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Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner's Feedback

January 2022

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Psychology (WPS03) Paper 01
Applications of psychology

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General Comments

Many of the candidates attempted to answer all of the questions. Knowledge and understanding were demonstrated by the many of the candidates.

From the two option units, Option A was the preferred choice of a majority of the candidates.

Option A was the preferred choice of the majority of candidates and knowledge and understanding in respect of many aspects of criminological psychology was evident. Candidates who had chosen Option B, demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of treatments.

Candidates would benefit from an improved understanding of choosing the appropriate strengths and weaknesses of a study, theory or concept as many just described the theory. Whilst the descriptions showed a full understanding, this did not address the question and so marks were lost. Further improvement is also required in respect of addressing the question, as it was clear, for example that candidates had a good knowledge of cross-cultural research but did not apply this information to the question.

It was pleasing to see the level of knowledge and understanding in respect of the classic study by Loftus and Palmer, as candidates were accurate on the whole in describing the study and could apply the description to the evaluative points as supporting evidence.

The longer response questions requiring AO3 appeared to challenge students at the lower end of the grade boundaries. It is important for candidates to understand the requirements of the questions in terms of the taxonomy. When a question requires an assessment to be made, candidates must make a judgement. It is also important to apply the judgement accurately, therefore, as in assessing whether a study can be considered scientific, general evaluation points should not be given.

Paper Summary

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

- Candidates need to review the calculation techniques for the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test.
- Candidates need to understand that when a scenario has been given, that elements of this scenario (not just a name) must be used in their response.
- Candidates would benefit from revisiting the requirements of the questions by reviewing the taxonomies and working through how to apply these, particularly in respect of the AO3 requirement in the 8-mark essay questions.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Q01a

Question Introduction

The majority of candidates could correctly identify the stage of development suggested by Piaget, the sensorimotor stage. A few errors were made in confusing the name of the stage, for example sensory-operational.

Q01b

Question Introduction

Many candidates were able to achieve one mark for outlining animism in the context of Flora and the teddy bear. Some candidates expressed it in terms of Flora's egocentrism leading her to believe that the bear would be experiencing the same feelings as she would in his place which was also creditworthy. The justifications were not always fully developed and/or related back to the stem to achieve the second mark.

Q02

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to identify and justify a strength and a weakness of mindfulness as used to enhance children's development. The majority of candidates could describe the application of mindfulness but were unable to suggest how this enhanced development and so did not achieve any marks.

Examiner's Tip

Where the question requires a strength or weakness, there needs to be a clear identification followed by a justification, where applicable, findings from an appropriate study should be used.

Q03a

Question Introduction

The bar chart was attempted by the majority of candidates and drawn accurately with correct labelling. Some candidates drew a histogram, so were unable to achieve full marks on the question.

Q03b

Question Introduction

The question required an improvement to be suggested for Maud's investigation. The most common response was to suggest a bigger sample size making it more generalisable, but this is a generic response and not creditworthy.

Examiner's Tip

When suggesting an improvement, if the candidates choose generalisability, it must be related to the scenario and show how this makes it more representative of the target population in question.

Q04

Question Introduction

Many of the responses were vague, descriptive answers in response to identifying and justifying the strengths and weaknesses of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, which were not creditworthy. Where candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the theory, the most popular strengths identified face validity and the fact that Erikson's stages covered the whole of life, rather than simply childhood. The most common weakness was lack of empirical evidence and the descriptive nature of Erikson's theories.

Q05

Question Introduction

The question required candidates to evaluate Skinner's theory of language development. This was a question that candidates did not feel comfortable in answering as there were many blank and limited responses to this question.

The candidates that did offer a response, the AO1 outline of Skinner's theory was generally well understood and explained, though there was some confusion between Skinner's theory, social learning theory and Chomsky. Many candidates also did not demonstrate a good understanding of the use of negative reinforcement in respect of language learning, often citing punishment instead. Some candidates were able to apply Chomsky's theory as an alternative explanation for AO3 and where this was used, were able to achieve the higher levels.

Q06

Question Introduction

The question required candidates to assess whether the findings of cross-cultural research into attachment have furthered understanding in developmental psychology. Many candidates demonstrated a thorough knowledge and understanding of research in this area. However, the question required candidates to apply the findings of these studies as oppose to just describing them, so they did not address the question and assess the significance of the findings, limiting many candidates to Level 2, gaining 3 to 4 marks. For those candidates who were able to address the question, Level 4 marks were achieved.

Examiner's Tip

It was clear that many candidates had a thorough understanding of cross-cultural research but had not read the requirements of the question. If candidates could focus on which parts need to be 'assessed', they could move into the higher mark bands.

Q07a

Question Introduction

Many candidates appeared to write about weapon focus well, mentioning, focusing on the weapon, paying attention to the weapon or the weapon provoking stress. However, the question required the description to be linked to how this affected memory and this was rarely addressed, so they were unable to achieve the mark.

Q07b

Question Introduction

Most candidates demonstrated an understanding of post-event information but found it difficult to apply it to the scenario. The candidates repeated elements of the scenario but did not refer to how the memory had been changed or how it affected reliability, so were unable to achieve full marks for this question.

Examiner's Tip

Whilst there were fewer generic responses, some candidates still did not reference the salient points of the scenario in their answers. If there is a scenario, it is important to identify key features to apply to the theory or concept being addressed.

Q08a

Question Introduction

The candidates were required to calculate the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test for Jago's experiment for 4 marks. The modal score for this response was, for the majority of candidates 1 mark. Most candidates could calculate the differences correctly but went on to make mistakes in the Ranked Difference column and scored no further marks.

Q08b

Question Introduction

The majority of candidates gave generic responses of the strength of a repeated measures design and did not apply it to CBT or offenders as detailed in the scenario and so were unable to achieve any marks on this question.

Q08c

Question Introduction

This question was answered well by many candidates who were able to identify an improvement to the sample, citing the inclusion of female offenders. However, the candidates did not achieve the second mark as the justifications were often generic, just stating it would improve generalisability but not relating this to how or to whom, so, not making reference to the appropriate target population.

Q09a

Question Introduction

Many candidates appeared to have a good understanding of self-fulfilling prophecy but found it difficult to apply it to the scenario, often just repeating elements from the scenario. Key features such as labelling, and internalisation needed to be linked to the scenario in order to gain full marks.

Q09b

Question Introduction

Some candidates were very clear on the important stages of CBT and demonstrated a good understanding of how CBT would be useful to Lucy, to bring about behaviour change. Marks were lost however, when candidates provided a response detailing the procedure of CBT but did not apply this to the scenario and suggest how these techniques would bring behaviour change.

Q10

Question Introduction

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates allowing them to access the higher mark band in this levels-based question. The candidates had to evaluate Loftus and Palmer in terms of reliability and validity. Candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the study. For those that achieved the higher mark bands, the evaluation concentrated on reliability and validity. For some, the evaluations were generic, or included elements such as ethics, generalisability and applicability which did not address the question.

Q11

Question Introduction

Many candidates found this essay question to be challenging. There were some higher-level responses which did describe pre-trial publicity and gave examples. However, the majority of candidates did not elaborate to make their knowledge and understanding detailed.

For the AO3 marks, some candidates discussed the problems with mock jury studies by many candidates struggled to find supporting evidence: Steblay was the most commonly cited and there were a number of responses that used this study quite well. At a loss for direct, relevant evidence, many candidates fell back on more tangentially related studies, for example jury decisions being influenced by race or expert-witness testimony. Some managed to incorporate these as a form of a competing factors but many were not able to apply these and so they did not relate directly to the question.

