Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner's Feedback

January 2022

Pearson Edexcel International Subsidiary/Advanced Level
In Psychology (WPS02) Paper 01
Biological psychology, learning theories and development

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Section A

Biological Psychology

Question 1a

Candidates were required to state the function of neurotransmitters. Most candidates could give an accurate statement. Some candidates were not clear on the function of neurotransmitters thinking they passed the action potential down the neuron.

Question 1b

The most common weakness was that it was reductionist with those candidates who gained marks naming a factor that was not included in the explanation, the most common one being environmental factors so gaining the AO1 mark. Few candidates went on to give any justification or exemplification of the weakness, with only the very best answers gaining the second AO3 mark. Weaker answers offered a description of the function of neurotransmitters and a behaviour that they affected.

Question 2a

Most candidates could correctly identify the two variables, with the majority being able to operationalise at least one of them. Answers did not gain marks as they failed to operationalise at least one of the variables as asked in the question. Only a very few answers failed to gain any marks as they could not state the variables.

Question 2b

Strong answers were able to gain all three marks for an appropriate title, appropriate labelling of the axes and accurately plotting the data. Where marks were lost this was often on the labelling of the axes, either due to not labelling what the figures were of accurately or due to not indicating that the scale did not start at 0.

Question 2c

The strongest answers were able to correctly state why Serenity used a Spearman's Rho test. Most answer gained one mark for correctly saying she was looking for a correlation but failed to get the second mark. A significant minority of answers got 0 marks as they failed to give a correct statement. Candidates do need to know the reasons why specific statistical tests are used.

Question 3a

Only the very best answers were able to gain all four marks for a description of the menstrual cycle. Those answers that failed to get all the marks often did not have enough detail, with the weakest answers often not going beyond how long it lasted and that it was regulated by hormones.

Candidates are advised to look at the marks available for questions and ensure they write enough to access all the marks.

3b) Only the best answers were able to focus on the question and give two strengths for infradian rhythms as an explanation of human behaviour. These answers often failed to justify of exemplify at least one of the strengths so not gaining the AO3 mark. Weaker answers did not focus on the question asked and gave a strength of external zeitgebers.

Candidates should read the questions carefully and ensure they have answered the question that has been asked.

Question 4a

McDermott (2008) was slightly more popular that Hoefelmann et al. (2006). Most answers showed a good understanding of the chosen study and were able to gain marks, with the best answers giving enough detail to gain all four marks. These answers often focussed on the procedure and the results. Some answers lost marks for inaccuracies when describing the study.

Question 4b

Most of the answers focussed on validity as the question asked, with only the weakest answers focussing on another weakness. The very best answers were able to identify two weaknesses in terms of validity and then justify or exemplify theses weaknesses. A lot of answers did not gain all the marks as they failed to justify or exemplify the weakness. A large minority of answers failed to gain any marks as their weakness was generic and not linked to their chosen study and could have been written about several studies.

Question 5

The best answers were able to show accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding about a range of scanning techniques and were then able to show a well-developed and logical evaluation. The weakest answers failed to show more than limited knowledge and understanding of scanning techniques, either confusing how the different scanning techniques worked, or just naming them. Some answers focussed on studies that uses a scanning technique rather than showing knowledge and understanding of the actual technique.

<u>Section B</u>

Learning Theories and Developmental Psychology

Question 6a

The best answers were able to accurately define attention and then give an example from the scenario as asked. Weaker answers failed to define attention, often using the same word as the definition.

Question 6b

The most common weakness was that it was reductionist with those candidates who gained marks naming a factor that was not included in the explanation, the most common one being biological factors so gaining the AO1 mark. Few candidates went on to give any justification or exemplification of the weakness, with only the very best answers gaining the second AO3 mark.

Question 7a

Very few answers were able to describe a thematic analysis in relation to the scenario so gaining any marks. Stating the name is not application and so cannot gain credit for AO2 marks. A lot of candidates showed no knowledge of how a thematic analysis is carried out.

Question 7b

A small minority of the best answers were able to gain marks as they could clearly identify an improvement in relation to the scenario. A lot of answers failed to link their answers to the scenario. Stating the name alone is not application.

Question 8a

The best answers were able to focus on free association and link their description to the scenario so were able to gain marks. A lot of answers failed to link their answers to the scenario. Stating the name alone is not application.

Question 8b

The very best answers were able to identify a strength and a weakness of free association in relation to the scenario, with a few going on to justify or exemplify the strength and/or weakness. Most answers failed to link to the scenario. Stating the name alone is not application.

Question 9a

A lot of answers could correctly calculate the standard deviation and gained all four marks. A few answers failed to gain the fourth mark as they did not give the answer to two decimal places as stated in the question. There was a large minority of answers that failed to get more than one mark as they wrote a minus times a minus was a minus, which then affected the rest of their answer.

Question 9b

Only a few answers were showed understanding of why a standard deviation may be used and were able to link it to the scenario. Stating the name alone is not application. A lot of answers showed no understanding of the standard deviation and why it might be used.

Question 10

The best answers were able to show accurate and thorough understanding of operant conditioning and were also able to display a well-developed logical discussion linking their answers to various details from the scenario. A lot of answers were able to show accurate knowledge and understanding and a developed discussion so getting into level 3. Weaker answers often failed to explain terms used in operant conditioning or were unable to show accurate knowledge of negative reinforcement. A very small minority of answers were about classical conditioning.

Section C

Question 11

The very best answers were able to show accurate knowledge and understanding of the MAOA gene and how it affected aggression and the XYY syndrome. They were also able to offer well-developed logical arguments. Weaker answers often did not go beyond naming the MAOA gene and saying it was passed down through families, and then often went into a detailed description of McDermott (2008) and/or Brengden et al. (2005).

Question 12

Candidates who knew both studies were able to write accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding about both of the as well as display a logical well-developed evaluation. Some answers were level three as they showed accurate knowledge and understanding and developed arguments. Weaker answers often lacked detail or were inaccurate in at least one of the studies. Very few answers wrote about a wrong study.