Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Subsidiary

In Psychology (WPS02/01)

Paper 1: Biological Psychology, Learning Theories and Development

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Biological psychology

Q1a

Most candidates were able to get this AO1 mark for defining an infradian rhythm. Some candidates confused it with other biological rhythms.

Q1b

This question required candidates to identify a weakness of infradian rhythms as an explanation for human behaviour for the AO1 mark and then exemplify/justify that weakness for the AO3 mark. The most common response was focussed on reductionism. Some answers could identify the weakness but failed to add anything further for the AO3 mark. Weaker answers often just described how infradian rhythms affected human behaviour.

Q2a

The best answers were able to gain the four AO1 marks for describing relevant research into the effect of hormones. Most gained the marks by describing relevant pieces of research, some included the methods used. Both were an acceptable way of gaining marks. Some answers did not write enough to gain all four marks. Some answers focussed on the role of hormones in aggression rather than the research into that role.

Candidates should read the question carefully and focus their answers on the question that is asked.

Q2b

To gain all four marks candidates had to identify a strength and weakness for the two AO1 marks and then exemplify/justify that strength and weakness for the two AO3 marks. The best answers were able to identify a strength and weakness, but only a very few answers went on to offer any exemplification/justification. A number of answers were about a strength and weakness of hormones as an explanation of aggression rather than a strength and weakness of research into the role of hormones.

Q3a

Most of the answers were able to use the statistics tables at the front of the paper and accurately identify that there was no significant difference for the AO2 mark. The best answers then went on to explain this using the critical and calculated values.

Q3b

This question required candidates to identify a strength in relation to the scenario for the AO2 mark, and then exemplify/justify that strength for the AO3 mark. The best answers were able to do this, with the most common strength being that it was safer than other types of scan. A lot of answers were generic and not related to the scenario so did not meet the demands of the question.

Candidates should apply strengths and weaknesses when asked to do so.

Q4ai

Most answers were accurate and clearly labelled so gaining all three marks. Some answers did not gain all the marks, often because the axes were not accurately labelled. A few answers did not draw a scatter diagram.

Q4aii

Most candidates were accurately able to identify the type of correlation they had drawn on the graph.

Q4b

Candidates were required to identify an improvement in relation to the scenario for the AO2 mark, and then further exemplify/justify this. The best answers could do this. Some answers could identify an improvement but the focussed on a weakness of the study rather than explain how/why it would be an improvement. Some answers were generic and did not link to the scenario.

Q5a

This was an AO2 question requiring candidates to describe the role of genes in aggression in relation to the scenario. The most common descriptions included the MAOA gene and the XYY chromosome. A large minority of the answers failed to apply their description to details from the scenario so gave a generic answer.

Q5b

To gain both marks candidates had to identify a weakness in relation to the scenario for the AO2 mark and then exemplify/justify that weakness for the AO3 mark. A lot of answers were generic and not linked to the scenario.

Q6

This essay required candidates to show their knowledge and understanding of light therapy and evaluate light therapy. The best answers were able to show accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding as well as well developed and logical evaluation. A lot of answers had isolated knowledge and understanding as they focussed on describing seasonal affective disorder rather and light therapy. Some answers focussed their AO3 on issues with light therapy and/or alternative treatments so they did not show a grasp of competing arguments.

Learning theories and developmental psychology

Q7

Most candidates were able to gain at least one mark for this question. The best answers were able to describe what was meant by primary reinforcement and then often used an example to gain the second mark. Weaker answers often described positive reinforcement rather than primary reinforcement.

Candidates should read through their answers to make sure they have answered the question that is asked.

Q8ai

Most candidates accurately identified the type of sample used.

Q8aii

Candidates had to identify a strength in relation to the scenario for the AO2 mark and then exemplify/justify this strength to gain the AO3 mark. A large minority of candidate did not apply their answer to the scenario so gave generic answers. Only the very best answers gained both marks. Those answers that accurately identified the strength in relation to the scenario often failed to explain the strength.

For explain questions candidates should ensure they have exemplified or justified their answer to gain the AO3 marks.

Q9a

This question was focussed on the procedure of their learning theories practical. Most answers were able to gain some of the AO1 marks, but often failed to gain all the marks as they also included other aspects of the practical. A minority of answers were generic and could have been about any of the practical carried out. Only a very few answers were about a practical from another approach.

Q9b

The best answers were able to identify a strength in terms of validity and then explain that strength and link their answer to the learning theories practical. A lot of answers were generic points that were not linked to the learning theories practical.

Q9c

Again the best answers could identify and improvement they could make to their learning theories practical, and then the very best could explain why this would be an improvement. Some answers failed to explain why it would be an improvement, often focussing on what had been a weakness of their practical. A lot of answers were generic with no specific link to their learning theories practical.

When asked questions about a practical candidates should ensure all points are linked to specific details of the named practical, rather than give generic points which could apply to several practicals.

Q10a

There were a lot of blank answers for this question. Of those that attempted to answer this question only a very few answers showed any knowledge of what object relation therapy is.

Q10b

Again there were a lot of blank answers for this question, with very few answers showing that they understood a weakness of object relations therapy.

Candidates should be aware that all aspects of the specification can be asked about.

Q11

The most common weaknesses were reductionism and the nature nurture debate. Those answers that gained marks were often able to accurately identify the weaknesses, but only the very best were able to go on to explain the weaknesses. Some answers criticised the research on classical conditioning but failed to explain how this was a weakness of the theory.

Q12

The best answers were Able to give accurate knowledge and understanding of the study for the AO1 marks, and also show well developed and logical assessment for the AO3 marks. Some answers showed isolated knowledge and understanding so limiting their AO1. Some answers offered generic assessment points that could be true of several studies. There were quite a few blanks for this question.

Section C

Q13

This evaluate essay required candidates to show knowledge and understanding of Freuds theory of psychosexual stages (AO1), apply that knowledge and understanding to the context (AO2) and evaluate the theory (AO3). The best answers demonstrated all three assessment objectives. A lot of answers showed accurate knowledge and understanding and application of the relevant evidence. However, they gave limited, if any, AO3 points.

Candidates should know what the requirements of the command words for essays are so that they can address all the assessment objectives required.

Q14

This evaluate essay required candidates to show knowledge and understanding of the two theories (AO1), apply that knowledge and understanding to the context (AO2) and evaluate/assess the theories (AO3). The best answers demonstrated all three assessment objectives. Answers often gave a stronger response for social learning theory, with the AO3 points for the pre-frontal cortex often being underdeveloped. Some answers showed their knowledge and application but failed to offer more that isolated AO3 points.