Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCE
In Psychology (WPS03)

Paper 3: Applications of Psychology

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General Comments

Candidate entry for the October series was very low, therefore a broad range of content and responses was not seen to the extent that would normally be the case in January and June examination series. Centres should remind candidates to clearly indicate the option they have chosen by including an 'x' in the option box in the relevant section of the exam paper.

Candidates showed good understanding of key terms and some theoretical concepts.

Difficulties tended to be in the long answer questions. Here, candidate responses were often limited to lower level mark bands as a result of limited understanding of specific content coupled with a lack of developed AO3 material. Few justified their arguments and evaluations, and very little supporting evidence was seen.

Application for AO2 responses was an area that posed some problems for some candidates. Where generic responses were given candidates did not achieve well, and it is recommended that candidates practice their application to stimulus material to demonstrate their ability to draw on their understanding of content and show how this would apply in each context.

Many candidates scored well in the mathematical assessment, and centres can be commended for their candidate skills in this content.

Paper Summary

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

- Candidates should review the taxonomy expectations within the specification to aid them in understanding the key requirements of the questions and the distinctions between these. In an extended essay question, for example where the command word is to assess, judgements and competing arguments are required to access the higher levels.
- Where candidates are required to use theories in respect of a scenario, it is important to apply features of the theories specifically to the scenario and not in a generic way.
- Candidates should focus on the specific direction of the question, if for example it asks for an improvement in relation to the scenario, the suggestion must relate to this and not offer an alternative which is not linked to the scenario.
- With a question that asks for a conclusion in respect of the data that it is provided, to achieve a mark, candidates must interpret the meaning of the data as oppose to repeating the data.
- Candidates should clearly apply their mathematical knowledge when plotting bar charts. It is important for candidates to have an understanding of the difference between a bar chart and a histogram for example.

The remainder of this report will focus on specific questions from the examination.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Q01

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application question that required candidates to use learning theory to describe how an attachment could be formed between Lorenzo and his mother. Most candidates were able to show an understanding of learning theory however application to the scenario was limited, with few candidates describing how this linked with attachment.

Q02a

Question Introduction

This was an AO3 question requiring candidates to draw a conclusion. Few candidates were able to do this, with most stating or describing the results rather than interpreting these and coming to a conclusion about what the results demonstrated.

Examiner Tip

When drawing a conclusion, candidates should be careful to the interpret data or information they have been provided with and come to a conclusion, rather than a statement of the results.

Q02b

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question that required candidates to explain one strength of naturalistic observations as used in developmental psychology. Most candidates were able to identify a strength, but few exemplified or justified this reason with reference to developmental psychology.

Q02c

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question that required candidates to identify a weakness of longitudinal studies as used in developmental psychology. Most candidates could identify a weakness, however, few candidates were able to elaborate on the weakness given.

Q03a

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 question where candidates had to suggest how a random sample could be obtained from the scenario. Most candidates were able to obtain one mark for describing the process of gathering a random sample, however very few gained the second mark by relating it to the correct age range given in the scenario.

Examiner Tip

In an AO2 question in respect of sampling, candidates should ensure that any application is appropriate to the target population indicated in the scenario.

Q03b

Question Introduction

This was an AO3 justification question requiring candidates to justify the use of a random sample instead of a volunteer sample. Few candidates scored well on this question. Candidates were required to say for example what was good about random sampling that volunteer sampling did not have.

Examiner Tip

When candidates have to justify one sampling method over another it is important to give details of both methods and not just one as this is not a justification.

Q03c

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to identify a demand characteristic, AO1 knowledge and to justify/exemplify this for AO3 skills. Candidates sometimes gave a demand characteristic but a majority gave a feature relating so social desirability as oppose to a demand characteristic.

Q04

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that evaluated Vytotsky's zone of proximal development. Candidates did not always achieve well on this question, often giving a very limited AO1 understanding of Vytotsky's theory and a limited AO3 evaluation of the points made in respect of cognitive and language development. There was a lack of focus on describing only the ZPD in respect of Vygotsky's theory. Candidates were able to offer Piaget as an alternative explanation as an

evaluative point, but this was often presented as the only evaluative point. Responses on the whole, failed to answer the question being asked.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should present accurate and detailed descriptions of the key factors of a theory. Exemplification of these points should be evaluated by drawing on a range of concepts and evidence to support the point. Competing arguments should be offered with a view to achieving the higher mark bands available for the question.

Q05

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that assess the use of primary and secondary data when investigating children's social and emotional development. This question targeted the 'methods' requirements of the topic assessing the use of methods when carrying out research and drawing on units 1 and 2

There was little balance in the essays, often candidates did not give a detailed description of both primary and secondary data. Few candidates used the findings of supporting/negating evidence to assess the suitability in terms of social and emotional development. A significant number of essays focused on cultural differences which was not relevant to the question. Judgements were not always evident, and many candidates presented their response without logical reasoning.

Examiner Tip

As outlined in the specification, an essay question on this paper will assess methods in psychology and draw upon prior understanding and skills from units 1 and 2. Limited use of examples, evidence, or methodological knowledge was seen in answers to this question. Candidates should review their unit 1 and unit 2 content as preparation for this question in order to demonstrate wider understanding of psychology.

Q06

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application question. Candidates were required to draw from the scenario to make their AO2 point about social learning theory in relation to Kris. Few candidates fully applied their response to the scenario, often giving generic descriptions of the theory without reference to the material given in the question.

Examiner Tip
Candidates should ensure they very clearly apply their understanding to scenarios when these are used in order to achieve the AO2 marks.

Q07a

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 question requiring candidates to draw a conclusion from the data in respect of the scenario. Few candidates were able to do this, with most stating or describing the results rather than interpreting these and coming to a conclusion about what the results demonstrated.

Examiner Tip

When drawing a conclusion from the data provided in the scenario, candidates should endeavour to interpret the data or information that has been provided and come to a conclusion, rather than provide a statement of the results.

Q07b

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 questions where candidates were required to demonstrate the mathematical skill of arithmetic and numerical computation using the data from the scenario. The majority of candidates were able to calculate the number of studies correctly.

Q07c

This was and AO1 knowledge question and AO2 application question in relation to the scenario. The majority of candidates were able to identify an ethical guideline and explain how it could be applied to the scenario.

Q07d

Most candidates could suggest a reason for how researchers may have breached ethical guidelines in their research into offender treatment programmes and satisfied the AO2 application requirement. Few candidates were able to justify

why they had breached the guideline and therefore did not meet the AO3 requirement of the question.

Q08a(i)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application where candidates had to read data from a bar chart and complete a results table using this data. The majority of candidates achieved full marks on this question.

Q08a(ii)

This was an AO2 mathematical skills question where candidates were required to plot a bar on a bar chart having calculated the data from the results table. Most candidates did not achieve well on this question, the majority creating a histogram as oppose to a bar chart.

Q08b

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question that required candidates to justify a weakness from the scenario. Most candidates were able to use a relevant information from the scenario to identify a weakness. Few candidates were able to justify this and therefore did achieve the second mark.

Q08c

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to suggest an improvement to the study in relation to the scenario. Few candidates were able to give an improvement to the study but suggested an alternative research method in place of the original study which is not an improvement.

Q09

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that evaluates factors influencing identification of offenders. Many of the responses attempted AO3 development by using supporting studies but the findings were not linked to reliability. Knowledge and understanding was underdeveloped and responses needed to provide a more detailed description of the factors.

Examiner Tip

When evaluating key areas, candidates should clearly demonstrate what the factors are and evaluate these by using supporting evidence and concepts to reach a balanced conclusion.

Q10

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that assessed whether ASPD is an explanation of crime and anti-social behaviour. The responses seen were limited, often missing the requirements of the question to assess ASPD as a disorder in the first instance. Limited supporting evidence or examples of how ASPD could be used to explain crime and anti-social behaviour were given.

Examiner Tip

When making an assessment, candidates are required to judge the topic and express their judgements through logical reasoning that can include evidence, theoretical concepts and/or methodological features.

Section B: Option 2

Q11

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application question. Candidates were required to draw from the scenario to make their AO2 point about two factors of stress given in the scenario.

Examiner Tip
Candidates should ensure they very clearly apply their understanding to scenarios when these are used in order to achieve the AO2 marks.

Q12a

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 question requiring candidates to draw a conclusion from the data in respect of the scenario. Few candidates were able to do this, with most stating or describing the results rather than interpreting these and coming to a conclusion about what the results demonstrated.

Examiner Tip

When drawing a conclusion from the data provided in the scenario, candidates should endeavour to interpret the data or information that has been provided and come to a conclusion, rather than provide a statement of the results.

Q12b

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 questions where candidates were required to demonstrate the mathematical skill of arithmetic and numerical computation using the data from the scenario. The majority of candidates were able to calculate the number of studies correctly.

Q12c

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO2 application to scenario question that required candidates to identify a requirement when conducting research using non-human animals. A majority of candidates were able to identify a requirement as given in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 but a few identified human ethical concerns. Few candidates were able to describe the requirement in relation to the scenario.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should not apply human research ethical concerns in respect of research using non-human animals. In a two mark question where the requirement has been correctly identified, it is important to relate this to the scenario for the second mark.

Q12d

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question that required candidates to justify why researchers chose non-human animals in their research into stress. Most candidates were able to give an accurate reason for the choice of research, however few candidates successfully justified the reason as to why it had been used.

Q13a(i)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application where candidates had to read data from a bar chart and complete a results table using this data. The majority of candidates achieved full marks on this question.

Q13a(ii)

This was an AO2 mathematical skills question where candidates were required to plot a bar on a bar chart having calculated the data from the results table. Most candidates did not achieve well on this question, the majority creating a histogram as oppose to a bar chart.

Q13b

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question that required candidates to justify a weakness from the scenario. Most candidates were able to use a relevant information from the scenario to identify a weakness. Few candidates were able to justify this and therefore did achieve the second mark.

Q13c

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to suggest an improvement to the study in relation to the scenario. Few candidates were able to give an improvement to the study but suggested an alternative research method in place of the original study which is not an improvement.

Q14

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that evaluates Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome as an explanation of stress. Many of the responses were able to demonstrate understanding of the GAS model, although the AO3 development was limited in many answers and often it was not clearly linked how the GAS model related to stress. Candidates did not always present logical, reasoned evaluations and many did not attempt to draw to conclusions during their arguments.

Q15

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that assessed the effectiveness of biological treatments and therapies for anxiety. The responses seen were limited, often missing the requirements of the question to assess whether (or not) biological treatments and therapies were effective. Limited evidence of research or alternative concepts was seen in candidate answers.

Examiner Tip

When making an assessment, candidates are required to judge the topic and express their judgements through logical reasoning that can include evidence, theoretical concepts and/or methodological features.