

Psychology

Advanced GCE A2 7876

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS 3876

Report on the Units

January 2009

3876/7876/MS/R/09J

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Advanced Subsidiary GCE Psychology (3876)

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2540 Core Studies 1

General Comments

Traditionally this paper is taken by candidates resitting the summer exam 2008, and performance usually reflects this situation. Many candidates were well prepared and demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of the studies thus performing well.

Most candidates did well on the questions that required them to state details of a study and there was a good understanding and use of the terms 'reliability' and 'validity'.

However, there were candidates who seemed to give answers that had been prepared from previous questions and not well related to the set questions on this paper.

Weaknesses are still tied in with; not relating the answer to the relevant study, not understanding the injunction i.e the differences between 'identify' and explain/outline, and confusing 'findings' with 'conclusions'.

Comments on individual questions.

- Q1. Well answered though there were some words that appeared that Washoe did not sign.
- Q2. Stronger candidate knew the difference between 'findings' and 'conclusions' so answered this question very well. Others gave conclusions which wouldn't score marks. The second part of the question was answered very well by all candidates.
- Q3. This question required candidates not only to identify problems, but also to relate them to the study. Many confused 'anecdotal' with 'experimental' evidence. The question also asked for **two** problems.
- Q4. On the whole well answered. This question required identification only and an explanation was not required. A misconception was that autistic children had a lower IQ than other children.
- Q5. Most candidates scored well on this question, few gave findings as their answer.
- Q6. The question turned out to be more problematic than anticipated. Many candidates did not distinguish between 'conditions' and 'controls'.
- Q7. A common mistake on this question was to think that the restored/adopted group was used as a comparison group.
- Q8. Well answered by most candidates, full marks were achieved by giving two different limitations and relating them to the study.
- Q9. There was a good understanding of the findings of the two conditions and clear explanations were given. Some candidates described the outcome of the initial injection rather than the findings.
- Q10. A well answered question only a few candidates confused EEG with scans.
- Q11. Candidates clearly understood the concept of low ecological validity and gave good answers relating to the study.

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- Q12. A common mistake was to describe how/what PET scans worked/showed rather than to say why they were carried out. Good answers described clearly that they were being used to provide evidence for those pleading NGRI. In part b of the question good answers referred to social discrimination and distress that the murderers would think that they were different.
- Q13. A well answered question. The majority of candidates gave the two reasons asked for with explanations relating to the study.
- Q14. There were some excellent answers showing sound applications of the findings of this study.
- Q15. Candidates commonly gave definitions better suited to 'bystander apathy' than the 'diffusion of responsibility'. In part b good answers identified a problem and related it to the study. Weak answers did not identify problems of measurement of diffusion of response but rather ethical issues.
- Q16. There was a good understanding of the question and only a few candidates missed out on full marks by either using 'children' as one answer or thinking the study took place in America.
- Q17. This was a poorly answered question and a great many candidates could not apply the findings of Gould to a 'nature' view of intelligence.
- Q18. Surprisingly not a well answered question, suggesting candidates were responding to a different question to which they had prepared 'their answer.
- Q19. Good answers related a strength/weakness to events in the study by Rosenhan.
- Q20. Few candidates knew the difference between physiological and psychological measures, scoring badly for this question.

2541 Core Studies 2

This was the penultimate sitting of what is now referred to as the legacy specification' but nevertheless some 2000 candidates took the examination and performed, in general terms, at a level similar to those of past January examinations. Although many candidates showed detailed knowledge and understanding and therefore achieved high marks, there were others with the same qualities who failed to do themselves justice through faulty examination technique. This is disappointing for the examiner and, of course, for the candidate who ought to achieve higher marks.

The most common errors in technique identified in the examination were:

1. For questions 1 and 2 part (c), fulfilling the assessment request to suggest an alternative but not considering how this might affect results.
2. For questions 1,2,3 and 4 part (b), not framing the answer in terms of general strengths/weaknesses or problems relevant to the topic area but, instead, considering specific points about the studies. This is especially apparent when a candidate writes in the study by xxx one problem was...'. It would be preferable, and allow the candidate to more readily access the available marks, if the answer began: 'One problem psychologists face when they use observation to gather data is...'
3. Again, in questions 1,2,3 and 4 part (b), taking the injunction to 'briefly discuss...' too literally and thereby providing insufficient detail to achieve a high number of marks.
4. Finally, and again with reference to part (b) responses, a tendency to rely on psychological concepts such as 'demand characteristics', 'validity', 'reliability' etc to fit any question regardless of the issue under consideration.

Question 1 (the use of controls)

Candidates could choose one of three named studies, those of Haney, Banks and Zimbardo; Raine, Buchsbaum and La Casse; or Milgram. There seemed to be a slight preference for Milgram over Zimbardo but few candidates used Raine et al and those who did often struggled to grasp the nature of controls in that study

Part (a)

Very few candidates scored 0,1 or 2 marks with most descriptions scoring higher. For top marks, candidates had to describe the controls that were used rather than a description of the study itself. The best did as required and were awarded marks accordingly though weaker candidates, using Zimbardo for example, filled their account with references to prisoner and/or guard behaviour, the 'pathology of power' and so on.

Part (b)

This, as noted in the general comments above, proved problematic for some candidates who identified and discussed study specific issues rather than the general advantages and disadvantages of applying controls. On the other hand many were able to identify and explain issues such as a lowering of ecological validity or reducing the effects of extraneous variables and illustrate these generally applicable points from their chosen study. Despite this, full marks were rare in this section, commonly because the candidate passed no additional comment or in offering one merely re-iterated the point.

Part (c)

Apart from the tendency, noted earlier, to omit any reference to the effect a suggested alternative may have on the results, candidates frequently discussed controlling variables which were already controlled in the chosen study rather than 'one other variable' as asked for by the question. Thus there was discussion, for example, on controlling the prompts used in the Milgram study or the continuous performance task in Raine rather than genuine consideration of what else could have been controlled in the original study.

Question 2 (the quantitative approach)

Candidates could choose one of three named studies, those of Dement and Kleitman; Loftus and Palmer; or Hradek and Grant. Whilst Loftus and Palmer was the most popular choice, the other two studies were frequently used as they too offered ample opportunity for illustrating the quantitative approach. On the whole, candidates who opted for this Section A question rather than question 1 seemed to find it more accessible and tended to score higher marks.

Part (a)

Again very few candidates scored 0,1 or 2 marks with most descriptions scoring significantly higher. For top marks candidates had to describe how quantitative data was gathered in their chosen study rather than a description of the study itself. A minority did simply describe the study with little or no reference to the data collection which restricted their marks considerably compared to those who fully engaged with the demands of the question. Exceptionally good answers were invariably found in those where Loftus and Palmer was the chosen study. Candidates were clear in their discussion of the use of questions to elicit numeric responses in the first study and how this information was used by the researchers to confirm their hypothesis. Indeed answers which focussed only on this first study, provided there was sufficient and appropriate detail, could score maximum marks, without reference to the second study. Answers using the other two studies were generally thorough although occasionally the Dement and Kleitman study in particular produced descriptive accounts including consideration of the qualitative elements.

Part (b)

This section was generally well answered as candidates seemed conversant with the general advantages and disadvantages of the quantitative approach. So the objectivity of the data, the ability to compare participants/conditions, the opportunity for statistical analysis, the failure to find explanations for behaviour and so on were raised as generally applicable issues with appropriate illustration and comment. A few candidates however still focussed on the 'study specific' and lost marks through discussing as problems that, for instance, Hradek and Grant used children or that Dement and Kleitman's laboratory based research reduced ecological validity without relating these to the set question.

Part (c)

Candidates generally found it a straightforward task to submit an alternative method of data collection. Interviews, to generate qualitative data, were frequently suggested and there was good discussion on the implications of such an approach. However, as noted earlier, there was rarely any consideration about how this would affect the results and often little consideration was given to the fact that the 'alternative' would have fundamentally changed the objective of the original study. This was especially apparent in Dement and Kleitman where the relationship between REM/NREM and dreaming could not be explored through, say, an interview.

Question 3 (observation)

Of the two Section B questions this was overwhelmingly the most popular choice and, on the whole, produced higher marks than those for question 4. It would appear, as was evident with the quantitative approach examined in question 2, that candidates are familiar with the observational method, perhaps through their experience in conducting practical investigations, and were therefore comfortable in making this their favoured question. The best showed impressive knowledge, understanding and effective examination technique especially the use of 'point, example, comment' in answering part (b)

Part (a) As always, a small number of candidates chose to write about one study instead of the required four and consequently could only score a maximum of 3 out of the 12 marks available for this section. For the remaining candidates, the four studies provided plenty of opportunity to discuss the use of observation to gather data, although some, as noted previously, described the study itself with any reference to observational techniques as incidental. With Rosenhan, the discussion sometimes focused entirely on the admissions process and with Bandura on the pre-observational elements with the model and the children in the same room.

Part (b) This provided some excellent answers with candidates clearly understanding the general issues such as the ethical problem of consent, of the possibility of misinterpretation of behaviours, the witnessing of normal behaviour and so on. As is frequently the case however, some students chose to reshape the question into a discussion of the ethics of observational research and produced two, three and sometimes all four paragraphs on this. This repetitive response does not demonstrate the breadth of psychological knowledge or understanding required by this particular paper.

Question 4 (usefulness)

This was the least popular question on the whole paper providing responses covering the whole range of marks. The best, again, showed impressive knowledge, understanding and effective examination technique though a number of candidates, whilst knowledgeable about the studies themselves could not relate this to usefulness.

Part (a) Whilst the occasional answer focused on one study only, this section was well answered if the candidates remembered to state clearly how the study was useful and discuss issues related to real life application. Some of the best answers referred to Samuel and Bryant's findings having useful implications for teaching young children, Tajfel in showing how best to avoid the effects of discrimination, Derogowski in highlighting awareness of cultural differences and the dangers of ethnocentrism and Hodges and Tizard for providing guidance to those working with children in care.

Part (b) If problems arose at all with time management it is in this last subsection of the paper that these came to the fore. Some students simply concluded their attempt with part (a) whilst a few managed to write one or two paragraphs instead of the required four. Again the best answers made effective use of 'point, example, comment' referring to problems related to ecological validity, the use of limited samples, reductionism etc., and used information from the studies to illustrate their points in a concise manner. Some candidates, however, lacked elaboration, particularly with regard to providing a comment which was genuine evaluation or implication, merely repeating some sort of mantra that 'it was more valid' or 'making it valid and reliable' without fully understanding the terminology or its relevance to the discussion.

2542 Psychological Investigations

General Comments

This session was a legacy paper which meant that the vast majority of entries were resits. The standard of scripts was very high, with the majority of candidates being able to describe and evaluate their data collecting activities, as well as identify strengths and weaknesses. Candidates had conducted a wide range of activities and most were able to report on the methods and findings of their activities clearly. It is apparent that centres are now very familiar with this paper and prepare candidates effectively for it. There were very few poorly performing candidates which, in these particular cases, reflected insufficient preparation for the examination.

Comments on individual questions

Section A: Questions, self reports and questionnaires.

1. This was a relatively straightforward question which most candidates answered well. To achieve full marks, three pieces of information, such as age, gender, occupation, number of participants or where the sample was from needed to be included. There were a few candidates who described the sampling method here without giving any information at all about the sample.
2. Most candidates were able to name and describe the sampling method used in this activity, with high performing candidates being able to describe this in the context of their investigation. There are still some candidates confusing random and opportunity sampling methods with some candidates using the words 'randomly selected' when describing how they collected their opportunity sample. A small number of candidates confused questions 1 and 2 resulting in a loss of marks.
3. This question was worth six marks which is more than 10% of the total marks on the paper. This should mean that candidates could spend six or seven minutes on this question. Candidates could either provide an advantage and disadvantage of their sample or sampling method. Candidates who gave more general strengths and weaknesses of their sample or sampling method with no mention of their activity were awarded a maximum of four marks on this question.

Section B: An observation

- 4(a) Most candidates achieved full marks here, although there were candidates who gave general responses such as 'the aim of my observation was to look at the behaviour of students in the canteen', this answer would have been awarded full marks if the candidate had specified the type of behaviour they were looking at.
- 4(b) Most candidates achieved full marks here, although some candidates lost marks due to a lack of clarity.
- 5 Most candidates were able to identify an appropriate ethical issue although some confused ethical concerns with their desire to collect valid data for example 'an ethical issue is that people may act to demand characteristics'. Most candidates explained how they would deal with the ethical issue, with weaker candidates providing a solution that was unrelated to the issue that they had identified. However, a lot of candidates failed to describe their

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ethical issue in the context of their investigation, resulting in a maximum of two marks on this question.

- 6 This question was misunderstood by some candidates who gave strengths and weaknesses of their own observation. However these answers were credited if the strength or weakness could be said of observations in general. Some candidates commented on the strength or weakness of the type of data that observations collect, rather than the observational method itself. These answers were not credited.

Activity C: Collection of data to investigate the difference between two conditions.

- 7 This question attracted a range of answers with poorer performing candidates being unclear in their description of what their investigation was about. This was particularly the case for candidates who had carried out Stroop tests. Poorer performing candidates also failed to identify the two different conditions in their answers. For full marks, procedure should be replicable and offer key information, such as what was being investigated and how it was being conducted.
- 8 This was generally well answered, although weaker candidates gave very vague suggestions for example, 'different time of day', 'observe for longer' without saying when or for how long. Some candidates effectively answered part (b) in part (a) resulting in wasted time giving the same answer again.
- 9 This question attracted a range of answers. Strong candidates were able to apply their suggested improvements to the result of their activities. Weaker candidates did not apply their suggested improvement to the results of their activity or if they did, they did not explain it well. Some candidates confused reliability and validity.

Activity D: A correlation

- 10 Most candidates were able to identify their two independent measures, although there were some who gave answers that were not measures such as 'sleep', 'reaction' or 'health' instead of 'number of hours' sleep', 'reaction time' or 'self rating of health'.
- 11 This was generally well answered, although some candidates failed to give enough information here for full marks, for example, saying 'measured with a questionnaire' rather than giving details of the question and/or rating scales.
- 12(a) Most candidates were able to draw a scatter gram, although some lost marks for misidentifying the unit that the scale was measuring e.g. 'cm' for 'reaction time' or omitting to identify where 'introversion' and 'extroversion' lie on a scale of 'extroversion.' A small number of candidates are still drawing graphs with each participant identified along one axis and these did not achieve any marks.
- 12(b) Varied answers to this question. The conclusion must be one that is evident from the scatter gram rather than simply giving the statistical calculation. Some candidates who had clearly drawn a positive correlation in their scatter graph, concluded that there was a 'negative' or 'no correlation' or vice versa. These answers failed to achieve credit. Better candidates explained a conclusion fully with reference to the independent measures.

2544 Psychology and Education

There was a good spread of marks on this paper from a small entry of 567 candidates. Most candidates balanced their time between part A and B in line with the weighting of the marks. However, there were a few candidates who spent too long answering Section A, leaving them insufficient time for Section B. Section B was stronger than Section A as many candidates found Section A part b particularly challenging. However, for a January entry the fluency and accuracy of the responses was good.

Most of the candidates entered for this module had sufficient knowledge and understanding of topics in psychology and education. They had learned a wide range of evidence to include in their answers and applied it appropriately in their responses. I am impressed with the way candidates are able to relate psychological theory to educational settings using a variety of different examples, but candidates must not forget that psychological evidence is of paramount importance in providing a well argued response. In section A, part b some candidates failed to evaluate with a range of points and drifted into description of alternative psychological research. In Section B candidates had most difficulty with part b. Some candidates used this section to describe further research instead of focusing on evaluation in relation to issues. There is no prescribed way of answering this part, but better candidates take three or four issues in turn and evaluate two or three pieces of evidence in relation to that issue, often using comparisons and contrasts. The candidates who evaluate different pieces of research in turn often do not present their argument so coherently.

Candidates did use the time well and the majority attempted every question.

Q1a – This was fairly well answered with a number of candidates achieving 4 of the 6 marks. Many chose to describe ADHD and this usually received the best marks. There was quite a bit of detail about symptoms and causes. However, candidates often went off track with how to prevent or cure ADHD which did not answer the question. In addition to this a number of candidates stated the cause of disruptive behaviour was poor classroom management but then went into great detail about strategies to deal with the disruption which again received no credit.

Q1b – There were many weak answers in response to this question as candidates tended to continue from part a in describing more explanations for disruptive behaviour rather than evaluating the explanation. Some did focus on discussing the explanations by using appropriate evaluation issues and gave some examples to back up their points. Many focused their answer on how to cure the disruptive behaviour and in particular all of the problems with Ritalin. This did not answer the question and received no credit. Good evaluative points focused on the nature nurture debate, reductionism and the difficulty of diagnosis.

Q2a – This was a straight forward question and many candidates gave a detailed, accurate description of a study into the effects of the physical environment on pupils' performance and some also referred to their feelings as well. A wide variety of classroom environment studies were described and not just on seating arrangements or noise. One or two strayed away from the question with for example environmental studies such as Middlemist. Some candidates did seem to describe more the features of an ideal classroom rather than a study.

Q2b – Candidates were able to make some appropriate evaluative points in response to this question and better candidates supported their points with evidence from a range of psychological studies. The problems described included individual differences and demand characteristics. Weaker candidates made a number of points but gave either no evidence or just anecdotal evidence to back up the points.

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Q3a – Well answered by the majority of candidates. They were clearly well prepared for this question and had revised well for it. Most described both psychometric tests as well as different forms of assessment used in the UK. The Rosenthal and Jacobson study on bloomers was often described as well. Weaker candidates gave briefer responses that were sometimes more anecdotal than psychological.

Q3b – This question was answered adequately by most candidates. Candidates did follow the house style and did give definitions of their issues. Some candidates spent time describing more evidence in this section rather than focusing on evaluative comments. Candidates clearly find it easier to describe psychologists' research than commenting on it and assessing its' effectiveness, validity, reliability etc. What was missing in most candidates answers was depth of evaluation. Candidates' evaluative points were very brief and often quite general about assessment strategies. A few candidates explained how assessment techniques could be tested for reliability and validity. Although some candidates did this very well, they did not relate it in an evaluative way.

Q3c – This was very well answered by the candidates and they brought in a range of evidence to support their ideas. This evidence came from the topic of assessment as well as other topics such as motivation and teaching and learning styles. A few candidates seem to think 13 year olds are still in Piaget's concrete operational stage which is incorrect.

Q4a – Very similar to 3a. Candidates were well prepared and had a really thorough and detailed understanding of teaching and learning styles. They often gave well structured, detailed answers using psychological terminology and showing good understanding. Many received 7-9 marks.

Q4b – Again this was very similar to 3b. Weaker candidates just evaluated teaching and learning styles generally rather than discussing specific pieces of evidence.

Q4c – Really well answered. The responses were impressive with a range of detailed suggestions given using evidence from the topic of learning and teaching styles as well as some of the other topics. Candidates were very well prepared for how to go about answering these type of questions.

Candidates did use the time well and the majority attempted every question.

2545 Psychology and Health

General Comments

There was an unequal split between the candidate's choice of questions: 1 (preventing and quitting substance abuse) and 3 (lifestyles and health behaviour) being chosen by fewer candidates than questions 2 (practitioner and patient interpersonal skills) and 4 (health promotion). There were some clear general patterns noted by examiners which are worthy of mention here. Questions 1 and 2 parts (b) clearly discriminate between candidates with only the very strongest candidates showing the ability to engage with the question, raising and applying relevant points. The majority of candidates managed to identify some points but failed to make them truly relevant to the question. Similarly in questions 3 and 4 part (b) the majority of candidates could identify relevant issues with which to evaluate the research and theory described in part (a) but fewer were able to address all aspects of the evaluation to warrant top marks on each of the mark-scheme criteria. In a similar vein answers to questions 3 and 4 part (c) tended to be polarised: Some candidates were well prepared for the demands of these questions and clearly offered their suggestions which they backed up with evidence and well explained psychological rationale. Weaker candidates tended to offer answers which were purely descriptive and often anecdotal. It was noted by examiners that the general quality of part (c) answers was poorer than in recent sessions. It was also noted that in general those candidates selecting question 1 (preventing and quitting substance abuse) produced weaker answers than those selecting question 2 (practitioner and patient interpersonal skills); in particular the part (b) of this question proved to be extremely challenging for the majority of candidates.

Comments on the Individual Questions

Question 1

Part (a) required candidates to outline ONE piece of research which investigates preventing or quitting substance abuse. Some very poor responses to this question were seen by examiners where candidates failed to even identify one piece of research and tended to give anecdotal examples of preventing or quitting substance abuse or describe research which was not explicitly about preventing or quitting. However, some excellent answers were also seen. Essentially good answers offered a detailed, accurate and well organised description of a piece of research which investigates preventing or quitting substance abuse. Some excellent answers to this demanding question were seen where the candidate gave a clear description of relevant research from a psychological perspective, demonstrating clear understanding.

Part (b) required candidates to discuss the ecological validity of research into preventing and quitting substance abuse. It was encouraging to note a number of candidates were able to answer this question by addressing a number of key points such as the way in which research has been conducted and the extent to which this affects ecological validity. Good answers explored the issues relating to the sample, setting, task and results of research and how they reflect real life. Weaker answers either completely failed to address the question or only did so by default as they used the Section B part b approach to evaluating evidence which failed to attract many marks other than when they addressed the issue of ecological validity. The very best answers were supported with examples and used psychological terminology. Weaker answers tended to list points, often referring to the methods of preventing and quitting rather than research into this which attracted little credit from the mark scheme as it essentially failed to answer the question.

Question 2

Part (a)

A range of different studies into practitioner and patient interpersonal skills were seen. Weaker answers tended to either:

- Describe a relevant study but fail to give appropriate detail.
- Describe a study but not relate it specifically to interpersonal skills.
- Fail to describe a study at all, for example describe interpersonal skills but not in the context of any study. Candidates who did this limited themselves to the lower mark band.

Regardless of study presented the credit given to an answer was determined by the clarity and detail of the description and the extent to which the description was from a psychological perspective. Those answers receiving the highest marks were detailed, well organised and showed clear understanding.

Part (b)

Candidates were required to assess the methodology used to investigate practitioner and patient interpersonal skills. In general candidates found this a less challenging question than question 1 (b). Candidates who considered a number of issues in relation to the methodology used and discussed how these impacted on the research tended to construct effective answers. Some of the significant issues raised related to the use of self report methods, observations and field experiments and how this raised issues such as validity, ethics, demand characteristics, reliability and generalisability and so on. Many stronger candidates commented on positive aspects of methodology used to investigate practitioner and patient interpersonal skills as well as the weaknesses. Weaker answers tended to consider only one issue and/or fail to address how methodology impacts on the investigation of practitioner and patient interpersonal skills. The very best answers offered a good range of points assessing methodology used with confident use of psychological terms and concepts. A coherent, thorough and clearly explained answer which clearly demonstrated a considered understanding in the given context received the higher band marks. The very weakest answers failed to raise relevant issues with which to assess the methodology and hence offered anecdotal answers which all too often consisted of further description of research rather than analysis and evaluation. This approach essentially failed to answer the question and attracted very few marks.

Question 3

Some of the candidates selecting this question were able to offer relevant concepts, terminology and evidence to the area of lifestyles and health behaviour. Different combinations of evidence were successfully presented to achieve full marks in section (a). It was not necessary to cover all three sub-sections of the specification in order to provide a suitable answer due to the openness of the question. Nonetheless those candidates who did present evidence covering the three areas frequently did so very effectively.

The answers to part (b) of this question which required candidates to evaluate what psychologists have discovered about lifestyles and health behaviour produced, in general, one of two responses: by far the most common response was to consider a range of issues such as validity, ethics, usefulness and so on, and how these impinged on the research presented in section (a). A less common approach was to take a less structured strategy to analysing and evaluating the research. In both instances however the most credit went to answers which clearly identified, explained and made relevant the issues in the context of research carried out into lifestyles and health behaviour.

Sadly, possibly more than in previous sessions, there were a number of candidates who failed to appreciate the demands of this section of the question by simply offering more description. A number of candidates/ centres still appear to be unaware of the requirements of this section

which is of concern as poor performance in this section had drastic consequences for some otherwise strong candidates.

Part (c) was on the whole answered poorly with many candidates unable to offer appropriate suggestions of how developmental, gender or cultural differences would affect the take up of a cholesterol testing scheme. Many candidates were not able to offer evidence to support any differences they had suggested and even fewer were able to offer appropriate psychological rationale for their suggested differences. Essentially these weaker responses were anecdotal.

The very strongest answers supported their suggestions with appropriate evidence and explained the reasons for their suggestions using clear psychological rationale. This part of the question offered candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to apply psychology to a situation. A disappointingly small proportion of candidates demonstrated the ability to do this effectively in response to this question.

Question 4

The open nature of the question allowed for a wide range of evidence and pieces of research to be offered and indeed an impressive range of theories, explanations and appropriate studies of health promotion were presented by the majority of candidates. Some weak answers were seen to this question which tended to offer predominantly anecdotal evidence.

The points outlined in relation to question 3 part (b) are again relevant here. The strongest answers raised, explained and made relevant a number of issues which they went on to evaluate in relation to the evidence presented in part (a). Only the very strongest candidates demonstrated the ability to offer analysis in the form of comparisons and contrasts between the issues as applied to the evidence presented. Equally only the very best answers contextualised their analysis and evaluation within the context of health promotion thus making the answer truly meaningful, relevant and impressive. In some cases argument structure was weak, often as a result of candidates failing to present a meaningful answer to the question.

Many appropriate answers to part (c) were seen by examiners. The majority of candidates offered good suggestions of ways in which psychology could be applied to promote a specific health behaviour to holiday makers. The answers attracting the most credit were those which supported their suggestions with appropriate evidence and explained it using psychological rationale and terminology. Once again it was pleasing to note a number of candidates who demonstrated an impressive ability to apply psychology in a given situation. The very best answers had considered the specific scenario of holiday makers and tailored their suggestions to a specific behaviour such as use of sun cream. Weak answers were essentially anecdotal and unsupported by psychological evidence or rationale.

Advice to centres;

In addition to the preference for this question (4) over question (3) the overall quality of responses was far superior. It would be advisable for centres to encourage candidates take time when selecting questions in the examination as question choice clearly had an impact on this paper. An opportunity to practice question choice using past papers would be advisable.

2546 Psychology and Organisations

General Comments

This option was sat by very few candidates probably due to the fact that it will not be offered in the new specification.

Candidates generally were well prepared, choosing appropriate research to answer the questions, although not always in enough detail or wide ranging in scope. Evaluation was often tailored to some extent to the question

Comments on the Individual Questions

Question 1.

This was mostly answered by research by Asch or sometimes with research into groupthink. To gain full marks a clear link to the psychology of organisations had to be made especially with Asch's study. Part b was asking for an evaluation of the usefulness of the research. This could be interpreted in two ways. The consideration of issues such as ecological validity and how low EV could reduce the usefulness would be an accurate way of addressing the question. Examples from appropriate evidence were necessary for higher grades. Consideration of use of the research (application) was also credited as this is often confused by teachers and students. However simply listing how the research was used showed little evaluation skills.

Question 2

Candidates needed to describe a clearly identifiable research study into communication networks and the amount of detail dictated the number of marks gained. Description of communication networks would be interpreted as results/conclusions of a study so would gain only a maximum of 2 marks. The comparison of networks was generally done well by candidates with differences and similarities in effectiveness of networks given. Situations which were favourable to one or other network were the most common points of comparison.

Question 3

This question was answered by the vast majority of candidates. There was much research to use here. Working environments both physical such as temperature and noise, and psychological conditions, such as overcrowding together with research into the reduction of negative effects such as token economy were all used effectively. It is important that candidates write in detail about their chosen research

The evaluation of the research tended to be formulaic, i.e. identifying an issue and relating it to two or more pieces of evidence, with some analytical comment, but this is a proven evaluation technique and so would gain good credit if done effectively and with enough issues and evidence.

The part c question lent itself to many suggestions, and better candidates considered several factors such as heat, noise, overcrowding and privacy, and to gain full marks the rationale for considering these in an IT office was needed. Better candidates identified what would have to be done, i.e. making an open plan office rather than simply stating the factors such as work space.

Question 4

Very few candidates answered this question, and those who did often concentrated on motivation and Maslow, often not linking the Hierarchy of Needs to organisations. Stress was also a common area of research described in these answers.

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The evaluation was again formulaic, with less section b answers which only carried on describing research rather than evaluating the research.

Part c was interpreted in two ways. One way was to suggest how stressors could be identified by giving questionnaires to workers, another was how they could be categorised, and both of these were given credit. What was not creditworthy was how stressors were managed. Candidates who answered this generally found it difficult to give detailed answers with a clear rationale.

2547 Psychology and Environment (Written Examination)

General Comments

As in previous years, the standard of entry for Environment was generally good with a number of candidates achieving very high marks. There were very few rubric errors although a small number of candidates ran out of time usually failing to answer Section B part (c). A centre-effect was again evident in that some centres were well prepared in the requirements of the assessment and others were less well prepared.

Section A Responses were more variable for Section A compared to Section B. For Section A **part (a)** better candidates described one detailed study, used psychological terms and concepts and showed understanding whereas weaker answers tended to give anecdotal evidence or only brief details of research/theory. In Section A **part (b)**, stronger answers put forward three or four points and these were discussed in relation to research or evidence from the topic area. Weaker answers tended to make a number of points but without discussion or elaboration and/or not make points relevant to the topic.

Section B For **part (a)** most candidates were able to cite a range of research, theory or evidence from the topic area, however weaker candidates often gave only brief details of research or used peripherally relevant evidence. There was more of a centre-effect for **part (b)** with some excellent detailed and evaluative answers using a range of issues, comparing and contrasting evidence and discussing this within each issue. Weaker responses either failed to cite research evidence to support their argument within an issue or showed little evidence of analysis. For **part (c)**, candidates were usually able to put forward detailed suggestions but then often failed to relate them to psychological theory or research or failed to give a rationale for the application.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

- 1) (a) **Describe one study on the effect of density/crowding on performance**
Any study on the effect of density/crowding could be used here. Most popular was Saegert (cognitive maps), Bruins and Barber (supermarket) Karlin (student grades). However, a number of candidates performed less well on this section as they either described a study on density/crowding and social behaviour (usually Calhoun's behavioural sink) or density/crowding and health (usually Lundberg commuters on train) rather than on performance and therefore gained no credit for this section.
- 1) (b) **Discuss the effectiveness of methods used to study density/crowding**
This question was generally answered well with most candidates discussing the effectiveness of a range of methods such as laboratory studies (Calhoun); field experiment (Saegert or Bruins et al); questionnaires (Baron et al – university accommodation); natural experiment (Christian – sika deer). Weaker responses tended to only discuss one method or discuss a number of methods but failed to link methods to the topic of density/crowding.

- 2) (a) **Describe one study investigating cognitive maps**
This was the least popular of the two section A questions but was generally answered well with most candidates describing a detailed study which investigated cognitive maps. Most frequently cited studies were Tolman (rats); Saegert (railway station/ department store); Milgram (cognitive maps of Parisians); Moar (Glasgow/Cambridge housewives).
- 2) (b) **Discuss the reliability of research investigating cognitive maps**
There were some excellent answers to this question with strong candidates putting forward three or four detailed points linked to the topic area. However some candidates did not seem to understand the concept of reliability, often confusing it with validity. Some candidates seemed to have learnt prepared answers using issues, e.g. ethics, which were not relevant to reliability.

Section B

- 3) (a) **Describe what psychologists have found out about noise as an environment stressor.**
This was the most popular of the two Section B topics and was generally answered well. Candidates usually cited a range of studies showing the effect of noise on health, social behaviour and performance with better answers describing four detailed or three very detailed studies. Most popular for Performance were Cohen, Glass and Singer (high rise apartments); Cohen (school near airport), Bronzaft and McCarthy (school near railway). Social behaviour – Geen and O’Neal (noise and aggression), Matthews and Canon (helping behaviour); Page (helping behaviour). Health - Woodson or Cherek (smokers). A number of candidates described research on the positive effects (music) which was not relevant to noise as an environmental stressor.
- (b) **Evaluate what psychologists have found out about noise as an environmental stressor.**
Some Centres were very well prepared for Section B part (b) answers with a good range of issues, selecting appropriate evidence for discussion and comparing and contrasting within each issue. Weaker answers merely listed points without developing an argument or discussing what effect this might have on the research evidence. A number of candidates evaluated each study individually making it more difficult to gain marks for analysis.
- (c) **A bookshop owner has been advised that there may be benefits in playing music in his shop. Using your knowledge of psychology, suggest how he could use music positively. Give reasons for your answer.**
This was usually answered well even by weaker candidates with some good suggestions based on relevant psychological research such as North and Hargreaves or Milliman using research involving cafes, cows, supermarkets, hospitals, waiting on the telephone, etc.
- 4) (a) **Describe what psychologists have learned about natural disasters and technological catastrophe.**
Most candidates described a range of disaster and catastrophe research with far less anecdotal responses than in the past. Most popular Natural Disasters included Sims and Baumann (tornadoes); Thompson (hurricane); Archea (earthquake). Technological Catastrophe included Buffalo Creek flood, Three Mile Island accident, Chernobyl (Bromet)

- (b) **Evaluate what psychologists have learned about natural disasters and technological catastrophe.**

As 3(b)

- (c) **A local town wants to be prepared in the event of a natural disaster occurring in the near future. Using your knowledge of psychology, suggest interventions that could be made to lessen the impact of the disaster on individuals. Give reasons for your answer.**

Candidates seemed well prepared for an answer to this question and most gave one or two detailed suggestions to help prepare for a natural disaster and effectively linked this back to research. However a few candidates did not read the question carefully and gave suggestion on how to help *after* a disaster.

In both 3 (c) and 4 (c) candidates sometimes failed to discuss their suggestion in relation to the research/evidence/theory and therefore lost marks on the 'Application Interpretation: Reasons' section of the mark scheme.

2548 Psychology and Sport

General Comments

The paper appeared to be appropriate and accessible to all candidates. There were few if any rubric errors and candidates were generally able to answer all questions within the time allocation. The paper performed well, covering the full ability range and allowing for good differentiation between candidates. There was a good range of answers across the mark scheme.

In section A the Motivation question was more popular than the Attention question and tended to be better answered; in section B the Arousal and Anxiety question was a little more popular than the Social Influence question.

The quality of responses appeared similar to previous sessions. There appeared to be more scripts of better quality spread at the top end. However, some candidates did not seem to display the same level of detail or thoroughness as previous sessions.

Most candidates referred to psychological theory, evidence and concepts, but to varying degrees of detail. The evaluation (part b in both section A and section B) was the greatest means of differentiation. Weaker candidates offered little or no evaluation, preferring to stick to extended narrative at best. Better candidates made evaluative observations. Best candidates were able to extend and elaborate on their evaluations, maybe with examples and/or reference to psychological research. The part c application questions provide further evidence by which to differentiate candidates. Reading and responding directly to the requirements of the question was another means of differentiating, such as weaker candidates failing to locate psychological knowledge in a sporting context. Many centres had prepared their candidates well. In some cases, however, candidates used the same studies in every case, demonstrating little more than rote learning. Sometimes, particularly in section B part A, candidates answers were restricted, such as only providing two theories/studies from only one section (e.g. theories of arousal). The section B, part C responses continue to markedly improve. The U side of the E/U boundary was typified by anecdotal responses and the wrong Psychology. The A side of the A/B boundary was typified by a well structured and clearly stated answer borne out of psychological research, which was appropriate to the question and the demands of the mark scheme.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1.

- a) This was generally well answered. It was clear that most students had a good grasp of attention and could relate their answers to sport. Commonly, Neideffer's work on attentional style was proffered, or selective attention research was applied to the sporting context. Many weaker answers clearly had some idea of attentional style but failed to relate to sport. Better answers were accurate and showed appreciation of detail such as by referring to effective and ineffective attenders.
- b) Weaker answers were typified by extended description/explanation without any evaluative or critical commentary. Similarly, some candidates successfully identified how or where attention can be useful but again failed to make evaluative/critical comment. Stronger answers critically considered and discussed the usefulness **of the research**, the question guiding the student to an accessible way to address the question such as with methodological criticism.

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Question 2.

- a) Good range of theories outlined in most cases with better answers related to sport. The most popular was McLelland and Atkinson. Often only partial understanding was apparent, or a general idea of their work without any level of detail. Additionally, there were many clear and detailed descriptions with no link at all to sport or effects on the athlete. Some students used theories of self confidence such as self efficacy, which was acceptable if explicitly linked to motivation, however credit was not given if they were unable to draw this link.
- b) A variety of responses were provided in response to this part of the paper. Weaker answers just outlined further theories with no evaluation or comparisons. Some students showed critical awareness and were duly credited, but only the best candidates *compared* throughout and linked to issues such as reductionism, nature/nurture and application which is appropriate.

Questions 3&4.

- a) In general, candidates had planned well for section B. One concern with part a has been referred to above, that there is less detail from candidates at some centres, maybe only detailing two theories/studies, addressing only one sub-section or failing to make explicit links to sport. Otherwise, no major issues.
- b) Again, generally competent responses received from candidates. Some are identifying and explaining issues, giving evidence but not analysing or evaluating. The other main weakness is issues being stated in absolute terms whereas most issues are relative. For example, "reductionism is one factor whereas a holistic explanation has 2 or more". This is then used to compare drive theory with inverted-u because "the down part on the inverted-u is a second factor making it a holistic explanation". Or a sample of 400 participants limited to four sports "*cannot* be generalised to other sports". A better candidate would analyse these comments rather than make truisms of them.
- c) A variety of answers and some excellent suggestions were provided. The quality of the rationale was more varied. Most were able to focus on the scenarios and in general there was a marked improvement in the standard of part c responses.

2549 Psychology and Crime

General comments

There has been an increased number of instances of poor handwriting this session which creates issues for examiners who are required to decipher the script in addition to marking it. I have seen one script this session where every word was joined to the next. If centres know they have candidates with handwriting difficulties, they should check whether any access arrangements need to be made, out of fairness to candidates. Practicing writing under exam conditions may also be helpful.

In general, examiners felt that the paper was appropriate and clear. However as usual, Section A questions presented the most challenge to the candidates with perhaps the greatest variety of responses to rational choice ever seen. Some were very successful, some extremely tenuous. Similarly, candidates did not differentiate their answers between 'who are the victims' and other sections of the specification which relate to victim responses and fear of crime. Section B was more competently approached with some good answers to the part (c) questions.

Comments on individual questions

Question 1

1(a) Describe one piece of research which investigates whether committing a crime is a rational choice for some people. (6)

A great variety of responses were seen to this question. Some students had been prepared with specific research but others had to try and make something relevant and we saw everything from Sheldon, through Freud, Bandura and more relevantly Eysenck, Yochelson and Samenow. There were some very good answers using Raine which showed a very good understanding of how a loss of control over impulsiveness could make it less likely to behave rationally.

1(b) Discuss the usefulness of research into criminal thinking patterns (10)

This was answered reasonably successfully by many candidates who were able to make a few good points but they lost out on middle and higher mark bands by failing to exemplify their points with good examples from crime and then commenting effectively. This meant many candidates stayed at 4 marks. Candidates need to be encouraged to go deeper with their points and show their understanding more clearly.

Question 2

2(a) Outline one piece of research which investigates who are the victims of crime. (6)

It seems that this question ended up as being unclear to candidates. The question was intended to ask the candidate to describe who are the victims of crime and which piece of research tells us about it. However, many candidates seemed to interpret it as tell me about a study of victims and their experiences. The bullet point in the specification is states as 'who are the victims; fear of crime'. To ask for both in a 6 mark question seems a lot and then what would happen if a candidate only wrote about one? For these reasons the question was set to make it simpler. Some candidates therefore got fewer marks than they might have expected but as always they should be encouraged to read the question carefully. Many candidates got a very good mark with the British Crime Survey although they often failed to give the results. Please can centres use an up to date version of this report as many of their criticisms of its validity which were cited in part (b) were factually incorrect and therefore should attract no marks.

2(b) Discuss the validity of crime surveys (10)

This was obviously a question that had been considered by candidates beforehand and many started off well by defining validity and making one or two points quite competently. However, all too many then drift into evaluation by rote and we get very weak comments like the British Crime

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Survey is not valid because it only looks at Britain. There also seemed to be quite a lot of confusion between what a victim survey is as opposed to an offender survey and what each one can tell us.

Question 3

3(a) Describe research about the police and crime (10)

Generally, there seems to be some good research in use now to answer this question but we are still getting too many anecdotal and offensive responses about police officers which bear no resemblance to a psychological argument. Candidates should be encouraged to go for detail and depth which can show their knowledge of psychological concepts to advantage. Also, encourage them to apply the research to the question rather than describe three or four pieces of research in a row with no link to each other, or the question.

3(b) Evaluate research on the police and crime.(16).

This was well answered if the candidates had some research at their disposal. The problems occurred if they were relying on anecdote. Most centres are now familiar with the structure which offers a good match to the mark scheme and many very competent answers were seen.

3(c) Candidates were asked to suggest guidelines for accurate interviews. This was done well and many weak candidates got more marks in this section than in the other two parts of this essay. Centres that had used the PEACE guidelines did particularly well, but they could have used a wealth of other material to answer the question such as the work of Loftus and Geiselman.

Question 4

4(a) Describe research about offender treatments etc.

The problem here arose if the candidates had no research and had only been taught about the treatments and punishments and their effectiveness. Providing they had research from across the spread of the topic this was answered very well. Candidates who rely on past questions which they learn by rote can come unstuck if the question changes in emphasis. In general, candidates will do well if they have been taught good relevant research which applies to the topic and they are not forced to rely on 'shoehorned' AS studies. Using peripherally relevant research is actually quite hard to do successfully and requires more understanding than learning something which is completely relevant.

4(b) See above for 3(b)

4(c) Candidates were asked to advise a court on sentencing a mugger who was also a drug addict.

This was not as well done as 3 (c) but most candidates were able to tap into the scenario and few strayed away from it. Sentencing is perhaps not considered as much in centres as the actual treatments but any sensible sentence was acceptable and gained marks.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Psychology 3876 7876
January 2009 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
2540	Raw	60	42	36	31	26	21	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2541	Raw	50	34	30	26	22	18	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2542	Raw	50	42	38	35	32	29	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2544	Raw	50	38	33	28	23	19	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2545	Raw	50	38	34	30	26	22	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2546	Raw	50	38	33	28	24	20	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2547	Raw	50	38	34	30	26	23	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2548	Raw	50	40	35	30	25	20	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2549	Raw	50	36	32	28	24	20	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
3876	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7876	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3876	8.4	30.1	64.1	86.6	97.4	100.0	1054
7876	7.4	32.1	74.1	91.4	100.0	100.0	90

1144 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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