Examiner's Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Psychology (WPS03)
Paper 3: Applications of Psychology

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General Comments

Candidate entry for the June series was similar to that of the June 2017 series and as such the range of responses seen was on a similar distribution to this previous cohort entry. Most centres appear to have elected for the Criminal Psychology option, with fewer taking a Health Psychology option.

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.

Across the 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. This was particularly evident with regard the 'Issues' question about the UNCRC. Whilst the understanding of the study was evident, candidates rarely showed an understanding of the UNCRC and tended to discuss basic ethics as opposed to rights.

Application for AO2 responses was an area that again 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 ensure they have given time to the specification content in equal parts during their preparation for exams, for example UNCRC and mindfulness were understood less well in comparison to studies and theory.
- Within their extended open responses, candidates should give balanced responses and exemplified points which lead to making informed conclusions or judgements (where appropriate to the taxonomy used) in relation to the question content.
- 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, especially in scenario based questions.
- 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, for example the differences between describe and explain in shorter questions.
- 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.

- Candidates should focus on the specific direction of the question to avoid going off topic, particularly in the extended essay questions.

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Q01a

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to identify the correct methodology of cross-sectional from the scenario given. Most candidates achieved well on this question, with only a few giving an incorrect methodology.

Q01b

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to suggest one reason for not including children under 12 months in the study given in the scenario. Most candidates could identify that children under 12 months would not be included due to their stage of language development/ability. However, few candidates were able to continue this effectively to say why this was a reason they were excluded from the study by Marianne.

Examiner Tip

With application questions, candidates should use their understanding in relation to the content of scenario they are given.

Q01c

Question Introduction

Candidates were given the sampling technique used by Marianne and were asked to justify how she could improve the generalisability of her study. Most were able to engage with the question and suggestions of multiple locations to increase the representativeness of the sample were often given. A number of candidates incorrectly gave increasing sample size which does not have a direct relation to generalisability as 'more of the same' does not make Marianne's study more generalisable.

Q02a

Question Introduction

Most candidates gave the correct response and achieved one mark for their calculation.

Q02b

Question Introduction

Candidates were not always able to give an applied response to the strength and weakness of Ling using a clinical interview with children aged 3 years old and a few

generic responses were seen to this question. Other candidates appeared unsure of the clinical interviewing process for developmental psychology and did not always give appropriate responses here.

Q03a

Question Introduction
The majority of candidates accurately identified the correlation as a positive correlation and achieved the mark for this question.

Q03b

Question Introduction

Most candidates were able to state the appropriate statistical test to achieve the mark for this question.

Q04

Question Introduction
This question proved challenging for most candidates. Many were unsure of mindfulness, and where they had some understanding this was not always used appropriately to the question about whether it can enhance the development of children. Some candidates presented responses with good supporting evidence to back-up their statements about supporting development and these were very pleasing to see.

Q05

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that evaluated the classic study by van iJzendoorn and Kroonenberg (1998). Candidates performance was mixed on this question, with some candidates demonstrating a very good ability to evaluate this study. Where candidates did not achieve as highly, this was often due to their understanding of the study and evaluation points that were either generic to meta-analysis overall or were related only to the SPP.

Examiner Tip
Candidates should present exemplified evaluations and draw from a range of points to justify their evaluations in extended essays. Logical chains of reasoning should be presented, rather than bullet pointed strengths and weaknesses, to show balanced arguments and they should draw to conclusions based on the evidence utilised in the response and in answer to the question presented. Answers should clearly relate to the study as opposed to overly concentrating on the method without links to the impact on the study itself.

Q06

Question Introduction

This question targeted the 'issues' requirements of the topic assessing the ethical issues of research drawing on units 1 and 2.

Candidates found this question challenging. Their understanding of the named study by Watson and Rayner (1920) was good, however their responses were limited by a lack of understanding in many cases of the UNCRC. Most candidates presented an evaluation of the study in terms of general ethical issues and were not fully able to make a link to the UNCRC and the rights of children.

Examiner Tip

As outlined in the specification, an essay question on this paper will assess issues in psychology and draw upon prior understanding, content and skills from units 1 and 2.

Section B: Option 1

Q07

Question Introduction

Candidates were mostly able to state what is meant by pre-trial publicity, although some did not make the link to media or news and others muddled their response with eye witness testimony and schema.

Q08a

Question Introduction

In this question candidates were required to use their understanding to explain the scenario of Francesco not remembering what the three men looked like. Many candidates drew on weapon focus, but did not make the link to the scenario, giving a generic answer rather than explaining why he may have been focussed on a gun in a robbery.

Q08b

Question Introduction

Candidates were able to describe a cognitive interview process well, although the application to how the police would undertake this with Francesco was often elusive. Better answers gave each step of the process and used examples such as the employees, the parked car, and the location of a shop.

Examiner Tip
Candidates should always make the connection to the scenario content clear when given application questions.

Q09

Question Introduction

Candidates did not fully explain the reason why Mollie would develop a psychological (case) formulation, many gave a description of what a psychological (case) formulation was rather than reasons why. A number of candidates misunderstood the question and discussed the implications of attachment on the offender.

Examiner Tip
When addressing questions, candidates should focus on the direction given in the structure of the question to ensure they are able to fully present an answer that is clear and relevant.

Q09a

Question Introduction

Candidates were able to plot, label and give an appropriate title to the bar chart for this question. Most candidates achieved well here, with only a small fraction of errors seen in the title more so than the labels or plots.

Q09b

Question Introduction

The justification of an improvement to the study by Charlie was usually well answered for the first marking point of identification of the improvement, however the exemplification/ justification of the improvement proved more challenging for candidates to achieve here. The better answers gave an appropriate improvement to the study, often the use of open-ended questions to find out why the offenders felt their thinking had changed, and developed this to say how or why it made Charlies study better, often related to the validity of the data gathered increasing through the offender personal accounts about why.

Q11

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that assessed whether the classic study by Loftus and Palmer (1974) could be applied to eye-witness memory in real life situations. Some candidates were able to access this question well and presented logical, well-reasoned assessments. However, a number of candidates evaluated the study without addressing the question of application to real-life.

Examiner Tip

When presenting an assessment, candidates should structure their essays to clearly argue their points in terms of what they are being asked to assess and not present an evaluative 'strengths and weaknesses' essay.

Q12

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to evaluate the impact of stress and trauma on eyewitness memory. Many good responses were seen here, with a clear grounding in theory and some good strengths and weaknesses about the levels of stress and trauma that impacts on memory. Where candidates achieved less well, the responses were usually lacking evaluation and supporting evidence for or against the impact of stress and trauma.

Section B: Option 2

Q13

Question Introduction

Candidates were not always able to state what is meant by a focus group, with a number of candidates confusing this with group therapy.

Q14a

Question Introduction

In this question candidates were required to use their understanding to explain the scenario of Francesco having physical health issues as a result of cortisol from stress. Many candidates did not make the link to the scenario, giving a generic answer about the role of cortisol rather than linking this to the symptoms of physical ill health Francesco displayed.

Q14b

Question Introduction

Candidates were able to describe how regions of the brain are associated with stress, but few applied this to the signs and symptoms suffered by Francesco in the scenario context. A small minority of candidates replicated their response to Q14a and talked about cortisol rather than brain regions such as the hippocampus, amygdala or prefrontal cortex.

Examiner Tip
Candidates should always make the connection to the scenario content clear when given application questions.

Q15

Question Introduction

Candidates showed some good understanding of the use of SSRIs for Mollie's patients, with application in this question being stronger than Q14. Where candidates struggled tended to be the exemplification/justification for their points in terms of being clear about why their point was a benefit to the patient. Little use of supporting evidence was seen here which could have aided candidates in achieving their AO3 marks.

Examiner Tip
When addressing questions, candidates should focus on the taxonomy given in the structure of the question to ensure they are able to fully present an answer that accesses the marks available.

Q16a

Question Introduction

Candidates were able to plot, label and give an appropriate title to the bar chart for this question. Most candidates achieved well here, with only a small fraction of errors seen in the title more so than the labels or plots.

Q16b

Question Introduction

The justification of an improvement to the study by Charlie was usually well answered for the first marking point of identification of the improvement, however the exemplification/ justification of the improvement proved more challenging for candidates to achieve here. The better answers gave an appropriate improvement to the study, often the use of open-ended questions to find out why the patients felt their thinking had changed, and developed this to say how or why it made Charlies study better, often related to the validity of the data gathered increasing through the patient personal accounts about why.

Q17

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that assessed whether the classic study by Brady (1958) could be applied to the effects of stress in humans. Some candidates were able to access this question well and presented logical, well-reasoned assessments. However, a number of candidates evaluated the study without addressing the question of application to human stress.

Examiner Tip

When presenting an assessment, candidates should structure their essays to clearly argue their points in terms of what they are being asked to assess and not present an evaluative 'strengths and weaknesses' essay.

Q18

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to evaluate the impact of social support on the ability to cope with stress. Some good responses were seen here, with a grounding in theory and several were able to bring in supporting evidence. However, a few candidates gave a 'common-sense' response that talked about different types of support, such as family, friends, school, clubs, and so on, but failed to fully address the question about the impact on coping with stress.