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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2019

Pearson Edexcel International GCE

In Psychology (WPS01) Paper 1

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General Comments

Candidates engaged particularly well with this paper. All questions were attempted in most cases. There were very few blank responses in this paper. The essays were detailed demonstrating that the candidates have good awareness both of exam skills and timing under exam conditions.

The mathematical assessment questions were approached confidently but candidates must ensure that they can define or describe some of the terms and concepts. In questions where there is a scenario it is important to take as much information from this as possible. There was a significant improvement in this skill with many candidates engaging positively with the scenarios and linking their responses back to the given context. Nevertheless, generic responses were still an issue and candidates should continue to be encouraged to apply their knowledge and understanding fully to the scenario.

Candidates demonstrated good levels of knowledge and understanding across both the Social and Cognitive parts of the paper. The essays questions were underdeveloped in most cases. Candidates did not include sufficient knowledge and understanding to underpin their evaluative points. As a result, the justification often appeared generic and provided a limited argument which was not supported by research evidence. Only a very few candidates were confident with justification of evidence and building up logical chains of reasoning to support a balanced conclusion. As in previous series, candidates would find it helpful to analyse the different command terms and recognise how they should approach that type of question.

Questions about the practical investigations are often difficult for candidates. Encouragingly most responses were clearly linked to the Cognitive practical and related well to the question.

Paper Summary

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

Candidates should identify strengths which relates specifically to a study, theory or scenario.

Candidates should be able to justify why a strength is a strength.

Candidates should analyse the command terms and be confident about the response required.

Candidates should develop justification points to show a logical chain of reasoning

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Q1a

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application question which demands clear links to the scenario provided. Most candidates attempted this question confidently and it largely produced clear answers. Although candidates were knowledgeable about compliance, they were less confident in applying the concept. Some candidates gave a formal definition rather than applying it directly to Billy's behaviour.

Q1b

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application question. Many candidates understood the concept of internalisation, again providing definitions. There were many excellent answers which explained internalisation in terms of Billy's behaviour very clearly. The ones that did not achieve credit were generic.

Examiner Tip

When a question gives a scenario, candidates should link all points back to that scenario

Q2

Question Introduction

There is an A01 knowledge mark and an A03 justification mark for each strength. Milgram's research is very well known but many of the responses were generic and could have been applied to any laboratory study. The A03 points were often under developed and involved basic statements, such as 'shows a lack of ecological validity', without further justification. Candidates found this question challenging as it asked for three strengths.

Examiner Tip

Candidates must ensure that strengths or weaknesses are specific to the study in the question

Q3a

Question Introduction

This is an AO2 application question where candidates are required to identify the type of data used in the scenario. A wide variety of responses were offered suggesting that candidates do not have a clear understanding of secondary data.

Q3bi

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application mark for a calculation of a standard deviation which was calculated accurately in most cases.

Q3bii

Question Introduction

There was one A02 application mark for the correct identification of the power with the largest spread from Table 1. Most candidates identified this correctly.

Q3biii

Question Introduction

This is an A02 application mark for the correct calculation of the mode. Most candidates calculated this accurately.

Q3c

Question Introduction

There are two A03 justification marks available for explaining Marco's conclusions using social power theory. This was a difficult question and candidates often did not justify the conclusions but just restated them, gaining no credit.

Q3d

Question Introduction

There is one A01 knowledge and understanding mark and one A03 justification mark for this [part of the question]. Candidates were asked to explain one weakness of social power theory. It is important that both points relate to the same weakness and that candidates do not just start to evaluate the theory. The question was not answered well. Many candidates described the theory or the types of power rather than identifying a weakness of the theory. Several responses were based on the idea of individual difference without these being explained fully.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should read the question carefully.

Q4

Question Introduction1

This is a 'Discuss' levels based marked question. There are 4 A01 and 4 A02 marks available. The answers must relate to the scenario. Suitable examples are outlined in the mark scheme. Candidates did use the scenario effectively and explained Riya's success in terms of obedience factors. Some candidates enlarged on the scenario and discussed whether or not Riya came from a collectivist culture. The most popular answers were an authority figure and the proximity of that figure and an external locus of control. These ideas related very well to the scenario. Fewer candidates supported their arguments with A01 knowledge points or developed their application points fully to show an awareness of competing arguments.

Cognitive Psychology

Q5a

Question Introduction

There are two AO1 knowledge and understanding marks which are awarded for an accurate description of the central executive part of the Working Memory Model. Although candidates were able to identify accurately that the central executive controls the slave systems and name them properly, few were able to elaborate on the role of the central executive.

Q5b

Question Introduction

There are two AO1 knowledge and understanding marks and two AO3 justification marks for this question. Many of the responses were very simplistic and although some candidates could identify weaknesses of the Working Memory Model they found the justification of those weaknesses a challenge. The weakness identified often included that WMM is only a short- term memory model or that it doesn't take the long- term memory into account. Candidates rarely went on to expound why they consider this a weakness.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should ensure they state why the weakness is a weakness

Q6a

Question Introduction

There were two AO3 justification marks for this question. Most candidates completed this well. There was clear evidence of knowledge and understanding of the Multi store model of memory and they interpreted the graph accurately. Where candidates failed to achieve the marks it was because they based their answer on primacy and recency effects without explanation or reference to the MSM. Some candidates just reiterated the results rather than formulating conclusions.

Q6b

Question Introduction

There is an A02 application mark for a mathematical calculation. Although most candidates completed this well, a few candidates were confused by the recurring number.

Q6c

Question Introduction

This question has one A02 mark for application. There was a wide variety of responses suggesting that candidates were not at all confident with identifying levels of measurement.

Q6d

Question Introduction

This question has two A02 application marks and two A03 justification marks. Most candidates found this extremely challenging. They were asked to provide some improvements to Nairi and Talia's experiment. They were very few appropriate answers. The majority focused on the number in the sample and suggested that a larger number would be more representative without any form of justification of that idea. Others tried to completely change the entire experiment which also did not achieve credit. Responses tended to be unrealistic or generic.

Q7

Question Introduction

This question had two A01 knowledge and understanding marks and two A03 justification marks. Schmolck has always appeared to be a study that candidates do not know in great detail and they struggle with questions based on this study. Candidates also struggle with the weaknesses of a study so this proved to be a challenging question for many candidates. Many responses involved generic comments about the sample and the participants whilst others became involved with the ethics which has limited application to the question. Where candidates did achieve credit they made clear reference to the procedure or about the uniqueness of the participants

Examiner Tip

Candidates should make sure that they evaluate a study fully.

Q8

Question Introduction

This is an 8 mark levels based question which has four A01 knowledge and understanding marks and for A02 application marks. Candidates do not always write confidently about their own practical investigation but this was an exception. The practicals were mostly from the Cognitive Approach and were realistic accounts of a student investigation. The procedure was clearly presented and easy to follow. Many candidates also had a good understanding of the features of a laboratory experiment and a few could relate their own investigations to these principles. Candidates tended to write either an A01 essay or an A02 essay and they did not integrate the two components easily. Candidates who achieved the higher marking levels managed to embed A01 knowledge whilst discussing their own practical investigation.

Q9

Question Introduction

This question was a 12-mark open response question which was assessed using the levels- based marking criteria. There are six A01 marks and six A02 marks available. Thus candidates were expected to give equal emphasis to knowledge and understanding and justification in this answer. Candidates can approach this type of question in many different ways. This was a straightforward question but few candidates achieved the highest marking levels. The A01 knowledge was mixed. Most candidates had a clear understanding of the basics of the study but there were confused accounts of the actual details involving many inaccuracies. The evaluative points were often generic and were not underpinned by an accurate account of the study. The candidates did not develop coherent chains of reasoning and failed to present a balanced conclusion. There was considerable confusion about the sample used

Examiner Tip

Candidates should include more relevant A03 points in the longer essay questions.