gains another mark for writing that the data would be recorded on a tally chart, and the final mark is for the analysis using a thematic analysis.

### Examiner Comment

Researchers were asked to plan a study to test whether children's television programmes showed positive or negative role model behaviour.

(a) Describe how the researchers could carry out a content analysis for their study.

(4)

You could observe the child and the child behaviour after watching the T-V show and see if they are showing positive or negative behaviour. Overt observation could be done. Taken an account of their behaviour and a graph could be plotted.

This gains 0 marks. The candidate has described how an observation would be carried out rather than a content analysis.

## Q06b

### Question Introduction

The better candidates were able to identify a weakness of content analysis and then justify the weakness. However a large minority of the candidates only gained one mark for the identification of a weakness but did not offer the justification. Some candidates who had described an observation in part a) wrote about a weakness of observations rather than a weakness of content analysis.

### Examiner Comment

(b) Explain **one** weakness of content analysis.

(2)

Since researchers would have to interpret the contents of the material, there is lots of subjectivity in the method. e.g. different people may have different opinions of whether fighting is a 'positive' or 'negative' role model behaviour. Thus the data may not be objective.

This gains 2 marks. It gains 1 mark for the identification of a weakness, the researchers having to interpret the content of the material. The candidate then goes on to explain why this is a weakness, as researchers may have different opinions therefore the data may not be objective.

### Examiner Tip

When asked to explain a weakness add the justification for the second mark.

### Q06c

#### Question Introduction

The good candidates were able to get this mark as they were able to say why the standard deviation was the appropriate measure of dispersion. Candidates who did not gain this mark often just defined the standard deviation, saying it showed the spread of scores or wrote about how it was better than the mean, or was able to show if the results were significant or not.

### Q06d

#### Question Introduction

Candidates either knew how to work out a ratio and so gained the mark, or did not know how to work out a ratio.

### Q06e

#### Question Introduction

Overall this question was well answered, with most candidates gaining both marks. Some candidates referred to a sample of five children rather than five television programmes so did not gain the marks.

#### Examiner Comment

(e) Explain **one** weakness of the sample used in this study.

(2)

the researcher analysed five children's television programmes. Five shows is a very small sample size, therefore his results may be not representative of all children's programmes, thus it cannot be generalised

This gains 2 marks. The candidate clearly identifies the weakness as five shows being a small sample size, and then goes on to explain that this is not representative of all children's programmes.



## Q07

### Question Introduction

Good candidates managed to gain 3 to 4 marks for this question, by being able to accurately apply operant conditioning to the context of the question. They were able to write about positive and negative reinforcement, how punishment could be used as a negative reinforcement and offered another point as well. Some candidates described what positive and negative reinforcement were without reference to the context, so this part of their answer did not gain credit, but most of these then went on to repeat the same points in relation to the context. Some candidates wrote that punishment could be used to teach Sangita to clean her teeth, but did not explain this, as punishment is used to stop an undesired behaviour rather than teach a new behaviour unless the threat of punishment is used for negative reinforcement. A very small minority of candidates wrote about social learning theory rather than operant conditioning.

### Examiner Comment

7 Rina wants to encourage her three-year-old daughter Sangita to clean her teeth.

Describe how Rina could encourage Sangita to clean her teeth using principles from operant conditioning.

(4)

*Operant conditioning suggests that people could learn from the outcome of their behaviour. Thus Rina could give Sangita a reward (e.g. a sticker) everytime she cleans her teeth. This is positive reinforcement and would encourage Sangita to <sup>repeat</sup> the behaviour. Or Rina could allow Sangita <sup>not</sup> to do ~~something~~ <sup>things</sup> she doesn't like (e.g. eat less vegetable) everytime Sangita cleans her teeth. This is negative reinforcement and encourages the behaviour to be repeated. Punishment could also be used to force Sangita to clean her teeth to avoid punishment (e.g. not be able to play outdoors).*

This gains 4 marks. There are four clear points and all are related to the context. 1 mark is for giving a sticker every time she cleans her teeth. 1 mark for saying it is positive reinforcement and will encourage her to repeat her behaviour. 1 mark for the point about negative reinforcement and Sangita not having to eat her vegetables. The final mark is for the last sentence on punishment as it says how Sangita will brush her teeth to avoid the punishment.

## Q08a

### Question Introduction

The better candidates were able to gain both marks for this question by accurately stating two different aims. Those candidates who only gained one mark either repeated the same aim twice, or put down something that was not an aim of the study, such as looking at the long term effects when this was not studied. Only a very few candidates wrote the aim to a different study.

### Examiner Comment

(a) Identify **two** aims of Capafóns et al's (1998) contemporary study.

(2)

1 To see if phobia can be desensitised through systematic desensitisation.

2 To remove fear of ~~ftt~~ flying from the participants ~~thoated~~ involved in the study.

This gains 2 marks, 1 mark for each aim. The candidate has offered two different aims, the second one being more specific than the first aim.

## Q08b

### Question Introduction

The better candidates clearly knew the detail of the study and were able to write four points describing the procedure of the study including the detail about how the sample was obtained, what scales were used, the pre-testing and various other points. Some candidates included the results or conclusions in their answer so did not gain marks for this part of their answer as the question asked about the procedure. Those candidates who knew the study but did not gain all the marks often failed to write enough points or failed to add some of the detail about the study. Only a very few candidates wrote about a different study.

### Examiner Comment

(b) Describe the procedure used in Capafóns et al's (1998) contemporary study.

(4)

The participants were recruited using a volunteering sample where they offered a free-of-charge treatment for fear of flying.

The participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions: experimental group (pts that did get the treatment) and control group (waiting for treatment). They used several ~~the~~ types of equipments to measure their level of fear (body temperature, heart rate, questionnaires...). They will then create the hierarchy of fear with their therapist to then go through the stages practicing relaxation techniques previously learned to move on on the hierarchy to confront their fear of flying.

This gains all 4 marks, the candidate clearly knew the details of the study. 1 mark for stating it was a volunteer sample with the fact the treatment was offered free of charge. To state volunteer sample on its own would not gain credit there needs to be a bit more detail, this could be about how the volunteer sample was found. 1 mark for the sentence about the experimental and control group as the candidate has written about the difference between the two groups. 1 mark for how the level of fear was measured and the final mark for the sentence about the relaxation techniques and the hierarchy of fear.

### Examiner Tip

When asked a question about a study read the question carefully to check which aspect of the study is being asked about.

## **Q08c**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates seemed to do better on this explain question than on similar questions in the paper. The good candidates were able to identify a strength and a weakness which were linked to specifics from the study, and then go on to explain both. Weaker candidates failed to offer the justification and so only gained two marks. Some candidates gave generic strengths and weaknesses that could have applied to several studies, and did not give a link to this study.

### **Examiner Tip**

When asked about strengths or weaknesses of a study make sure there is some specific detail about the study in the answer.

## **Q08d**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates struggled with this question, with most only gaining 1 mark. A lot of candidates seemed to think that by identifying an improvement and then explaining why it would be an improvement this would gain both marks. For a justify question all the points need to offer a justification. Some candidates wrote about a weakness of the original sample and then offered an improvement, rather than focussing on the improvement they wrote about and justifying why it was an improvement.

## **Q09**

### **Question Introduction**

The majority of candidates gained a level 1 or level 2 score for evaluating Freud's stages in the development of personality. Those who gained level 1 failed to give a conclusion within their essay, and often described Freud's theory in detail but offered little in the way of evaluation. Those who gained level 2 did offer a conclusion but this was often superficial, or their evaluative comments were limited. Some candidates focussed their answers on what happened if fixated in a stage rather than focussing on what happens in the stages themselves.

## **Q10**

### **Question Introduction**

The majority of candidates gained a level 1 or level 2 score. Candidates tended to write an evaluative answer, rather than answer the question to what extent? Candidates need to present judgements throughout the essay to get into the higher levels. Candidates often used studies that showed brain functioning can explain aggression, but failed to offer other possible explanations as an alternative.

## **Q11**

### **Question Introduction**

Again very few candidates achieved above a level 2 in this essay. Candidates tended to focus solely on light therapy and how it could be used, rather than assess whether it was the only therapy that could be used. Candidates who did use alternative therapies often picked therapies that would not work very well, such as systematic desensitisation. The specification does say that candidates need to know therapies, one of which should be light therapy. Candidates often wrote this as an evaluate question rather than an assess question. To get into the higher levels candidates need to have assessment in their essay that leads to a judgement. Most candidates were able to refer to the context throughout their essay.

