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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner's Feedback

January 2022

Pearson Edexcel International
Subsidiary/Advanced Level
In Psychology (WPS01) Paper 01
Social and cognitive psychology

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General Comments

Good psychological knowledge and understanding was demonstrated equally across the social and cognitive sections of the paper. As in previous series, candidates would find it helpful to analyse the different command terms and recognise how they should approach each type of question.

The essay questions were approached confidently and showed some awareness of psychological knowledge and understanding. Only very few candidates were confident with justification of evidence and offered explanations which could be used as part of a balanced conclusion.

There were frequent blank responses throughout the paper suggesting that candidates did not have sufficient breadth of knowledge and that there were gaps in their preparation. There was no evidence of running out of time. Some questions were left uncompleted more often than others but there was a spread throughout all questions.

The cognitive practical was poorly reported. No clear evidence of an experiment showed through in the answers. Unfortunately, the responses to questions involving the investigation were generic and obtained little credit overall. Centres are reminded that the practical investigation must adhere to ethical principles in both content and intent.

The mathematical assessment questions were generally answered well but candidates must ensure that they read the instructions carefully and provide the answer in the form requested. Candidates should ensure that they can define core terms such as the levels of measurement or types of data and give appropriate examples.

As always, candidates are encouraged to apply their knowledge and understanding to a scenario, and this was attempted successfully in the social questions where responses were linked back to the given context. Again, generic responses were one of the main reasons for not gaining credit in questions involving strengths and weaknesses. These responses should clearly refer to the theory or study in the question. There is also a justification mark in this type of questions so it should be clear why a feature is considered a strength or weakness.

Paper Summary

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

- Candidates should use supporting evidence or more fully developed justification points within their responses.
- Candidates should use specific points from their investigations to answer the questions.
- Candidates should follow the instructions carefully and look at the format required in calculations.
- Candidates should include more AO3 points in the longer essay questions.
- Candidates should show how the point identified as a strength is a strength of a particular theory.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Q1a

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding question with two marks for a description of screening procedures carried out by Burger (2009). Many candidates knew this well and achieved both marks by identifying that the volunteers were screened for their knowledge of psychology and for emotional difficulties or psychological problems. A few candidates were able to elaborate on the two-step process and the Beck Anxiety Inventory. Most responses achieved one of the screening processes and were awarded one mark. Some weaker responses focused on the sampling technique or vision tests and attained no credit.

Q1b

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 identification and an AO3 justification/exemplification question. As is often the case with questions about strengths and weaknesses, many responses were generic and did not refer specifically to Burger (2009) at all. Others did refer to the study but were descriptive rather than evaluative. Other candidates did not take note of the instruction to explain **one** strength or weakness and listed several. Candidates found this question difficult, and answers were not clearly expressed. The most popular strengths involved comparisons to Milgram's work or focused on ethics and the sample.

Q2a

Question Introduction

This question was frequently left blank. Many responses were descriptive and did not identify a strength or have any justification. Some candidates attempted to relate social power theory with other theories of obedience or use Milgram's research as support without identifying the type of power being discussed. The more successful attempts used a real-life application such as the behaviour of soldiers in the Holocaust and firmly linked this to legitimate power.

Examiner's Tip

Candidates should show how the point identified as a strength is a strength of a particular theory.

Q2b

Question Introduction

An AO1 knowledge and understanding mark and an AO2 justification/exemplification mark was available for each weakness.

Candidates struggled to find weaknesses and did not demonstrate a clear understanding of this theory. Attempts usually involved using alternate approaches to obedience without reference to Social Power Theory.

Responses recognised that this theory did not take individual differences into account but struggled to justify this.

Q3a

Question Introduction

Candidates performed this calculation confidently and accurately.

Q3b

Question Introduction

There was one A02 mark for a simple calculation. Whilst the calculation itself did not cause any problems and most candidates achieved the correct answers, not all candidates expressed the fraction in its lowest form as directed and did not achieve credit.

Examiner's Tip

Candidates should follow the instructions carefully and look at the format required in calculations.

Q4a

Question Introduction

The question has two AO1 marks and two AO2 application marks. This was a popular question, and most candidates did apply knowledge to the scenario accessing at least one of the application marks. There was some repetition of the question stem, but many responses achieved both application marks. The types of conformity were sometimes confused leading to a muddled account of compliance and identification. Internalisation was included in weaker responses. It was encouraging to see application of the scenario being included so often.

Q5a

Question Introduction

The command term 'Discuss' has four AO1 and four AO2 marks. This is a level-based question which tests knowledge/understanding and application with equal emphasis. Candidates applied Matthew's behaviour confidently and used information from the context well. There was a range of answers as the stronger responses gave detailed information about Milgram's research such as variation studies 7, 10 and 13, meeting the descriptive demands of the question whilst others talked about agency theory and did not link to Milgram's research specifically. Some logical chains of reasoning were shown with an awareness of competing arguments allowing access to the higher marking bands for stronger candidates. Limited knowledge of Milgram's studies and superficial application of Matthew's behaviour kept many candidates in the level 2 band.

Cognitive Psychology

Q6

Question Introduction

Candidates answered this strength/weakness of the Multi store Model question well showing good knowledge and understanding of the model. Many were able to describe a suitable strength or weakness and then justify why it was either a strength or a weakness. A few responses were generic and could be applied to any theory; a few muddled MSM with WMM. Most of the evidence for a strength came from using evidence to support the existence of different stores – case studies were used effectively to show separation of STM and LTM. Weaknesses often focused on the model being too simple to explain all the features of memory. Some candidates struggled to justify this effectively.

Q7a

Question Introduction

Q7a There were two AO2 marks in this question. Whilst candidates knew the difference between qualitative and quantitative data, they only gave a basic description. Very few candidates were able to elaborate to access the second mark.

Q7b

Question Introduction

There were two AO2 marks for this question. Many candidates did not attempt this question. Those that did attempt it achieved one mark for a limited description of primary and secondary data.

Q7c

Question Introduction

Q7c There were two AO2 marks. One was credited for an accurate statement about ordinal data and the other for an appropriate example. There were many blank responses and quite a few misconceptions such as ordinal data is in categories or is data you have collected yourself. Many answers were very simple such as data you can rank or put in order. Very few responses included reference to the difference in values not being consistent. Only a few candidates provided an example despite the clear direction in the question.

Q8a

Question Introduction

This question related to the candidate's own cognitive practical. Two AO2 marks were available for a description of ethical considerations made in the practical. This was a low scoring question as almost all responses were generic and made no reference to a practical investigation. Some investigations that were mentioned were obviously not cognitive or experiment based. Most candidates did not gain credit.

Q8b

Question Introduction

Similarly, although there were two AO2 marks available for an accurate description of the use of the Wilcoxon test, most responses were generic and made no reference to the cognitive practical. The candidates that did gain credit referred to the collection of ordinal data or using a repeated measures design.

Q8c

Question Introduction

This question offered two AO2 description marks for the identification of an improvement to the cognitive practical investigation and two AO3 marks for the justification or exemplification of that improvement. Candidates more often described weaknesses of a study than offered an improvement. Many of these were generic and did not refer specifically to their cognitive practical. Responses demonstrated a lack of understanding of reliability and validity.

Examiner's Tip

Candidates should make an improvement very clear and relevant to the study.

Q9

Question Introduction

This question was an 8-mark open response question assessed using the level-based marking criteria. Candidates had a basic knowledge of case studies although this was very simplistic. Many did not make a link to memory at all. Other candidates used HM to illustrate their AO1 points. There was confusion between the case studies of HM and Clive Wearing in particular. Other case studies such as Phineas Gage were also quoted but this does not give a reference to the study of memory. A popular response included details of Schmolck's experiment as candidates incorrectly considered it a case study. There was limited evaluation which was quite superficial for example case studies cannot be generalised. A reason or justification for this was rarely given. Candidates struggled with this question

through lack of knowledge and there were many who missed it out altogether.

Section C

Q10

Question Introduction

This question was a 12-mark open response question which was assessed using the levels-based marking criteria. There are six AO1 and six AO3 marks thus candidates are expected to give equal emphasis to knowledge/understanding and justification/exemplification. Most candidates attempted this question. Knowledge of reconstructive memory was limited although candidates had a confident understanding of schema. Many responses focused entirely on Bartlett's study rather than the reconstructive memory theory. The theory was often not developed beyond the basic description of schema. Although occasionally information about the theory was exemplified clearly through Bartlett's study, there was, in general, an over reliance on this study. Evaluation was limited although some use was made of eye-witness studies. Many candidates did not focus their answers on inaccuracy of memory, failing to answer the question fully. Candidates who managed to combine knowledge and justification successfully to consider inaccuracies in memory did achieve the higher marking levels.

Examiner's Tip

Candidates should include more AO3 points in the longer essay questions

