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Examiner's Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level

In Psychology (WPS02) Paper 2

Biological Psychology, Learning Theories and  
Development

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## Examiners Report WPS02 1810.

### Section A: Biological Psychology.

1a) Candidates were required to identify a neurotransmitter for an AO1 mark. The vast majority of candidates were accurately able to identify a neurotransmitter, with serotonin being the most popular answer. Some candidates gave a description of how the named neurotransmitter affected human behaviour, which is not needed for an identify question.

1b) The requirements of this question were to identify a weakness for AO1, and then justify or exemplify a weakness for the AO3 mark. Better answers were able to do this, though there were a lot of answers that identified a weakness but did not go on to justify or exemplify their answer. The most common weakness was that it ignored other factors such as the environment. Other answers included that the explanation could not determine cause and effect when it comes to neurotransmitters and human behaviour.

2a) Question 2a required two AO1 marks to describe a CAT scan. The question was focussed on how they are used in biological psychology. Some answers repeated the same point twice, so could not gain credit for it the second time. Most answers were able to describe a CAT scan, though some did write about another type of scan. The best answers were able to offer 2 clear, distinctive descriptive points about how a Cat scan was used in biological psychology.

2b) Answers should include identification of a strength and weakness for the AO1 marks and then exemplify or justify the strength and weakness identified to gain the AO3 mark. Whilst many answers were able to identify the strength and/or weakness of CAT scans in relation to Biological Psychology, not many went on to exemplify or justify them. A range of strengths were given as answers, then most common weaknesses were that fact it does not show the functioning of the brain and the side effects of the scan. Some answers for the strength described what a CAT scan did rather than offer a strength.

3a) This question had three AO2 marks, so answers should be linked to details from the scenario that went beyond repeating the name Gabriella. The best answers were able to describe how Gabriella could have used the external zeitgebers to help regulate her sleep wake cycle, with reference to her holiday. Weaker answers often did not give sufficient link to the scenario, or did not offer enough detail to access the three marks available. Some answers did not account for the fact that she was on holiday.

Candidates should look at the marks available to determine how many points they need to write.

3b) Answers should have identified a strength and a weakness for the AO2 marks, and then exemplified or justified the strength and weakness for AO3 marks. Often

answers did not link the strength or weakness to the scenario. Few answers went on to exemplify or justify the strength and/or weakness. Some candidates described the role of external zeitgebers for the strength rather than identify a strength. Good answers used psychological research with a link to the scenario for the strength. The most common weakness was that it ignored the influence of internal pacemakers.

4a) Most answers could identify what the two variables were, but very few operationalised them.

4b) Most answers correctly identified the sampling method as a volunteer sample.

4c) This answer required an AO2 mark for identifying a weakness, and a AO3 mark for exemplifying or justifying the weakness. Most answers were able to identify a weakness in terms of the sample, with the most common answers being about the fact it was a volunteer sample or that only students from one school were used. Better answers were able to go on to justify or exemplify their weakness.

4d) This question was either answered well, with answers stating two accurate reasons for using the statistical test, or the not answered well with no accurate reason for the use of the test being given.

4f) It was clear that very few people knew what a type II error is. Some answers did show that they knew what a type II error is, but some of these failed to link it to the scenario to gain the AO2 mark.

Candidates need to do more than repeat a name when the answer is AO2.

5) This essay was an evaluate essay so required AO1 and AO3 in relation to infradian rhythms and the menstrual cycle. Good answers were able to show accurate knowledge and understanding, with the best answers being thorough. The good answers were also able to develop arguments and show a grasp of competing arguments, with the very best giving well developed logical chains of reasoning. It was good to see psychological research being used effectively in some answers for the AO3. Weaker answers tended to just give AO1 points with minimal AO3 points, if any. Some answers were limited in the AO1 with little or no AO3.

### Section B: Learning theories and development.

6a) Candidates had to describe the process of classical conditioning to gain four AO1 marks. Better answers were able to offer four descriptive points that described the process, some used psychological research in the form of Pavlov's dogs or Watson and Rayner to aid their description. Most candidates were able to gain some marks, but weaker answers often failed to write enough to access all the marks available.

6b) Answers needed to identify a strength and a weakness of classical conditioning for the AO1 marks, and then exemplify/justify the strength and weakness for the AO2 marks. Most answers identified a strength and a weakness. The most common strengths were using supporting evidence or the application of classical

conditioning. The most common weakness was that it was reductionist. The better answers went on to exemplify or justify the strength and weakness. Some answers confused classical conditioning with operant conditioning.

7a) This was an AO2 question that required answers to engage with the scenario of children playing and their body language. Better answers were able to engage with the scenario and playing with or without rules, and the children's body language in terms of thematic analysis. Weaker answers gave generic descriptions of thematic analysis with little engagement with the scenario. Some answers described how Jayant would carry out an observation rather than a thematic analysis.

Candidates should read the question carefully to ensure they are answering the question.

7c) Good answers were able to gain all 3 AO2 marks by accurately titling, labelling and plotting the graph as a bar chart. Marks were lost in the labelling of the x axis, or in not plotting the graph as a bar chart.

8) The most common study was Bastian et al. (2011).

8a) Candidates had to identify two strengths for the AO1 marks and exemplify/justify these strengths for the AO3 marks. Better answers gained both AO1 and AO3 marks. Some answers could identify two strengths but failed to go on and exemplify/justify them. The weakest answers gave generic points that could apply to several studies, with no direct reference to their chosen contemporary study.

8b) This question required candidates to identify and improvement to the sample (AO1) and to exemplify/justify the improvement (AO3). Most candidates were able to identify an improvement in relation to their chosen contemporary study, but few then went on to exemplify/justify the improvement. Some answers focussed on a weakness. Some answers were generic and showed no knowledge of their chosen contemporary study.

When asked for an improvement, candidates should explain the improvement rather than a weakness.

8c) This question required candidates to identify and improvement to the creditability (AO1) and to exemplify/justify the improvement (AO3). Some candidates were able to identify the improvement in relation to their chosen contemporary study, and a few of these answers went on to exemplify/justify the improvement. Some answers focussed on a weakness. Some answers were generic and showed no knowledge of their chosen contemporary study.

9) This open extended response required AO1 marks showing knowledge of social learning theory, and AO2 marks in relation to the scenario. The best answers were able to show accurate and knowledge and understanding of social learning theory. This was often combined with the AO2 points which showed a well-developed and logical discussion that had sustained application and a thorough awareness of competing arguments. Weaker answers either failed to knowledge that was above

limited, often just stating terms, and/or failed to apply evidence from the scenario or they failed to show an awareness of competing arguments.

### Section C.

10) Candidates were required to evaluate a study, and demonstrate both AO1 and AO3 skills. The best answers were able to demonstrate accurate and thorough knowledge of the study, as well as use that knowledge to produce well-developed, logical evaluation points that showed an awareness of competing arguments. Weaker answers often showed limited knowledge and understanding, or the knowledge was mostly accurate, but not all of it was accurate. Weaker answers also AO3 points.

11) This question required candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of two theories of aggression in relation to the scenario as well as assess those theories. Strong answers showed accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of both theories, often with the AO2 element woven into the AO1. They were also able to show well-developed logical assessment of both theories. Weaker answers often failed to show accurate knowledge and understanding of both theories, the AO1 might have been imbalanced, or both theories may have been limited. There was also often a lack of AO3 points.

Candidates need to address all the assessment objectives required for the extended open response questions.