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**Examiners' Report**  
**Principal Examiner Feedback**

**October 2020**

**Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level**  
**In Psychology (WPS04/01)**  
**Paper 1: Clinical Psychology and Psychological**  
**Skills**

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## General Comments

Across the paper, candidates showed good understanding of key terms and some theoretical concepts, along with some good mathematical skills.

Difficulties tended to be in the long answer questions 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 material was seen in the 20-mark essay.

Application for AO2 responses was improved for some candidates, however it remains an area that posed problems with some candidates giving generic responses or simply using the name of a person in the stimulus rather than applying their knowledge to the stimulus material they are presented with.

## Paper Summary

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

- Candidates should write in full sentences in responses that require detailed information in the answers. Bullet pointed lists of key terms or brief phrases are not appropriate, particularly in the extended open response 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.
- Mathematical skills of statistical tests and interpreting charts could be improved, with few candidates able to identify a negative skewed distribution.
- Candidates would benefit from revisiting how to construct a hypothesis so they can master the skills of operationalisation of variables and also better understand the nature of directional one-tailed and non-directional two-tailed hypothesis, and also eliminate confusion with a correlational hypothesis.
- In the unseen 'key question' essay, candidates should apply their understanding of psychology from the course to the context in the given scenario, they should not just copy the information they are presented with as this is insufficient to show application of their knowledge and understanding.
- Within their extended open responses, candidates should give balanced arguments and exemplified points which lead to making informed conclusions or judgements (where appropriate to the taxonomy used) in relation to the question content.
- 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.

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 an fMRI scan. Some candidates confused this scanning technique, for example with a PET scan.

#### **Q01b**

##### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to give a symptom of schizophrenia. Most candidates achieved a mark here, although the symptoms were not always expressed in appropriate terminology and candidates would benefit from more accurate expression of the DMS/ICD symptoms.

#### **Q01c**

##### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to explain two strengths of Arthur using an fMRI in his investigation. This required AO2 application to the stimulus material, and few candidates were able to make appropriate application links, instead giving generic strengths of the fMRI technique that were not related to the investigation.

#### **Q01d**

##### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to describe a control for Arthur's investigation. Some candidates achieved well on this question and were able to give a relevant control that related to the stimulus material. Where candidates did not achieve marks it was often due to a lack of application to the investigation by Arthur.

#### **Q02a**

##### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to describe how family therapy would take place with Ruva and her family. Where candidates did not achieve marks it was often because of not applying their responses to the stimulus material given, and instead giving generic responses about family therapy.

#### **Q02b**

##### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to explain two weaknesses of family therapy in relation to Ruva. Some candidates achieved the AO2 mark for weakness that related to the stimulus material, but often failed to develop this point for the AO3 marks here. Where candidates did not achieve marks it was often due to generic responses being presented.

### **Q03a**

#### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to state whether Laurels results were significant using the data provided. Most candidates achieved full marks on this question with clear answers that utilised the data given. Where candidates did not achieve marks it was often due to not using the data, as instructed in the question.

### **Q03b**

#### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to state the lowest probability level of significance that Laurel could use for her data. Many candidates were able to identify  $P \leq 0.025$  as the answer here. Where candidates did not achieve the mark, they had usually given the level of significance for a one-tailed test, or they had given  $P \leq 0.10$ , suggesting a misunderstanding of what is meant by high or low probability.

### **Q03c**

#### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to explain one strength of Laurel using a correlational method. Many candidates struggled to achieve marks on this question due to limited understanding of the correlational method itself, with candidates often suggesting that Laurel can find 'cause and effect' or establish 'differences between' the disorders. Where marks were achieved, it was often the AO2 identification of the strength, although these were usually quite basic identifications.

### **Q04**

#### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to analyse whether mental health diagnosis can be considered reliable and valid. Some candidates achieved well here, where candidates did not achieve the available marks it was often from a lack of AO3 justification or exemplification of their points. A few candidates gave answers that talked about reliability and validity as if these were the same concepts in diagnosis. Candidates should be clear about the differences between reliable diagnosis and valid diagnosis in questions such as this.

### **Q05a**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to state one symptom and one feature of their chosen mental health disorder from Anorexia Nervosa or Unipolar Depression. Some candidates were able to give appropriate, specific symptoms to achieve the mark, however those who did not achieve the mark gave symptoms that were not wholly specific to their chosen disorder or were vague and unclear. When giving features, many candidates gave a second symptom rather than a feature that related to the disorder.

#### **Examiner Tip**

Features of a disorder may include demographic data in relation to cases, such as how many individuals within particular demographic groups may be diagnosed with the disorder; features associated with onset, such as the most common age or gender of onset; or data around the incidence of the disorder in society, for example changes over time, or percentages of individuals diagnosed in a given population.

## **Q05b**

### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to describe one biological explanation for their chosen disorder from Anorexia Nervosa or Unipolar Depression. Some candidates were able to achieve well, where candidates did not achieve marks there was often a very generic and poorly linked biological explanation that showed limited understanding of the biological factors said to explain the chosen disorder. Candidates who described the genetic explanation for Anorexia Nervosa rarely gave any detail about specific genes associated with this disorder, instead simply stating that genes were involved. A few candidates gave brief statements of multiple biological explanations rather than a full description of one biological explanation as directed in the question. Some candidates also went on to discuss the use of drug treatments, particularly in relation to Unipolar Depression, which was not related to the question.

## **Q06**

### **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 their chosen contemporary study for Anorexia Nervosa or Unipolar Depression.

There were some good responses seen which was pleasing. Where the responses achieved lower marks it was often due to multiple inaccuracies in the AO1 understanding of the study and often very basic, non-specific points made. It was evident in some responses that the candidates did not know the study or had muddled the study with studies or research from other topic areas.

A few of the responses gave generic points about generalisability, validity, and reliability, not making it clear how their identified evaluation point would relate to these evaluative points. The AO3 was often underdeveloped and at times was 'list-like' without the exemplification that would be expected in a 16-mark extended open response.

Some of the responses did not engage with the taxonomy of 'evaluate' and in these cases candidates often presented AO1 understanding of their contemporary study with very limited AO3 content.

### **Examiner Tip**

Extended open response questions for 16 marks require candidates to engage in depth with the content being assessed. Their responses should link to the question presented and they should avoid generic, simplistic content presented in list like or bullet pointed form.

## **Sections C, D and E: Psychological Skills**

### **Q07a**

#### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to identify the measure of central tendency shown on the graph. Most candidates were able to identify that this was the mode.

### **Q07b**

#### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to state the type of distribution shown on the graph. Few candidates were able to state that this was a negative skewed distribution.

### **Q08a**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to give a hypothesis for the investigation in the stimulus material. Some candidates gave a fully operationalised hypothesis, but most candidates were unable to achieve well on this question. Errors were seen where candidates did not give a direction in the hypothesis or were unable to operationalise variables. Several candidates stated an aim rather than a hypothesis here. Some candidates gave a correlational hypothesis.

### **Q08b**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to calculate a percentage to three decimal places. Some candidates achieved the marks here, while in several responses they utilised the wrong data to calculate their answer. Candidates should ensure they respond to the question presented.

### **Q08c**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to state a conclusion that could be made from the investigation by Spiros. Most candidates achieved a mark here, giving a conclusion that was relevant to the findings of the investigation. Some candidates restated the results of the investigation instead of a conclusion that could be drawn.

### **Q08d**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to explain one improvement to the investigation by Spiros in relation to validity. Many candidates achieved the marks for identification and application to the stimulus material, however few were able to justify how or why their improvement would relate to validity. A few generic responses were seen that did not relate to the stimulus material.

## **Q09**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to analyse whether research with human participants in cognitive psychology can meet the BPS ethical requirements. Some candidates achieved well here, however several candidates responded to this question with answers relating to research from topics other than cognitive psychology and therefore did not answer the question presented.

## **Q10a**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to calculate a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test on the data provided. Most candidates achieved some of the marks available. Errors that were seen were in relation to the ranking of data.

## **Q10b**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to state whether the data was significant or not. Most candidates were able to use the statistical tables to make this statement. However a few candidates used an incorrect N value here. Some candidates did not use the data, as instructed in the question.

## **Q11**

### **Question Introduction**

This was a discuss AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO2 application question that required candidates to discuss the key question of whether knowledge from social and cognitive psychology can help reduce prejudice. They should give an equal emphasis between their underpinning knowledge/understanding and an application to the context of the given key question in their answer.

Some candidates were able to approach this question using relevant and accurate aspects of their psychology course content in social and cognitive psychology, some candidates made basic reference to schema in cognitive psychology and conformity in social psychology, however these were often under developed and did not always link to the key question itself of helping to reduce prejudice.

Overall, a few 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. Some candidates were able to apply some of their understanding to the scenario given that underpins the key question.

### **Examiner Tip**

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 actual 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.



## **Q10**

### **Question Introduction**

This was an extended open response essay worth 20 marks that addresses a key issue and debate in psychology. The topic of content was centred on the issue and debate of nature versus nurture in psychology. The question required candidates to demonstrate AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 assessment points.

A few candidates responded well to this question with coherent and broad responses that presented arguments of whether nature or nurture were more important in psychology. However, for the most part many candidates were unable to give evaluations in their responses and gave a response that was more knowledge of some topic areas and theories, as opposed to an evaluation, for example failing to engage with an argument of whether the theory or research provided support for or against nature or nurture holding stronger weight within psychological research and explanations.

### **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 from across the course 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 excessive and unbalanced focus on the AO1 underpinning knowledge and understanding.