Examiner's Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel
International GCE Advanced Level
PSYCHOLOGY (WPSO4/01)
PAPER 4: Clinical Psychology and
Psychological Skills.

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General Comments

Candidate entry for the June 2019 series was similar to that of the June 2018 series and as such the range of responses seen was on a similar distribution to this previous cohort entry.

Across the paper, candidates showed good understanding of key terms and some theoretical concepts. There was some good understanding of Rosenhan. It was disappointing that candidates have given the sample in the study as the pseudo-patients and have lost marks here.

Difficulties tended to be in the long answer questions where few justified their arguments and evaluations, and very little supporting evidence was seen. 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. This was especially evident in the 20 mark question, where the responses were significantly dominated by AO1 knowledge and understanding, and very little attempt to assess whether there were changes over time was seen.

Application for AO2 responses was improved in many candidates, however it remains an area that posed 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.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates 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, for example the differences between describe and explain in shorter questions.
- 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.

- Although there was some improvement to the unseen 'key question' essay, candidates should clearly apply their understanding of psychology to the context in the given scenario, they should not just replicate the information they are presented with as this is insufficient to show application of their knowledge and understanding.
- 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.
- 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.
- Mathematical skills were mixed this year, with some evidence of very high-level skills, whilst in other questions, such as estimations, there were few correct responses. Candidates should practice calculation and the rationale behind mathematical decision making.

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

Comments on Individual Questions
Sections A and B: Clinical Psychology
Q01a

Question Introduction

This question assessed knowledge and understanding of symptoms and or features of schizophrenia. Many gave positive and negative symptoms and listed examples of these. Very few gave features of the disorder.

Q01b

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to explain two strengths of a biological explanation for either Anorexia Nervosa or Unipolar Depression. Some candidates achieved well here, but some struggle to identify the strengths, instead giving research evidence with no indication to what this was demonstrating in terms of the strength of the explanation.

Q02a

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to give an aim from Rosenhan (1973). Many were able to achieve a mark here, but others gave unclear points and did not appear to know the aim of the study.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should know the main points of any named study, including aims.

Q02b

Question Introduction

Most candidates were able to give a strength and a weakness, although this was not always well justified for the AO3 marks. Some candidates are confusing the sample with the pseudo-patients and not achieving marks here.

Q02c

Question Introduction
This question required an improvement to the study by Rosenhan (1973). Some candidates gave a suitable improvement with justification of how or why this was an improvement. However, where errors were seen the candidates had given a

weakness of the study, or confused the sample as the pseudo-patients. Candidates could improve any aspect of the classic study by Rosenhan, but the improvements needed to be specific to the study and realistic. Often weaknesses were given rather than improvements, and these were not creditable. In addition, candidates very often misunderstood the participant sample, believing these to be the pseudo-patients rather than the sample of hospitals.

The points must improve the study and not make it weaker, for example some candidates suggested informing staff in the hospital to improve ethics and where it was clear the candidates were suggesting only the management are informed this was accepted for a mark, however it would not improve the study to inform all the nurses on the ward.

Further common responses included diversifying the sample of hospitals used e.g. different/more USA states or a different country; and changing the demographic of the confederates/pseudo-patients e.g. ethnic groups or increased number of women.

Examiner Tip
Improvements should be realistic, Rosenhan could not sample every hospital in the world or even in the USA, but he perhaps could have sampled one hospital in each state of the USA or made a comparison to some hospitals in Japan or the UK.

Q03
Question Introduction
Candidates were required to explain whether Henima should be concerned about the reliability and validity of her diagnosis. Some candidates applied their understanding to the scenario, however a number were giving generic responses that did not achieve marks here. Justification for the reasons why she should or should not be worried was often unclear and answers were muddled at times.

Examiner Tip
Candidates should ensure they apply their understanding to the scenario when directed by the question.

Q04

Most candidates were unable to describe the process of a peer review, and this question was poorly answered overall. Some managed to achieve marks here, but many of the responses indicated that candidates were unsure how a peer review would be conducted.

Q05a

Candidates often achieved at least one of the marks here for the features of the ICD, usually knowing it covered more than just mental health disorders and/or that it was published by the WHO. The only errors seen were generic responses that could apply to any classification system for mental health, or health in general.

Q05b

Candidates often achieved at least one of the AO3 marks here, usually for a difference between the DSM IVR and DSM V. Candidates rarely gave the similarity required for a comparison question.

Q06a

Candidates often achieved the mark for the use of data here, however drawing to a conclusion is not always well achieved, with candidates describing the results rather than determining what they can conclude from those results in terms of the study that has been undertaken.

Q06b

Candidates often achieved the AO2 mark for the weakness of the study here with common responses being related to the social desirability of the participants given the nature of the topic being investigated. Some candidates were able to give justification of why or how this was a weakness, but in many cases this was often under developed or not present.

Q7

Question Introduction

This question was an extended open response question for 16-marks assessed using the levels-based marking criteria. The question required candidates to evaluate drug treatments for schizophrenia.

Some of the responses did not engage with the taxonomy of 'evaluate' and in these cases candidates often presented some knowledge and understanding of drug treatments. A few candidates presented knowledge and understanding of schizophrenia and did not address the question.

Most candidates have attempted evaluations in their responses, some commented that there was 'evidence to show' without giving any actual psychological supporting evidence, however some were able to give specific research evidence to evaluate whether drug treatments were a good or bad treatment for schizophrenia.

At the lower end of candidate responses, it was common to see candidates giving a range of specific drug treatments and describing what these do.

Concluding points were not always evident, whether throughout or at the end, and many candidates presented their response without logical reasoning or understanding of competing arguments when attempting this question presented.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should present exemplified arguments and draw from a range of evidence or concepts to justify their points in extended essays. Logical chains of reasoning should be presented to show competing arguments, and these should draw to conclusions or judgements based on the evidence they have utilised in the response and in answer to the specific features of the question presented.

Sections C, D and E: Psychological Skills

Q08a

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application question where candidates were required to describe how Arina could use a PET scan in her research. Many candidates knew the features of PET scans but were unable to apply this knowledge to the process in relation to 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.

Q08b

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 understanding and AO3 exemplification/justification question. Candidates were required to give one strength and one weakness of a PET scanning technique, and many candidates were able to achieve marks for identification of a strength or weakness of this method. A few candidates were able to justify why or how these were strengths or weaknesses, but the AO3 skills overall were limited in this question.

Q9a

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 mathematical question where candidates were required to estimate the answers. This was very poorly answered, and it was clear that very few candidates knew the mathematical process of estimating, instead giving a calculated exact answer for each condition.

Q09c

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 mathematical question where candidates were required to determine which statistical test would be used. Where candidates knew the statistical tests and reasons for them, they often scored well on this question. The errors were usually seen where candidates gave the wrong test.

Q10a

This question required candidates to explain how Ahmed could control one extraneous variable, and many candidates were able to achieve the AO2 mark on this question, with some also justifying this well.

Q10b

Candidates were required to complete the chi-squared using the data in the table provided and to give their answers to two decimal places. Many demonstrated good skills here and achieved well. For those who did not achieve higher marks it was often an error with their calculations during the process, thus many achieved at least one mark here.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should ensure they follow the guidance in the question with mathematical skills, for example the number of decimal places required in their answers is a skill they should be able to demonstrate.

Q15

Question Introduction

This was a discussion on AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO2 application question that required candidates to give an equal emphasis between their underpinning knowledge/understanding and an application to the context of the given key question in their answer. Candidates were able to approach this question using any relevant and accurate aspect of their psychology course content, many used social learning theory.

Overall, some candidates were able to select appropriate theory/concepts/research relevant to the key question, although some gave limited understanding in the points they made from their chosen content. Most candidates were able to apply some of their understanding to the scenario given that underpins the key question.

Many candidates discussed social learning theory and/or social psychology, but were limited in their ability to show their AO1 understanding, although application skills to the novel context of the key question have improved. Fewer candidates engaged with content from the biological approach and therefore did not fully address the question.

A few candidates copied large chunks from the scenario rather than engaging with this and developing their answer to show how their understanding from their course can be connected to the stimulus material.

The key question used in this section of the examination will require candidates to select appropriate content and apply these areas of their understanding of psychology to explicitly discuss the key question presented. They should draw on the stimulus material given and any relevant knowledge and understanding from across their studies and not simply 'copy' from the material presented to them.

Q16

This was an extended open response essay worth 20 marks that addresses a key issue and debate in psychology. The topic of content was whether psychology has developed over time. The question required candidates to demonstrate AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 assessment points to whether psychology has developed over time or not.

Some candidates responded well to this question, although for the most part many candidates were unable to give assessment in their responses and gave a response that was more knowledge of how topics in psychology have developed, as opposed to an assessment of whether it has or has not. This resulted in many unbalanced essays that did not fully address the question.

Most candidates did respond to the question, giving some responses and very few blank answers were seen. Most responses included development in clinical psychology in terms of diagnosis, many also discussed the changes in ethical considerations, some included biological methodology of PET, fMRI and CAT scanning, but few developed their understanding beyond these points.

There was limited use of research from across the course to exemplify where changes over time were evident, for the most part the candidates described a piece of research but did not make it clear if this was demonstrating a change over time or that psychology had not developed significantly in that field.

Examiner Tip
Extended open response questions of 20-marks in this section require candidates to draw on a range of content from across their studies of psychology. They should select the appropriate content in order to address the question being asked and it may be worth candidates practicing question techniques in order to ensure they are confident with strategies to respond to the specifics of a 20-mark question.

Candidates do not need to describe every element of content they have studied, but rather they should actively select what is an appropriate range of points and accurately utilise these for the specific direction of the question taxonomy.

The LBMS weighting in 20-mark questions is heavier to AO3 content, therefore the focus of candidates should be the taxonomy used, for example Evaluate, Assess or To what extent? As opposed to the AO1 underpinning knowledge and understanding.