



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

October 2019

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Subsidiary In Psychology (WPS02) Paper 1:
Biological psychology, learning theories and
development

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Question 1

Most candidates could accurately name the parts of the neuron. Those answers that did not gain full marks often labelled the parts the wrong way round.

Question 2a

Those answers that gained the AO2 mark were accurately able to identify the independent variable. A lot of answers failed to get the mark because they identified the dependent variable instead, or were not specific enough about the independent variable. Some answers thought the independent variable was the experimental and non-experimental rats.

Question 2b

This question required candidates to identify a reason why independent measures were used in relation to the scenario for the AO2 marks and to then justify/exemplify this reason for the AO3 marks. Too many answers were generic and did not relate to the scenario. Only the very best answers were able to gain both marks. Those answers that did gain the AO2 mark often did not go on to gain the AO3 mark through a lack of justification or exemplification. There was some confusion in a minority of answers about what the two groups were with some answers saying they were the experimental and control rats rather than the rats who had or had not been injected with testosterone.

Question 2c

Candidates were required to calculate the standard deviation. The majority of answers were able to do this correctly and gain all the available marks. Those answers that did not gain all the marks were often able to achieve two of the marks for correctly calculating the sum of the differences.

Question 2d

Candidates were required to link their answer to the scenario in order to gain the AO2 marks for this question. The vast majority of answers failed to link the answer so gave generic responses and described what a skewed distribution is without any context. A large minority of the answers showed no understanding of what a skewed distribution is.

Question 3a

This was an AO1 question requiring candidates to describe the results of Brengden at al. Good answers showed a clear understanding of what the results showed and were able to gain the marks. Weaker answers did not show an understanding of

the study or the results from the study often making statements that were not accurate or failing to state which type of aggression they were writing about.

Question 3b

This was an AO1 and AO3 question. Candidates were often able to gain the AO1 marks as they were able to identify a strength and a weakness. Those answers that did not gain the AO1 marks often gave a generic strength and weakness that showed no knowledge of the study and could be applied to several studies. Only the best answers were able to offer a justification or exemplification of their strength or weakness to gain the AO3 marks.

Question 4a

This question required candidates to describe in relation to the scenario. The best answers were able to do this and gain the marks. A lot of answers were able to describe the effects of brain damage on aggression, but they failed to give this description in relation to the scenario so could not gain the AO2 marks. Some answers did attempt to link to the scenario but they did not go beyond mentioning the name.

Answers need to do more than repeat the name from a scenario to gain AO2 marks.

Question 4b

Candidates were required to identify a strength and a weakness (AO2) and the justify or exemplify them (AO3). Many answers were generic and not in relation to the scenario so did not gain credit. Those answers that were linked to the scenario were often able to gain the AO2 marks for the identification, but it was only the very best answers that went on to offer a justification or exemplification and gain the AO3 marks.

Question 5

This is an AO1 and AO2 essay where candidates had to show their knowledge and understanding and discuss this in relation to the context. It was [pleasing to see that a lot of the answers were engaging with the scenario, with reference to her shift patterns and the times. However, a lot of answers did not go beyond limited knowledge and understanding of internal zietgebers.

Candidates should be aware that 'Discuss' essays require them to show their knowledge and understanding as well.

Question 6a

Good answers were able to describe what stimulus generalisation means to gain both marks. It was nice to see some use of psychological examples, such as Little Albert and Pavlov's dogs, as part of the description. Some answers did not give enough detail to gain both marks, but were able to gain one of the marks. It was evident from some answers that there was no understanding of what the term meant.

Question 6b

Most answers were able to gain 1 of the AO1 marks for saying the conditioned stimulus no longer causes the conditioned response. However, very few were able to gain the second mark as they did not write anything else, or thought that the neutral stimulus was no longer present. Some answers used the term extinction in their response so did not demonstrate an understanding of the term.

Candidates should not use the same term in their answer when asked to define or describe what it means.

Question 7a

Most answers were correct, those that were incorrect had worked out the answer rather than give an estimate.

Question 7b

Most answers gained all three marks for accurately drawing the graph. Some answers did not accurately label the axes, either not labelling them properly or not numbering them accurately. A minority of answers were in the form of a histogram rather than a bar chart.

Question 8a

This question required candidates to apply the scenario in their answer to gain the AO2 marks. Most answers gained at least one mark for the stages the children were in. The best answers were then able to apply Freud's theory to details from the scenario going beyond just naming the children. Weaker answers did not take any further details from the scenario.

Question 8b

The best answers were accurately able to identify a strength and weakness to gain the AO1 marks and then justify or exemplify these to gain the AO3 marks. A lot of answers did not go beyond the identification and so failed to gain the AO3 marks. Some answers gave a description of the theory instead of identifying a strength.

Question 9a

Candidates obviously know this study and most were able to gain one of the AO1 marks for describing a result. The best answers were able to gain both marks for describing two results from the study.

Question 9b

For this question candidates had to identify two strengths of the study and then go on to justify/exemplify the strengths. The best answers were able to do this and gain all the marks. Some answers just identified the strengths and so gained AO1 marks but did not gain the AO3 marks as they did not justify/exemplify the strengths. Unfortunately, a lot of the answers were generic and could have applied to a variety of studies so did not show any knowledge or understanding of this specific study.

Candidates should not give generic answers that could apply to several studies when asked about strengths or weaknesses of a study.

Question 10

This question required candidates to identify a strength and a weakness in relation to the scenario for the AO2 marks and then exemplify/justify that strength and weakness for the AO3 marks. A lot of answers failed to engage with the scenario beyond naming Phillippe, or gave generic answers which limited the marks they could gain. Only the very best answers that identified the strength and weakness in relation to the scenario were able to gain the AO3 marks for the exemplification/justification.

Question 11

This essay required candidates to show knowledge and understanding of social learning theory for the AO1 and to assess for the AO3. Good answers were able to show accurate knowledge and understanding which went beyond limited and offer assessment of the theory. The weaker answers were often limited in their knowledge and understanding, often not going beyond naming the term and not showing any knowledge of what those terms mean. For the AO3 the best answers were able to offer a balanced assessment and show an awareness of competing

arguments. Weaker arguments often offered little or no assessment of the theory as an explanation of human behaviour.

Question 12

Candidates were required to show knowledge and understanding (AO1), apply relevant evidence (AO2) and evaluate (AO3) for this essay. Good answers were able to show accurate knowledge and understanding which was supported by the application and develop their arguments showing a grasp of competing arguments. Weaker answers often failed to address the AO3 element of the essay, or only occasionally supported their lines of argument with application from the scenario. Some showed limited knowledge and understanding, often just naming melatonin but not showing any understanding of how it affected the sleep wake cycle.

Question 13

This essay required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of both fMRI scans and observations for the AO1 marks and evaluate them both for the AO3 marks. Good answers showed accurate knowledge and understanding of both and were able to use coherent chains of reasoning within their evaluation of both. Some answers were imbalanced in terms of more emphasis on one of the research methods compared to the other. Some answers made categorical claims, especially about observations, which were not correct so limiting the level the answer could be awarded. Weaker answers gave limited knowledge and understanding of either research methods, and offered little in the way of evaluation.

Candidates should be aware that for 16 mark essays that look at AO1 and AO3 there is more emphasis on the AO3.