GCE

Psychology

Advanced GCE A2 **H568**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H168**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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Advanced GCE Psychology (H568)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Psychology (H168)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

G541 Psychological Investigations

General Comments:

In general, candidates demonstrated a good understanding of knowledge of research methods and evaluation issues in their responses to questions on this paper. The highest scoring candidates provided lots of detail and used specific examples in response to the higher tariff questions (Q1b, Q7 and Q9). Higher marks could have been obtained by other candidates if this strategy had been adopted. Responses of the highest scoring candidates also included a sophisticated and detailed inclusion of context in their answers in response to questions that required a link to the research outlined in the scenario presented. This fulfilled the requirements of the mark scheme for a 'detailed' response, rather than the mere 'token (superficial) use' of key words from the research outlined in the scenario as constituting 'context'. Again, higher marks could have been obtained by other candidates if this strategy had been adopted. Responses that were not 'detailed and clear' were capped at the lower band, whether they were in context or not.

More generally, for some students their use of English is quite poor at times and prevents them from expressing themselves clearly.

There seems to be a lack of understanding of descriptive statistics, such as what the different measures of central tendency represent and when they are most appropriate to use.

The understanding of reliability is poor generally and specifically in relation to replication, with candidates focusing too much (sometimes exclusively) on reference to obtaining the same findings if the research were repeated. It needs to be acknowledged that this is only one feature/aspect of reliability ('test-retest reliability).

Many students are going for quantity rather than quality of evaluation so the lack of explanation (elaboration) in their answers is letting them down.

Section B

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. 1(a)

This should have been a nice easy start to the exam, with a straightforward question and this is how it proved to be, with most candidates achieving full marks. It was also pleasing to see candidates demonstrating good practice by putting their answer in context, even though it was not required in order to obtain maximum marks for this question. Occasionally candidates (incorrectly) stated that the design was independent measures (which had consequences for the next follow up question).

Question No. 1(b)

This question had two demands – the requirement to outline both a strength and a weakness of the experimental design used in the study. The highest scoring candidates adopted a strategy of making a point, then using an example to illustrate the point and finally finishing with a conclusion where they provided elaboration. They did this separately (two distinct paragraphs) for both the strength and the weakness advanced. Other candidates could have achieved higher marks if they had adopted this structure in their answer. Most candidates cited the control of

individual differences (or participant variables) as a strength and were able to refer to examples of appropriate variables for the research to illustrate this (e.g. differences in hearing ability that may otherwise affect how clear the music was perceived to be). Many referred to order effects for the weakness, using fatigue or procedural insight as the specific example.

Candidates who incorrectly stated that the experimental design was independent measures, but then went on to refer to a strength and weakness of repeated measures designs were capped at 4 marks (2 for the strength, 2 for the weakness).

Question No. 2

There were not many candidates achieving full marks on this question. Those that did responded to both demands of the question (identify and evaluate) and answered in context. Many candidates only responded to the first demand, and identified how the dependent variable had been operationalized, but did not then go on to evaluate it. Clearly some candidates did not understand the term 'operationalize' in the context of measuring variables. Many that did understand the term correctly identified it in context, but forgot to evaluate the use of the rating scale. In turn, of those that included the evaluation, many forgot to include context in their evaluation.

Question No. 3(a)

Most candidates demonstrated knowledge of how to calculate the mean, but a lot did not make it clear how this would be achieved for each condition of the research described. The highest scoring candidates wrote two separate sentences - one referring to how the mean would be calculated in the light room condition, and the other in the dark room condition. Some responses were simply too superficial, for example just saying ... *add all the scores up and divide by the number of scores.*

Question No. 3(b)

This question had two demands – when and why would the median be more appropriate. Many candidates struggled with this question and demonstrated a lack of understanding of descriptive statistics. The highest scoring candidates made a point followed by an example, for each of the demands of the question. E.g. *the median would be more appropriate when there is anomalous data, or outliers, such as a score much higher, or lower than the rest. Unlike the mean, the median does not include such anomalous data in its calculation, because it takes the middle value of data arranged in numerical order.*

Some candidates incorrectly referred to data with a large range as being justification for using the median, which in itself would not benefit the use of the median (only if the large range included anomalous data at its extremities). Others simply described how to obtain the median, rather than explaining when and why it would be more appropriate.

Question No. 4

This question was generally well answered, with most candidates opting for a simple response referring to the most frequent category of behaviour noted and the least frequent. Some candidates however, incorrectly cited *number of people* exhibiting behaviours (e.g. *12 people put their coat on the seat*), rather than total frequency of occurrence of the behaviours (e.g. putting a coat on the seat was observed 12 times).

Question No. 5

This question had two demands – describe an ethical issue and suggest how it could be dealt with. Although generally well answered, some candidates did not answer in context when describing what the ethical issue to be addressed was. E.g. simply saying .... there was a lack of consent as participants had not given permission to take part in the study. Nearly all candidates explained how the ethical issue could be dealt with in context, with many describing how posters advertising the study could be displayed in the bus, with an acknowledgement that travelling on the bus was an indicator of willingness to participate.

Question No. 6(a)

Most candidates responded to this question with reference to the sampling of *participants*, and correctly cited opportunity sampling as the technique used. However, as it was an observational based piece of research there were a few candidates that referred to sampling of *behaviour*, and cited event sampling as their answer. Either option was creditworthy in response to this question. Those who opted for the latter, however often did not explain why it was event sampling (so did not respond to, or get credited with the second demand of the question).

Question No. 6(b)

This question was generally well answered. The highest scoring candidates adopted a strategy of making a point, then using an example to illustrate the point when referring to their strength and weakness in response to the two demands of the question. E.g. *a strength of opportunity sampling is that it is fairly quick and simple to obtain participants. In this study, all the researchers had to do was board a bus and use the passengers who were travelling on the bus on that day at that time as the participants for their research*. Candidates who did not achieve high band marks often provided a much briefer answer that was not very well contextualised (if at all). E.g. simply saying *it was quick and easy as it was people on the bus.*

Question No. 7

Responses to this question revealed a good understanding of the observational method and its associated strengths and weaknesses. The question had two demands (the requirement to outline both a strength and a weakness) and the highest scoring candidates adopted a strategy of making a point, then using an example to illustrate the point and finally finishing with a conclusion where they provided elaboration. They did this separately (two distinct paragraphs) for both the strength and the weakness advanced.

Many referred to high ecological validity as a strength, but others (equally creditworthy) commented on the ability to record natural behaviour, that was unrestricted and not influenced by demand characteristics.

Candidates generally found weaknesses harder (especially to discuss in a detailed way to achieve the high band marks). The concept of lack of control and the issue of replicability were not well presented or elaborated on. For example, candidates struggled to explain why being unable to control the environment was a weakness (e.g. type of people present and difficulty recording behaviour if view was obscured etc). There were some excellent responses referring to observer bias supported with good examples in context (e.g. *a passenger could just be stretching and putting their arm out to the side as they do so, but this could be interpreted and recorded as putting their arm across the seat as a territorial marker*). There were many uses of ethics cited as a weakness, but often this was superficial and lacked elaboration (*e.g. simply stating that people did not know they were in a study so had not provided consent*).

Question No. 8(a)

Responses to this question revealed that not many candidates were familiar with the concept of a target (or research) population and the principle of equality of selection. Many candidates simply described the process (or part of it) of how to obtain a random sample (e.g. *names from a hat*), but even when doing this did not convey an understanding of the connection / relevance to a specific target population. Some confused random sampling with systematic sampling (saying every nth person selected). The best responses provided clear definitions, such as saying it is .... *where each and every member of the target population has an equal (and independent) chance of becoming a participant.*

Question No. 8(b)

Candidates that were uncertain in their response to the previous question struggled here, but did sometimes obtain marks fortuitously with reference to things like lack of bias without demonstrating a good understanding of the principle of random sampling. The best responses here made reference to the target population in their answer and answered in context.

Question No. 9

This was the only 10 mark question on the paper and in order to obtain top band marks candidates needed to both 'describe and evaluate' a procedure for a study using the self report method. Candidates achieved higher marks when they first described a fully replicable procedure, making reference to *'who, what, where, when* and *how'* the investigation would be conducted. Most importantly (otherwise regarded as 'major omissions') this required details of the specific questions to be asked ('what'), including examples of the open, closed and/or rating scale questions to be used, and 'how' they were to be presented (e.g. in a written questionnaire or face-to-face interview etc). Candidates achieving the highest marks then went on to evaluate the procedure they had outlined with two or more evaluation points discussed in context of the research outlined in the scenario. Some candidates did not always discuss their evaluation points in context (e.g. simply saying that people may be prone to demand characteristics and lie, and that this would lower the validity of the data collected)

Many candidates described a combination of research methods, rather than focusing exclusively on the use of a self report. For example, suggesting conducting research in a natural setting, such as on a train and having stooges collapse and researchers record responses (clearly influenced by the core study by Piliavin et al here). In such circumstances it was only towards the end of the answer, and very briefly that any reference to the use of a self report was mentioned. Occasionally there was no reference to the use of a self report whatsoever.

Question No. 10(a)

It was not always clear in responses to this question how the self report method was still being used. The best answers here focussed on explicit changes to such things as the number and type of questions to be used (e.g. asking more open than closed questions), or changing from the use of a questionnaire to a face-to-face interview. Here there were some excellent answers that made reference to things methodologies such as structured and semi-structured interviewing techniques.

Question No. 10(b)

Responses here followed on from the suggested change outlined in the previous question, and the best answers were those where lots of detail had been provided about the change to be implemented in the previous question. For example, candidates suggesting the use of semi-structured interviewing techniques were able to give examples of how this would allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions to explore further the reason that help would be offered or not.

G542 Core Studies

General Comments:

There was a good range of marks across both candidates and the paper. The paper seemed fair and accessible.

In both Section A and Section B many candidates provided fully contextualised answers, though marks were lost by some candidates who provided vague answers which could, on occasions, apply to almost any of the core studies. Q17(b) and Q18(b) in Section C required candidates to demonstrate their understanding of psychology: in Q17(b) candidates had to explain how the physiological approach could explain the relationship between sleep and dreaming whereas in Q18(b) they were required to explain how the psychodynamic perspective could explain the development of a phobia. Some candidates were able to do this well, though many found it very difficult to provide adequate explanations and to support these with appropriate evidence; Q17(c) and Q18(c) required candidates to identify a similarity and a difference between *the way data was gathered* in any studies that take the chosen approach / perspective and then support these appropriately with evidence from two studies that take the selected approach / perspective. Many candidates answered this question very well, whilst some mis-read the question completely and just described a similarity and a difference between two appropriate studies. Q17(d) and Q18(d) required candidates to both identify and justify appropriate strengths and weaknesses in relation to *ethical issues* linked to their chosen approach / perspective. These then needed to be supported by appropriate evidence from any appropriate studies. Although some candidates tackled this question well, many found it extremely challenging.

Understanding of general injunctions continues to improve though knowledge and understanding of both key psychological terminology and the actual core studies themselves resulted in some candidates not attaining higher marks. The quality of written communication continues to prevent some candidates from attaining higher marks and there were many examples of handwriting which were difficult to decipher. Such candidates may be eligible for access arrangements.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

1a   Generally well answered though many candidates were confused between the controls in experiment 1 and the controls in experiment 2 and referred to 'film clip' rather than 'film clips'.

1b   A generally well answered question with some good use of terminology such as extraneous variable. Many candidates showed a good understanding of what is meant by a control though there were many instances where the answer was not contextualised to Loftus and Palmer's study.

2   Another well answered question with many candidates providing a very detailed account of the 'eyes test' which included many specific details.

3   This proved an excellent discriminator. Many candidates missed the point of the question and spent a lot of time describing the pointing board. Few candidates could really describe how the board was used.

4a   Generally a well answered question, however some candidates referred to the materials that were used rather than a questioning condition and many gave far too much detail. The question merely asked them to 'identify' two of the questioning conditions.

4b   Generally a well answered question, however some candidates failed to make it clear whether they were referring to the fixed array or the one question condition by not making it clear whether or not the participants 'saw' the transformation. Some described one or more of the actual conservation tasks and so did not answer the question.

5a   Generally a well answered question though some candidates failed to say who was being observed/talked to/interviewed.

5b   A range of weaknesses were described well in this question, with good links often made to the study. There were however many gave partial answers such as 'Hans' father was a great supporter of Freud so the data may be biased' without then going on to say that the data was biased as Hans' father wanted to support Freud's theories.

6   This proved a good discriminator. Good candidates referred to specific model conditions and showed real understanding of the study. Many candidates however merely referred to same sex effects without qualifying their statement, or even linking their answers to aggression.

7a   Generally a very well answered question with few candidates incorrectly labelling the variables as an IV and a DV.

7b   Generally a well answered question with many candidates using the variables on the graph in their answer.

8a   There were some excellent answers to this question with most candidates being at the least able to refer to participants not being able to have alcohol or caffeine.

8b   Some good use of relevant terminology here and a good range of instructions referred to including the use of electrodes as well as instructions relating to the recording of data.

9a   Many candidates were able to appreciate that participants would be able to 'say' what they had seen but less went beyond this and reference 'writing/drawing' – in fact some specifically said participants would not be able to 'draw/ write'. Few candidates seemed to appreciate that the study was based on the abilities of typically right-handed people.

9b   Again many candidates were able to make the link between the LVF and the right hemisphere with some being able to go beyond this by making an appropriate link between the right hemisphere and the left hand. Many candidates said that the LVF and left hand were both controlled by the right hemisphere.

10a   This proved to be a challenging question. Although some candidates were able to state that the cognitive alternatives variable was operationalised by introducing a new prisoner who had a background as an experienced trade union official, many candidates either referred to the permeability variable or the use of the psychometric tests rather than cognitive alternatives.

10b   This proved to be another challenging question with many candidates struggling to demonstrate an understanding of why the cognitive alternatives variable was introduced.

11a   Generally a well answered question though some candidates failed to appreciate the difference between the sample and the sampling technique and incorrectly referred to volunteer sampling.

11b Many candidates scored at least partial marks on this question. Some however either incorrectly referred to strengths of the sampling technique rather than the sample itself or failed to link their strength adequately to the focus of the study: obedience.

12 This question was not answered well. When the model conditions were described they were rarely elaborated upon with candidates often giving a description of early and late but not making any links to critical or adjacent areas. Many candidates incorrectly referred to the 'cane' and 'drunk' conditions rather than the model conditions.

13 A generally well answered question with many candidates scoring full marks. Some candidates failed to make it clear that the pseudopatients stopped hearing voices once they *had been admitted* and stated that they did this on arrival. Other candidates merely identified an appropriate behaviour shown by pseudopatients, failing to elaborate their answer e.g. they took notes, they lined up early for lunch.

14 This proved to be a good discriminator. Many candidates misread the question and gave ethical problems rather than the way ethical issues were upheld, primarily because they did not seem to understand the term 'upheld'.

15a There were some excellent answers here. Where candidates referred to a psychometric test, numbers were generally very accurate however some referred to projective test results and therefore gained no credit.

15b Again, there were some good answers here with many candidates gaining full marks. Where candidates gave figures they were generally very accurate. Unfortunately some candidates referred to 'cycles per minute' / Eve Black being 'psychotic' whilst others showed confusion between the three personalities.

Section B

The most popular study by far was Milgram with an almost equal balance between Piliavin and Bandura.

16(a) Many candidates scored at least 1 mark. However many of those who chose the Milgram study focused on the back ground of the study in relation to the behaviour of the SS is WW2 failing to link this to Milgram's actual study. Likewise those who chose the Piliavin study focused on the Kitty Genovese incident and failed to link this adequately to Piliavin's study.

16(b) Many candidates scored half marks for this question by giving a vague outline of how quantitative data was gathered, supporting their outline with an example from their chosen study e.g. 'Milgram gathered quantitative data by seeing how many shocks participants were prepared to administer. He found that 65% of his participants went up to the full 450 volts.' Few were able to give a really accurate and detailed description.

16(c) Candidates seemed to find it easier to identify, justify and evidence a weakness than a strength of quantitative data There were many study-specific answers to this question which meant both the strength and the weakness were capped at 1 mark each as the question required a generic strength/weakness of quantitative data, supported by evidence from the chosen study.

16(d) Overall, Milgram's results were covered very well and contained a balanced mix of both quantitative and qualitative findings. Piliavin and Bandura were not answered as well. Many candidates referred such things as 'the cane victim was helped 95% of the time whilst the drunk victim was only helped 50% of the time'. This is incorrect as the cane

victim received *spontaneous* help 95% of the time whilst the drunk victim received *spontaneous* help 50% of the time' (Piliavin) / 'when shown a male model boys were more physically aggressive' – comparison not completed so a partial finding (Bandura). Some candidate fabricated their findings and gave answers peppered with percentages and raw data that did not actually exist.

16(e)   This was a generally well-answered question with many candidates scoring at least 6 marks. Many candidates however only referred to ethical issues that were broken and failed to suggest even one way in which ethical issues were upheld.

16(f)   Some good suggestions here though few were able to make really good suggestions as to how the improvements would be implemented e.g. 'I would make sure participants knew the aim of the study so they were not deceived.' A considerable number of answers had little or no contextualisation so it was unclear which study was being discussed e.g. 'I would make sure that participants were informed of the full aim of the study. This means they could give informed consent. However if they know the aim of the study they could respond to demand characteristics or social desirability.' Some particularly good suggestions in relation to gaining consent and debriefing were provided by candidates who chose to consider the Piliavin study. Many candidates who chose Milgram's study suggested that they would remove the prods to reduce the amount of stress but then failed to acknowledge that this would defeat the purpose of the study which was to show how obedient people will be when ordered to perform inhumane acts when ordered to do so by an authority figure.

Section C

There appeared to be an equal balance between the physiological approach and the psychodynamic perspective.

17/18(a)   Most candidates scored at least partial marks here. Many however failed to elaborate their answers adequately e.g. 'the psychodynamic perspective says that behaviour is caused by the unconscious mind' / the physiological approach holds that behaviour is influenced by the way the brain works'.

17/18(b)   This proved an excellent discriminator. There were some excellent answers which showed candidates really did understand the demands of the question. On many occasions however links to the approach/perspective were weak and evidence often did not support the explanation.

17/18(c)   Candidates who had read the question carefully gave excellent answers. Many candidates however failed to answer the question, simply giving similarities and a difference in two appropriate studies. Answers therefore read like: 'This is one I prepared earlier and as I know part (c) always asks for a similarity and a difference, I'll just reel out what I have learned.' Such answers therefore did not answer the question. Some candidates did not provide a generic similarity/difference before giving evidence so dropped a mark. There were however some good suggestions e.g. a <u>similarity</u> between the study by D&K and Maguire is that they both gathered data through the use of highly scientific machines ..... / a <u>similarity</u> between Freud and T&C is that they both gathered data using the self-report method .... / the types of data gathered by D&K and Maguire were <u>different</u>. D&K gathered both quantitative and qualitative data whereas Maguire only gathered quantitative data .... / a <u>difference</u> is that T&C gathered most of the data themselves whereas Freud didn't ....

17/18(d)   This proved to be an excellent discriminator with those who had read the question carefully giving good answers that scored at least half marks. Unfortunately many answers again read like: 'This is one I prepared earlier and as I know part (d) always asks for strengths and weakness of an approach / perspective, I'll just reel out what I have learned', thus pigeon-holing a set of strengths and weaknesses without actually addressing the question. In many cases ethics were not even referred to! There were also many study-specific answers in which candidates evaluated appropriate studies in terms of ethical guidelines. Such answers were awarded no marks.

G543 Options in Applied Psychology

General Comments:

The paper appeared fair and reliable, with a vast majority of candidates fully addressing all questions. There were very few candidates appearing to know very little or relying on anecdote. There were no obvious inconsistencies between questions, nor did I see any rubric errors. A good range of marks was accessed. I am not aware of any examples where candidates answered questions from the wrong sections. Candidates generally produced a consistent level of response across the 4 questions.

The general quality of candidate responses was very varied, the best showing impressive insight and developed lines of argument while fewer displaying poor construction and a less specific response to the question posed. However, knowledge was generally good; it was the skill in using this knowledge which produced most of the variation, as well as level of detail. Many candidates were thoroughly prepared, more evident than in previous sessions. Marking is mindful of the expectations of standard of a typical 17/18 year old with the wide specification coverage and demand of the exam; hence the level of detail required for a good mark is not as exacting as may be feared by some. More significant in differentiating the award of marks is the extent to which candidates responded to the precise demand of the question. Formulaic responses of the PEE type were more in evidence; this has the outcome of ensuring a decent level of response to all questions to a good second band level but for the better candidates may stultify greater development in response to the precise demands of the question. There was a return to study-by-study responses with an evaluative comment to follow, which it has been advised makes development of evaluation harder to achieve effectively. Issue by issue, point by point, allows evaluation to be developed with supporting research as part of that evaluation. As teachers we have a dual task of educating and nurturing fascination and curiosity as well as how to pass exams and the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. There is a clear improvement in student engagement with the material, and there are more expedient approaches than the aforementioned formulaic answer. As stated, better candidates answered the question asked, whereas others did not (eg Q1a saw weaker students describe disadvantaged families, whereas better candidates described *disrupted families* specifically*, maybe with examples,* to address the question of causes of crime rather than dysfunctional behaviour in general). Some candidates merely outlined research, where better responses used the research as support or evidence and made precise to the question.

Part (b) responses showed great variation. The skill required is "application of knowledge and understanding" rather than to simply "evaluate". The very best candidates would develop the answer a stage further, such as with a challenge, an extension or a legitimate comparison. Effectively addressing the injunction was a key differentiating aspect and was broadly interpreted by examiners. As ever, an extended demonstration within an answer would be sufficient to award a higher band mark even where the whole answer may not have maintained this level. It is further acknowledged that a consistently strong band 2 response would access the top band. Weaker candidates made general points without the necessary application/contextualisation which was needed to take answers to higher bands. This was typified in pre-learned evaluative comment that lacked anything beyond a superficial understanding of the material. For example 3b and 10b required evaluation of methodology, which was specifically and systematically addressed by stronger candidates; weaker candidates however seemed to churn out pre-learned limitations (eg determinism) without necessarily linking to methodology. Part (b) responses improved when candidates went beyond being overly descriptive and points were well expressed in the context of the question. It was particularly pleasing to see certain previously elusive evaluation issues have now been clarified and mastered, as suggested in previous reports, most notably when asked to discuss reliability or validity.

Candidates from some centres have clearly been taught to add a 'however' (on the other hand) between paragraphs even though the information does not follow on or connect to the paragraph above it. Legitimate links however, are readily credited.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

1a   Many candidates referred to a relevant study, usually Farrington, and linked the study and its findings to criminal behaviour. Some of these answers, however, merely reported the study without specifying 'disrupted' elements, or failing to explicitly link to crime. There were some good references beyond that suggested on the specification, Bowlby's 44 thieves being an example of this.

1b   The best candidates addressed 'to what extent'. Most candidates referred to relevant studies and talked of social environments, and the better ones used this to explicit comment on the nature-nurture debate. Some became confused, other referred to nuture.

2a   Better answers linked research to juries specifically. Some detail, in terms of the study or an understanding of the question, also marked out the stronger candidates.

2b   There were many good attempts. Most candidates dealt with ecological validity and internal validity. As well as critical comment, here were many comments praising how validity has been addressed, which was good to see.

3a   Most candidates chose an appropriate study. The better candidates managed to report it accurately and use it to draw conclusions, some candidates got confused with the set-up or were less sure of the details.

3b   Better candidates responded directly to the question. Weaker responses appeared to be pre-learned evaluative points which were not really appreciated by the candidate so were not well applied to the context of the question. Many candidates gave general evaluative answers rather than focussing on methodological issues.

4a   In general well answered, with candidates able to comment on depression and suicide risk. There was good knowledge of studies, particularly Dooley.

4b   Many candidates are happier than in previous series discussing reliability and why consistency in research may be lost. Some candidates were still grappling with the concept of reliability, or applying it inaccurately to relevant research.

5a   Most candidates were able to outline research; some got the details of the groups and of the findings accurate; and some were able to use it to comment on fear arousal as a method of health promotion.

5b   The 'usefulness' question appears to be a great differentiator. Better candidates unpick the concept of usefulness, drawing on research to make their points which they then develop or extend. Others are more descriptive, while others still struggle to grasp the link between the research and its implications/application.

6a   Most candidates were able to outline research; some got the details of the experimental conditions and of the findings accurate; and some were able to use it to comment on lack of control as a cause of stress.

6b   Some candidates confused control with experimental control (group). Most accessed this question, but only the better candidates managed to extend to a discussion. Many candidates did not get beyond description of ethical considerations.

7a   Candidates were generally able to address this question, usually with genetic or bio-chemical explanations. The quality of explanation or detail contained therein determined the level of response.

7b   There was some effective evaluation of the different explanations, maybe but not necessarily in the form of comparison.

8a   Better answers described the 'how' of the treatment. Most candidates were able to correctly identify an appropriate behavioural treatment for a given disorder.

8b   Candidates appeared to be well prepared for this question and were able to explore a range of different issues in relation to 'appropriateness', such as short and long term benefits, side effects, generalisability, etc..

G544 Approaches and Research Methods in Psychology

General Comments:

General

The overall standard of performance of the candidates was good and candidates were well prepared for the style of questions and the format of the paper. In section A most candidates described a feasible investigation in detail which was both practical and ethical. There are a few candidates who suggested unethical research including using under 16 year olds as participants. Some candidates did not make it explicit how they gathered ordinal level data and some did not gain full credit as their description of their sample did not include how participants were obtained. However, many candidates gave imaginative and carefully thought out descriptions of a practical project based on the options. Popular choices were sport performance, mental arithmetic practice and healthy eating.

 Candidates used their knowledge and skills appropriately to respond to the short questions on research methods. Some candidates did not answer these questions in the context of their own practical project. In section B, most candidates showed understanding of the questions under discussion but sometimes their points were not fully elaborated or their examples described in much detail.

There were few rubric errors: in Section A candidates usually chose one of the research questions on which to base their practical project; in Section B they selected one out of the two questions. Most candidates were able to complete the paper in the allocated time but some appeared to be short of time as the parts d and e on section B could be very brief. Although there is not a requirement to include research from the A2 options unit many candidates were over-reliant on AS studies which limited the scope of their answers. However, the AS studies were used to good effect in the candidates' responses.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Section A

1. Most candidates framed an appropriate null hypothesis; operationalising both the independent and dependent variables. Some candidates had difficulty wording the null and suggested that there will not be a difference between the independent and dependent variables.

2. This question was marked out of 13 +6. 13 marks were given for the description of the practical project and its replicability and appropriateness. 6 marks were given for the design and its feasibility. The full range of marks (13) and (6) was awarded.

    Many good responses contained a clear description of their practical and how it could be carried out; they gave details of the sampling method and sample, the data that was being collected and the testing conditions including timing. Others needed to describe their sampling more clearly and/or testing conditions. Some candidates were unable to get into the top band for design as their practical either lacked feasibility or was unethical

suggesting the use of young participants under the age of 16. Some candidates did not make it explicit that a repeated measures design was used. Candidates should be encouraged to carry out their own practical investigations in preparation for this examination so that they are not tempted to give partial replications of unethical research.

3. This question was answered well by candidates and they commonly used a cause effect relationship can be inferred as an advantage of the experimental method. To get full marks candidates need to link their answer to the topic.

4. a) The majority of candidates were good at identifying the reasons for using the Wilcoxon signed ranks test. Some candidates forgot to answer in the context of their own project.

    b) Few candidates accurately explained what a type 1 error is.

5. Many candidates demonstrated good understanding of a weakness of their suggested sampling method.

6. Most candidates correctly identified an ethical issue that could have arisen in their project.

7. Most candidates described an appropriate alternative to using the repeated measures design and most described the independent measures design in the context of their own practical.

Section B

8. a) Most candidates gave good answers and showed they clearly understood the individual differences approach. In a few instances, there was a lack of detail in the description.

    b) The selection of research described as Individual Differences was wide and varied- most candidates stuck 'safely' with the studies categorised as individual differences studies at AS level but for a minority of candidates it seemed that any study that compared two groups was a study of individual differences. Answers that described the studies without explaining why they were from the individual differences approach could not achieve top marks.

    c) Most candidates attempted to discuss two strengths and two limitations of the individual differences approach, usually qualitative data, lack of generalisability, useful application, small samples and not reductionist . There were some unusual answers suggesting that any research into individual differences is unethical. The full range of marks was awarded.

    d) Many candidates were able to make some distinctions between the individual differences approach and the physiological approach and support this with appropriate evidence, commonly Thigpen and Cleckley for the Individual Differences approach and Sperry or Maguire for the physiological approach. Weaker responses focused on a comparison between the two areas with little or inappropriate evidence.

e) Most candidates could discuss a few points relating to the reliability of research taking the physiological approach to behaviour and present a balanced argument. However, some responses to this question demonstrated a lack of understanding of what 'reliability in research' means and there were some responses conflating reliability with validity.

9   a) Some candidates gave good answers to this question but some demonstrated misunderstanding of what is meant 'in science' and 'in psychological research' by the term reductionism.

b) Most candidates gained credit for descriptions of at least one study that can be seen as reductionist research. However, the selection of research described as reductionist was even more varied than in Q8 - probably because to answer this question the candidates had no 'safe AS study option'.

c) Many candidates discussed a range of at least two strengths and weaknesses of using reductionist research. However, some responses to this question did not mention the word 'reductionist'. Candidates also lost marks by evaluating research that they 'selected' as reductionist but which is not e.g. Freud, Thigpen & Cleckley, Farrington. Candidates need to ensure that their points are discussed fully and supported with relevant evidence.

e) Most candidates have a good understanding of the validity of research using the self-report method. Most responses to this question discussed demand characteristics, social desirability bias, and/or direct from the participant and/or qualitative data. Since these are all AO2 marks candidates should be advised to avoid wasting time writing lengthy descriptions of research. Also, a significant minority seem to think that that all questionnaires lack ecological validity.

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