Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCE
In Psychology (WPS01)
Paper 1 Social and Cognitive Psychology

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Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper candidate are offered the following advice:

- Candidates need to continue to develop their strength and weakness answers in terms of justification in addition to completing accurate identification.

- Candidates need to pay careful attention to not only the taxonomy within a question but the question requirements. For example, if the question asks for reference to a scenario then candidates need to include this within their answer to access the marks.

- Some candidates provided answers in terms of the levels based questions that showed an awareness of the necessary skills. Candidates need to continue to develop this in terms of balance/judgement/ conclusions and reasoned chains or arguments that may be required from a question.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Q01a

Question Introduction

Most candidates attempted this question demonstrating an understanding of the aim of Milgram's Experiment 7. The majority of these candidates were able to provide an accurate aim for Experiment 7, there was some confusion from a minority with other Milgram studies. Only occasionally did candidates provide an answer from other parts of Experiment 7 which were not credited.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would have befitted from knowing the differences between Experiment 7 and Milgram's other studies.

Q01b

Question Introduction

Lots of candidates attempted this question demonstrating an understanding of the conclusion for Milgram's Experiment 7. Candidates who were successful concluded that reduced proximity of the experiment lead to fewer participants obeying. Some candidates were confused and provided conclusions from other Milgram studies including Milgram's original study and his Experiment 10. A minority of candidates confused the requirements of the question and provided answers for results instead of conclusions.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from ensuring that they know the differences between Milgram's studies in addition to knowing the different requirements i.e., conclusions.

Q01c

Lots of candidates attempted this question demonstrating an understanding of the requirements of a weakness of Milgram's Experiment 7 in terms of validity. Candidates were at times able to identify a weakness of Milgram's Experiment 7 and justify their weakness for a second mark. Some candidates provided answers that did not focus on a validity weakness of Experiment 7, instead providing a weakness that related to other evaluation points. There was some confusion in candidates' answers for a minority in terms of providing weaknesses for Experiment 10 instead of 7. In terms of validity candidates need to be clear on which validity area they are evaluating, if there are referring to ecological validity they need to write about the artificiality of the context for example.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from ensuring that their answers are focused in terms of identification marks to the correct study being asked about. This then needs to be justified in relation to the requirements of the question, in the terms of this question - validity.

Q01d

For this question candidates needed to identify one individual difference that could affect someone being obedient and then justify their selected individual difference. Many candidates were able to identify an individual difference and provide reasonable knowledge of that individual difference. A minority of candidates were then able to justify their individual difference for a second mark. Common responses referred to authoritarian personality and locus of control.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from ensuring that their answers incorporate a justification of the requirements of the question for additional marks in terms of the taxonomy asked.

Q02a

Question Introduction

Many candidates were able to state an accurate closed question in relation to the scenario for one mark. A minority of candidates provided open ended answers or provided an answer which did not focus on the scenario of Rendi and her questionnaire on obedience.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from providing answers clearly focused on the scenario when asked to do so in the question.

Q02b

Question Introduction

Lots of candidates were able to identify one weakness of Rendi using quantitative data about obedience. Only some candidates were able to successfully go onto justify their answers in terms of the requirements of the question. Most popular answers referred to validity. Some candidates provided generic response which did not refer their answers back to any aspect of the scenario.

Examiner Tip

Candidates must ensure that they read the question carefully in order to ensure that they are able to meet the requirements of what the question is asking.

Q02c

Question Introduction
Lots of candidates were able to state one open question that Rendi could have asked in her interviews about obedience. A minority of candidates provided an answer which was not stated as a question or did not link their open question to the scenario.

Examiner Tip
Candidates need to ensure that they fulfil the requirements of the question when asked to do so, for example an open question.

Q02d

Question Introduction
Lots of candidates were able to provide a description of how Rendi could analyse the data gathered from the open questions in her interviews. Common answers referred to looking for common themes, coding, thematic analysis and content analysis processes. A minority of candidates did not attempt this question. Some candidate answers did not refer to the scenario in their answer, the question clearly asks to describe analysis of the data in terms of the scenario.

Examiner Tip
Candidates must ensure they provide full descriptions in their answers in terms of scenario based question in order to access both marks available in a question like this.

Q02e

Question Introduction
Many candidates were able to explain how Rend used secondary data to improve the reliability of her research into obedience. Some of the candidates were able to accurately identify an improvement in relation to the scenario but only a few provided justification of the improvement for a second mark. A minority of candidates provided generic answers or mixed up their answers with primary data improvements.

Examiner Tip
Candidates would benefit from further work on "improvement" style questions in order to ensure that are able to meet all skill and question requirements.

Q03a

Question Introduction

Most candidates attempted this question and for many they were able to provide accurate results of Moscovici et al.'s (1969) study. Most common answers referenced in 8.42% of responses in the consistent condition were green for example, amongst others. Some candidates confused the results of Moscovici et al.'s (1969) study with the results of other studies from their course. A minority of candidates provided conclusions instead of results, confusing the requirements of the question.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to ensure that they know the difference between results and conclusions within their studies.

Q03c

Question Introduction

Lots of candidates attempted this question, some were able to provide an accurate identification of one improvement that could be made to Moscovici et al.'s (1969) study. The most successful candidates were then able to justify this improvement for an additional mark. The most common answer referred to Moscovici et al.'s sample, with candidates suggesting improvements in terms of gender for example; other improvements were acceptable.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to ensure that they know the difference between results and conclusion within their studies.

Q04

Question Introduction

Some candidates produced accurate knowledge and understanding of research into conformity. These answers provided understanding of conformity research referencing areas of methods used in the studies identified in addiction to tasks completed, and other research aspects. These answers displayed arguments using mostly coherent chains of reasoning about conformity research leading to a conclusion being presented.   For some candidates they were able to demonstrate a grasp of competing arguments but evaluation was imbalanced in some cases.

Candidates at times did not read the question carefully which resulted in answers focusing completely on describing conformity theory and not evaluating "research" into conformity. For these candidates their answers at times followed a more theory based response on general conformity, sometimes supported by conformity study conclusions for example. A minority of students did then refer to research suggestions which did gain credit if correct.

Asch (1951) tended to be the most common study used within candidate answers, lots of candidates had good knowledge of the study itself and were able to construct answers which met some of the requirements of the question. Other studies if relevant were also credited. A minority of candidates provided knowledge of conformity studies but made no attempt to develop their answers further in terms of the question. Conclusions for some were not always evidenced or clear which again limited what candidates could achieve.

As a level based question it is important to note that an A01/A03 response was required which needed to show an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding versus evaluation/conclusion in their answer. Those candidates who scored highly on both skills were able to demonstrate accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of research into conformity. This A01 knowledge was displayed in a well-developed assessment containing logical chains of reasoning throughout the candidates answer, not just in the second part. This therefore allowed these candidates to demonstrate an awareness of the significance of competing arguments throughout their answer, allowing them to provide a balanced judgement.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from a clear understanding of evaluating research into conformity. This would then allow candidates to apply both skill elements in order to gain higher levels. Conclusions for some would also support answers in providing a balanced conclusion.

Q05

Question Introduction
Many candidates were able to identify one strength of working memory model and go onto justify their answer for a second mark. Very few candidates were able to successfully do this for both strengths. Answers focused on many elements of the theory including the working memory model being a more detailed explanation of the STM, supporting evidence from different studies and application. At times for some identification of the actual strength was not clear or inaccurate in terms of the working memory model. A minority of candidates provided answers for alternative models of memory in terms of a strength identification and justification - so could not be accredited any marks. .

Examiner Tip
Candidates need to ensure that their strengths and weaknesses have clear identification A01 within them to allow for accurate justification of their answers.

Q06a

Question Introduction
Lots of candidates were able to calculate the correct median for the data in the scenario. A minority of candidates did provide an answer for the mean and not the median or did not attempt this question at all. A few candidates did show calculations of the median which were worked out inaccurately.

Examiner Tip
Candidates must ensure they check their calculations for errors in order to ensure their answers are correct.

Q06b

Question Introduction
Most candidates attempted this question and some were able to calculate the standard deviation for Group 1 for 4 marks. A few candidate made errors early on in their calculations which resulted in only partial marks being awarded for those elements of their answers they had completed correctly. A minority of candidates were unfamiliar with the standard deviation calculation and did not gain any marks.

Examiner Tip
Candidates must ensure they check their calculations carefully to avoid losing marks. Candidates would also benefit from ensuring they answer all elements of the question asked.

Q06c

Question Introduction

Lots of candidates were able to provide an accurate identification of one conclusion that Mrs Wang could make from her study using the multi-store model of memory. Successful answers were able to justify the conclusion that had been suggested for a second mark. Answers for the most part referred to justification in terms of rehearsal and transference from the STM to the LTM, these were also well linked to the scenario for the identification mark. A minority of candidates mixed up the multi-store model of memory with the working memory model, referring to the central executive.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to ensure that they know the clear knowledge difference between their theories to avoid confusion in questions like this.

Q06d

Successful candidates were able to identify a strength/weakness of an independent groups design, from this they were also able to justify their answer for additional marks. Candidates' answers for the strength often focused for example on an increase in the number of participants or avoiding demand characteristics amongst others. These answers although identified were not always justified in terms of them being a strength of the independent groups design. Weaknesses had a similar pattern in terms of justification. For identification the most common answers referred to control issues over participant variables or practical issues in terms of being time consuming. A minority of candidates confused independent groups design with repeated measures design which lead to errors in their answers.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to make ensure that when justifying a strength or weakness they provide enough accuracy in their answers to access the second mark available.

Q07a

Question Introduction

Most candidates attempted this question providing one aim from their contemporary study of either Darling et al. (2007) or Sacchi et al. (2007). Sacchi et al. (2007) seemed to be the most popular for this entry, with many answers providing an accurate aim. There was some confusion with other studies not the contemporary ones being placed within answers for a minority of candidates.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to ensure that all elements of contemporary studies are learned well.

Q07b

Question Introduction

Candidates attempted this question in terms of explaining one weakness of candidates' contemporary study - either Darling et al. (2007) or Sacchi et al. (2007). For both contemporary studies, candidates answers focused mostly on sampling weaknesses. When done well candidates were able to accurately identify a weakness of their contemporary study and then go onto justify it for a second mark. Very few candidates did this well, either omitting key elements of the study for the identification mark or not justifying their answer in term of it being a weakness.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to ensure that they know weaknesses for their contemporary studies in terms of an accurate identification of the weakness and justification of it.

Q08

Question Introduction

Some candidates produced accurate and well developed answers focusing on discussing the use of case studies in cognitive psychology as a method to research memory, making reference to the context in their answers. A minority of answers were able to display accurate knowledge and understanding of the use of case studies as a research method in cognitive psychology. These answers at times showed mostly developed chains of reasoning and a grasp of competing arguments in terms of the Papel scenario. Candidate answers seldom displayed accurate knowledge and understanding of case studies as a research method in addition to a lack of support throughout from Papel and the anterograde amnesia scenario. The question specifically asked for a discussion of case studies in cognitive psychology as a method to research memory not an evaluation of case studies - which some candidates tended to do in their answers.

Some candidates focused on describing case studies from cognitive psychology for example, HM, Clive Wearing - amongst others. Other candidates provided answers which evaluated a case study from cognitive psychology with no reference to the Papel scenario as the question asked for. Common in some answers was a tendency to provide case studies from cognitive psychology as supporting evidence for the knowledge they had provided about case studies - again with minimal or no reference to Papel. This resulted in answers that did not meet all the requirements of the question in terms of the scenario.

As a level based question it is important to note that an A01/A02 response was required which needed to show an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding and application within candidate answers. For level 4 candidates needed to score highly on both skills being able to demonstrate accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of case studies in cognitive psychology as a method to research memory in addition to making reference to the context in their answers. Candidates also needed to display a well-developed and logical balanced discussion, containing logical chains of reasoning throughout. Demonstrating a thorough awareness of competing arguments, supported throughout by sustained application of relevant evidence from the context.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from putting clear context reference into their answers when asked by the question, this will enable them to access higher levels in terms of this skill requirement.

Q09

Question Introduction

Some candidates produced accurate and well developed answers focusing on reconstructive memory. Stronger answers provided and understanding of reconstructive memory in terms of schemas, filling in gaps, previous experiences, amongst other areas - providing accurate knowledge and understanding of each area. These answers sometimes reflected lines of argument occasionally supported through the application to Antonio and Enrique.

Candidate answers that did this well referred to either Enrique or Antonio having all the information about the foul so their memory traces would be complete, references to reconstructive memory in terms of schemas with previous knowledge coming through as well within the context of the scenario. Answers sometimes displayed a developed and logical evaluation incorporating supporting evidence from studies like Bartlett's (1932) "War of the Ghosts", issues with reconstructive memory lacking explanation and possible alternative explanation of memory that may have been better at explaining the difference in the account between Antonio and Enrique.

Some candidates did not always show an awareness of competing arguments which resulted in an imbalanced argument. The question specifically asked for an evaluation of reconstructive memory in terms of the difference in Antonio's and Enrique's recall and in doing so candidates did at times provide an awareness of competing arguments within their answers, resulting in a balanced conclusion.

As a level based question it is important to note that an A01/A02/A03 response was required candidates to show an equal emphasis on knowledge and understanding, application and evaluation/conclusion within candidate answers. More successful candidates demonstrated accurate and through knowledge and understanding of reconstructive memory. This A01 knowledge was then successfully applied in lines of argument supported through sustained application to relevant evidence from the context of the difference in Antonio and Enrique's recall. This demonstrated candidates' ability to integrate and synthesise relevant knowledge. Candidates at this level when successful often displayed a well-developed and logical evaluation suggesting supporting evidence from reconstructive memory studies, alternative explanations, amongst others. This often demonstrated an awareness of competing arguments with them presenting a balanced conclusion.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from additional A03 evaluation/conclusion within an answer like this ensuring that all skill requirements are covered within their answers. Candidates could them easily demonstrate an awareness of competing arguments and provide a balanced conclusion. Some candidate would benefit from clearly referencing in the scenario in addition to providing clear knowledge and understanding of reconstructive memory.