GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**PSYCHOLOGY
A LEVEL**

SUMMER 2018

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COMPONENT 1

General Comments

Pleasingly the majority of candidates attempted all questions and appeared to manage their time appropriately. One positive feature that stood out in particular was the improvement on AO2 skills. Most candidates displayed the skill of application well in order to answer the question being asked. However, a recurring theme is the sheer amount of answers that rely solely on one textbook and the issue of model answers that are provided by centres. As highlighted in the 2017 report, such answers lead to centre effects and often lower band marks because candidates do not understand or engage with the content. As mentioned in the 2017 report candidates need to show independence in answers, but it was pleasing to see that some centres have acted upon this advice.

Q.1   In general this question was answered well. Many candidates accessed full marks for their description of conditioning. When marks were lost it was due to mistakes with the formula for classical conditioning e.g. stating that food was the neutral stimulus. With regards to operant conditioning there was some confusion between negative reinforcement and punishment, therefore centres need to make important distinctions between the two when teaching conditioning techniques. It must be noted that in order to gain full marks on this question candidates did not need to include both types of conditioning. One form of conditioning, well explained with clear links to psychology, would be enough to gain full marks.

The most popular 'second' assumption was 'humans are born like a blank slate'. Unfortunately, many candidates did not gain above 2 marks for this question because they did not link the answer well to psychology. Candidates can take any example from across the three components to illustrate this assumption.

When candidates chose 'humans and animals learn in similar ways' they rarely gained full marks because they failed to demonstrate links to psychology by using both an animal and human example.

Q.2   This question gave a very mixed response of answers. Those candidates who answered the question well were able to clearly give the strengths and weaknesses of the positive approach, use appropriate examples to highlight their point and then give a reason why it was a strength or a weakness. Candidates who gained lower band marks did not evaluate the actual approach, preferring to evaluate therapy or the classic evidence. Such evaluations are acceptable, but only if they are in the context of evaluation the approach as a whole. Some candidates displayed very little understanding of the approach whilst many stated that the approach is ethnocentric because of the focus on the USA. However, research in this area is now very international with great work being undertaken in country's such as Australia.

Q.3 On the whole the findings were accurate and concise. It was perfectly acceptable and time saving, for candidates to place findings for both experiments into tables. Wrong numbers from the findings of the two experiments, and brief conclusions, were the key factors that kept many candidates out of the top band. Some candidates gave generic or incorrect conclusions that were not from the original article. As noted previously, only findings and conclusion from the original journal are accepted.

Q.4 (i) & (ii) It was encouraging to see that in general candidates have started to answer the question that is asked. Many candidates wrote a brief description of the assumption and how it linked to one human behaviour. However, the previous issue still remains where some candidates simply describe an assumption or describe the assumption and then apply it to a human behaviour in a brief sentence at the very end of the answer. Such answers receive minimal credit.

It is important to note that only one behaviour was required. Many candidates unfortunately gave more than one behaviour but only one was credited in such cases. The question only stated 'behaviour' therefore human and non-human animal examples were both acceptable.

In the 'evolutionary influences' question candidates who used information from Buss or Trivers for mate selection generally used it well. However, there were occasions where candidates wrote about the passing on of genes but would not link it to evolution or adaptive behaviours e.g. discussing MAOA links to aggression but giving no evolutionary perspective on it. Similarly, candidates who referred to altruism tended to gain marks in the lower bands because it was not applied effectively.

In the 'neurotransmitters' assumption, the best answers were those that effectively used component three content from the applications. Many of these answers gained top band marks. However, there was some confusion in weaker answers between neurotransmitters and hormones.

Q.5 Although it was pleasing to see that there were fewer descriptions of the classic evidence than in the previous examination, there was a general inability to actually judge the methodology and the procedures of Bowlby's classic evidence. Weaker candidates simply evaluated the research as a whole, which the question did not require. Findings were often referred to in answers and there were often times when the methodology was touched upon (e.g. strengths and weaknesses of case studies), but answers were generic and not linked to the classic evidence. It is important for centres to teach each section of the classic evidence separately and allow students to independently judge the different aspects of the research.

Q.6 There was a wide range of responses for this question. Some candidates fully understood the expectations of a compare and contrast question whilst others had little idea of the structure; making point after point with little or no discussion. Although it occurred less often in this session, some candidate's still list strengths and weaknesses of both approaches which is not comparing or contrasting them, therefore minimal marks are awarded for such answers. The most common mistakes were; giving half of an argument e.g. providing an example of how the biological approach is reductionist and saying cognitive approach is also reductionist, but providing no evidence of this; stating inaccurate detail e.g. the cognitive approach is not scientific, the cognitive approach is fully on the side of nurture and ignores nature; responses referring to usefulness of the therapies but then not using any research to demonstrate effectiveness.

On the whole conclusions were weak. A good rule of thumb for a conclusion in such an answer is to discuss briefly which approach is better and why, but not repeating any information that has been written about previously.

Q.7 **(a)** Dream analysis was the most popular answer given. Psychodrama answers were reasonable, often showing a range of components, but the depth was not evident in most answers e.g. stating the mirroring technique but not fully explaining what it is.

With regards to dream analysis, many candidates not only gave a description of what dreams actually are rather than describing the therapy, but practically every centre had described the components of dream analysis directly from one textbook. These answered failed to reach the higher band. Many candidates did not make clear that the analysis is about bringing the repressed forward to enable clients to work through their issues and some candidates were confused between manifest and latent content.

However, it was good to find that candidates identified and described key terms, e.g. condensation, secondary elaboration. They must ensure, however, that such terms are explained to gain more credit.

For both therapies the aim is a good place to start.

(b) In terms of AO2 skills, it was encouraging that candidates made good use of the words 'ineffective' and 'unethical' within the quote, demonstrating the application skill. Candidates who did not do this were confined to lower bands as their answers did not meet the requirements of the question. There were a small number of candidates who discussed 'psychoanalysis' rather than dream analysis or psychodrama, for which they received no credit if it did not link to the therapy they had described in 7(a)

For both evaluations candidates used research, which is an effective way of evaluating a therapy, however, it receives no credit if it is just described and not linked effectiveness and ethics. Many answers did not have a conclusion or the conclusion was repetition of what had been written previously.

Q.8 On the whole this question was generally well answered, producing better answers than in 2017. Structure has improved and many candidates are using a much wider range of research as well as using mini conclusions throughout their answer. Some candidates did not take enough care to refer back to 'incapable of remembering and recalling accurate information' and 'should never be used in criminal convictions', preferring to make 'reliability' their focus instead. Care should be taken that responses do not become generic 'reliability' answers. The debate is about the reliability of EWT but it is important that candidates focus on the actual question given, rather than learning a model answer that they do not link to the question being asked.

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COMPONENT 2

General Comments

The examining team were generally pleased with the standard of work produced by most candidates; it was clear that centres had heeded the advice offered following last years' examiners report. It is evident that a 'whole class' option is being used by many centres when delivering the personal investigations, and this strategy is fine as long as the research conducted by all of the candidates reflects what is being asked for in the specification. Performance in Section C is also improving; some centres have clearly taught their students well and many were able to pick up on some of the more subtle nuances of the scenarios, but a sizeable proportion of marks are still being lost when candidates do not apply their knowledge to the scenario effectively enough.

Section A

Q.1   Most candidates attempted this question and were able to get 1 mark. Some candidates gave a definition that more clearly indicated a sample group, and so did not receive credit.

Q.2   Most candidates attempted this question and were able to give two criticisms of on-line research. Some candidates did however offer criticisms, such as social desirability without really linking it to on-line research. These sorts of answers achieved two out of three marks.

Popular criticisms included problems gaining valid consent/debriefing and limited methodologies.

Q.3   A number of candidates had difficulties with this question. Some clearly had no idea what skewed distributions looked like and opted for drawing positive and negative scattergrams instead, which of course received no credit. Some candidates were able to sketch a normal distribution curve, but then got the positive and negative skews the wrong way around.

Q.4   **(a)**   Candidates opted to answer this question in a variety of ways. Some candidates opted to literally describe how the brain scans worked; some candidates imported knowledge from other components and described examples of when brain scans had been used in Psychology e.g. Raine *et. al.*'s work; some chose to use a mixture of the previous two options. On the whole this question was answered well by many candidates, however for many their description were not as good as their evaluation of brain scans, question 4 (b).

(b) This question required candidates to discuss strengths and weaknesses, so some candidates that only included weaknesses or only included strengths in their answers were not able to achieve the top band. Most candidates were able to give some criticisms of the various scans; some criticisms were quite specific whereas others were quite general especially relating to the potential ethical impact of brain scans in society. Some candidates insisted on criticising certain scans for increasing the individual's exposure to radiation. Although this is a reasonable critique, it was evident that a minority of candidates really thought the scans were potentially deadly.

Q.5 This question caused difficulty for some candidates. Firstly, the question does not require a description of non-participant observations and participant observations - this sort of content received no credit. Another, more worrying issue was the number of candidates who were confusing non-participant observations and participant observations with covert and overt observations. Although covert and overt observations are not on the specification, some candidates have either imported knowledge from other subjects or believe that non-participant observations and participant observations and covert and overt observations are interchangeable terms - they are not. Non-participant observations can be both covert and overt, and participant observations can also be both covert and overt. A worrying minority of candidates believed that non-participant observations contained no participants.

Q.6 **(a)** Most candidates were able to construct some good answers for this question. Their evaluations included discussion of Kohlberg's use of interviews and hypothetical moral dilemmas. Some candidates included discussion of the use of the longitudinal method although this tended to be less detailed or applied than their discussion of hypothetical moral dilemmas. Another point of note is that most candidates only included negative commentary about the methodology; answers which include positive commentary about Kohlberg's methodology is equally credit worthy. Criticisms that related to the sample of Kohlberg's research did not receive credit here.

(b) Most candidates were able to offer some criticism of the sample used by Kohlberg. Although a minority still believe that Kohlberg used two groups of boys aged between 10-16 and 22-28, most gave informed criticisms of the use of an all-male sample group. After noting the problems with all male sample, many candidates struggled with developing their criticism further. Some criticised Kohlberg for only using American boys in his sample, whilst others praised him for using boys from other cultures such as Taiwan and Mexico. Again the size of Kohlberg's sample was criticised by some for being too small and by other candidates it was praised for being so large. Sample size (as ever) receives no credit as after all it is the representativeness of the sample that is most important, not the number of participants included.

Section B

Q.7 **(a)** **(i)** Most candidates were able to identify an experimental design although some did not receive any more credit than 1 as they then went on to describe how they had used their participants in their experimental design, rather than explaining their selection with reference to the strengths of their selected experimental design or the weaknesses of rejected experimental designs.

(ii) Most candidates were able to select and justify their chosen statistical test well. Although some candidates were losing the odd mark because they did not link each of the three elements (difference, level of measurement, independent/related data) to their research.

(b) Some candidates managed to do really well in this question and gave account of two strategies that they implemented to deal with ethical issues that were clearly linked to their research. Some candidates sadly achieved 0 as they must have misread the question and just talked about two ethical issues in their research, rather than how they dealt with them.

(c) A huge array of suggested improvements were suggested (changing the experimental design to a matched pairs design as well as other practical suggestions such as, better timing of the presentation of perceptual stimuli). Some candidates included suggestions for improvements that really changed the nature of their whole experiment, so this didn't receive credit. Another popular suggestion was changing the nature of the sample. Again examiners were presented with 'increase the size of my sample to make it more generalisable'. This doesn't receive credit as, as noted in 6 (b), the size of the sample is not the issue, but the representativeness is. So improvements, such as changing the sampling technique from an opportunity sample to a stratified sample, is creditable as it could theoretically improve the representativeness of the sample.

Q.8 **(a)** Most candidates were able to note the psychological variable they had chosen reasonably well. Fewer were able to offer a fully operationalised psychological variable. Some candidates explained how they had operationalised intelligence and this obviously received no credit. A few candidates had sadly not selected a psychological variable (as specified in the title of this investigation) with which to correlate intelligence. For example some had correlated intelligence with height in cm or the number of phone apps a participant had etc. As a result of this it was decided to award '0' marks for part (a), but then potentially award the full range of marks for 8 (b) and (c).

(b) Many candidates were able to describe their use of standardised instructions well with clear operationalisation. Some candidates offered less well thought out descriptions, but had key ideas of reliability, such as making sure all participants had the same instructions and these also received appropriate credit.

(c) Surprisingly, this question didn't seem to be answered as well as 8 (b). Establishing the validity of measuring tools was one way of dealing with validity issues, another popular, but less well thought out response was their use of sample selection. Some candidates did talk about their use of face validity and concurrent validity as ways in which they dealt with validity issues, and these received credit it they were described and linked appropriately to their research.

Section C

Q.9 **(a)** **(i)** Most candidates were able to identify the sampling technique as either opportunity or volunteer/self-selected; both of these received credit in the marking scheme.

(ii) Most candidates were able to give an advantage and a disadvantage that matched their selected sampling technique. However a sizeable minority of candidates still persist in believing that an advantage of opportunity sampling is 'quick and easy'. This is an insufficient explanation unless some form of comparison to another sampling technique is made.

(b) **(i)** Most candidates were able to give a good definition of social desirability, however some candidates were getting confused with demand characteristics.

(ii) Most candidates were able to spot and report on possible social desirability problems from the scenario, with many linking it really well to the scenario.

(c) Many candidates did well on this question, possibly because they had also used a chi- square in one of their Personal Investigations. Surprisingly, even though many knew the appropriate elements for a chi-square, a larger proportion of the candidates did not link all of the elements to the scenario.

(d) **(i)** A wide variety of methods were identified and credited if they could possibly be used to collect qualitative data. Popular choices included interviews and questionnaires that included open questions.

(ii) Most candidates were able to justify their choice with a basic justification and apply it well to the scenario. Fewer candidates were able to a stronger level of justification i.e. more than one strength or some comparison to the problems of other methods.

Q.10 **(a)** Most candidates were able to give an appropriate disadvantage and link it to the scenario. A few candidates tried to include more than one disadvantage, in this case the examiner credited the best response.

(b) **(i)** Most candidates were able to spot that it was repeated measures design, although some candidates clearly had no clue what experimental design was and included inappropriate identifications, such as correlations, field experiments etc.

(ii) Most candidates who had identified that the experimental design was repeated measures were also able to offer a clear, appropriate and linked disadvantage. Popular choices included the possibility of an increased risk of demand characteristics, although a minority correctly noted issues related to order effects.

(c) **(i)** Most candidates were able to calculate the mean. Only a handful received 1 mark because they had omitted their calculations or because their final total was wrong.

(ii) Although most candidates were able to note a good disadvantage of the mean score and link it to the scenario, very few candidates were able to offer an appropriate advantage for the mean score. Some candidates offered answers such as 'it is the only measure that includes all the data set' (not true) or 'it's the most sensitive measure', but this did not receive credit unless they explained why being sensitive is a good thing; especially as many of the same candidates then went on to suggest 'sensitivity' is a disadvantage because the mean is easily affected by anomalous or extreme results. Few candidates picked out advantages such as, 'unlike the mode, you will always be able to find a mean score within a data set that is ordinal level or above' or 'means are useful as they are also an essential part of other statistics such as standard deviation'.

(d) Many candidates did well on this question, with most being able to link the ethical issue to the scenario. Popular issues included exposing the aerophobes the harm of experiencing two flights or that they may be 'humiliated' when reporting their anxiety levels. One canny candidate also alluded to the possible stress and anxiety that may be experienced in flight by the aerophobes, because they would not be able to withdraw from the research without a parachute – excellent application!

Advice

Really highlight to learners the need to show clear links to the scenarios in their answers. Half of the marks on this paper come from AO2.

Don't just rely on GCSE Mathematics knowledge for concepts such as the measures of central tendency; learners need to be able to be much more critical about the mathematical concepts included in the specification.

When justifying an inferential test, make sure to link each element to the research or data being collected for the best marks. Also, when justifying an inferential test in a scenario question (Section C) claiming the data is 'nominal' or 'at least ordinal level' is fine; it is not necessary for candidates to specifically select whether the data is ordinal, interval or ratio on the tests that require those levels of measurements. With regard to Personal Investigations however, we really would expect the candidate to be able to identify the specific level of measurement used in their own research.

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COMPONENT 3

General Comments

It was very encouraging to see that again some students had been very well prepared for the demands of this component in terms of the articulation of argument, level of detail expected and ability to apply knowledge to statement or scenario. More candidates this year could identify what questions required of them and responded accordingly, illustrating correctly the skills of AO1, AO2 and AO3.

Marks were commonly lost again this year due to a couple of common errors:

- Timing - As noted in the previous examiners report timing was an inhibitory factor last year and remains so this year also. Many examples this year again were seen where students just did not complete the paper. This many have been commonly caused by spending too long on one question. Students need to have a clear idea of the parameters of time for each question to ensure that they can have every opportunity to complete the paper. As with last year there were plentiful examples of incomplete papers – or papers where questions had been completed in a rushed manner. In order to ensure students, get every opportunity to complete the paper, please ensure that candidates are aware of the following.

  10 Mark question - 13 minutes
  15 Mark question - 20 minutes
  25 Mark Question - 33 minutes

  When teaching the topics, centres need to ask themselves if they are in fact teaching too much for the topics. The times identified above especially for the 10 markers are not long! Centres should also be encouraged to offer regular and frequent timed assessment to ensure that candidates can recognise what they can achieve and write in the set times given. The skill of condensing description and argument down into set amounts of time is something that takes practice, and will greatly improve public exam performance.

- AO2 – This skill was approached overall better than last year, and centres should be congratulated on their efforts here. That said, what is concerning is that there are still large numbers of students that fail to engage with scenario / stimulus style questions and by so not doing – do not score any marks at all on AO2. This is such a waste of marks and talent – that is either through lack of knowledge of what the question demands – or direction from centre. In either case candidate's potential is not maximised.

Applications

Addictive Behaviours

Q.1 **(a)** Addictive behaviour remains a popular choice. Most candidates correctly identified that this question was assessing AO1 and A02 (AO1 the descriptive knowledge of a method of modifying the addictive behaviour, and AO2 the application of knowledge to the scenario.) Candidates provided a range of responses to this question which in the better cases described in detail a method of modification (agonist and antagonist substitution or aversion therapy) whilst equally ensuring that the description was applied to the scenario of Natalie. Weaker responses either did not comment on Natalie's scenario or made a token comment towards her. Centres should be encouraged to practice scenario style questions with students to ensure that they can provide responses that allow for thorough well-chosen material that is applied thoroughly to the scenario.

(b) This question required the use of AO3. Responses (to varying levels of quality) referred to personality and cognitive biases. Responses to this question at a weaker level either did not respond to the actual question, simply just evaluating one explanation thus achieving a maximum of 5 marks, to those that evaluated two explanations but in a weak and very generic way. Better responses were able to articulate effectively varied issues (range) and ensured that the evaluatory points that were made were substantiated with relevant research and conclusions / inferences drawn that links the comments made directly back to the title. Indeed, the most notable difference between the poorer and stronger responses in this question was in the effectiveness of argument and its relation to relevant research. Centres would be encouraged to help candidates develop strategies to remember research relevant to the issues they study. One of the most effective means of analysis is by reference to research to assess it's worth. Such skill was notably absent in some candidate responses.

Autistic Spectrum Behaviours

Q.2 **(a)** Autism as a topic is fascinating, and students often engage with it well. Despite the fascination of the topic – autism remains an understudied area of the component three specification. This is the first year a characteristics style question has appeared on the paper. This question required the candidate to use just AO1 – descriptive skills being utilised to provide details of the characteristics of autistic spectrum behaviour. Of those centres that taught this section of the specification, the quality of response varied between them. Most notable to comment on for this question, like other characteristic style questions, was the accuracy, depth, and range of the material – this being the discriminator between higher and lower marks being awarded. Some candidates showed limited understanding of the condition and thus listed very general behaviours showing limited depth and range. More able candidates were able to not only state how the condition is diagnosed (and by what systems) but so organise the behaviours accordingly illustrating each with suitable examples – allowing the skills of accuracy, depth and range to be fulfilled. Timing remains an issue in this exam, like last year. Some responses were very short clearly illustrating candidates were short of time. Centres could be encouraged to ensure that candidates have adequate practice of responses under timed conditions hitting the guides given earlier in this document.

(b) This question required the use of AO2 and AO3 skills. Candidates who attempted the question often evaluated biological explanations with no reference to the statement – thus not scoring any AO2. Another approach observed was where candidates had selected appropriate material for their response but made few, if any, links to statement- thus scoring low on AO2; or very finally making comments that were appropriate and well applied to the statement thus scoring higher on AO2. In the latter case the better responses were those that provided well rounded evaluations beyond the basic assertions and drew these back to the statement with reference to appropriate studies / authorities and thus scored higher. With regard to AO3, centres should encourage their students to add depth to their evaluatory commentary. Try to get them to avoid generic statements like: 'a problem of this approach is that it is reductionist or determinist' – with little or no explanation / substantiation to back up and give depth to the comments made. The more effective response used such comments as an opportunity to then refer to the statement in the question. For example 'from this evaluatory comment it can be deduced that biological explanations are the best way of explaining autistic spectrum behaviours.' In such cases the structures of the responses were very effective and the overall meaning of the response very clear.

Bullying Behaviours

Q.3 (a) This topic was the most unpopular of all, with equally low numbers as last year attempting this topic as a whole. The question required the candidate only to use AO1 skill, requiring the candidate to give the examiner a response that outlined the characteristics of behaviour for bullying. The few centres that attempted this question actually provided varied sourced attempts at answering the question. Few responses formally defined bullying, neither did they indicate current estimated levels of bullying as a problem. As the question indicates the focus is on the bullying behaviours so the candidate is expected to ensure that the response provided focuses on the behaviours of the bully. The better candidate here was clearly able to articulate key aspects of bullying behaviour for example the bullying being a behaviour that involves negative acts. The better response also ensured that suitable examples were used to guarantee depth was achieved. Utilisation of wording like 'for example' or 'an illustration' were used to take the readers understanding to a deeper level. In this case examples could have included varied forms of physical bullying (restraint, kicking, hitting etc.), verbal (threatening remarks, sarcasm, teasing etc.), social exclusion (isolating the individual from others – thus making the impact of other forms of bullying on them far greater). The criteria for range was satisfied by the candidate looking at the varied number of characteristics that can describe the behaviour (e.g. following Olweus' view – negative acts, repeated behaviour, intention to harm, power asymmetry, types of bullying). Centres would be encouraged on characteristics questions to ensure that candidates are well practiced in describing the behaviours of bullying and ensuring that's depth is achieved through varied use of examples to illustrate the behaviours described.

(b) The question combined skills of AO2 and AO3. As noted before in this report what was surprising was that some entire centres candidates did not engage with the stimulus materials / scenario and thus did not score on AO2. With regard AO3, the statement was deliberately provocative with the aim of exciting from candidates a balanced evaluatory response back that both looked at evidence for and against this explanation. As noted before though, varied responses were seen. For the poorer candidate simply stringing several generic evaluation points together in a rather list like fashion – with limited depth was commonly noted. Such attempts also would have held large descriptive sections about the individual differences explanation which as a result would have cut down the time the candidate had to 'evaluate'. Centres could offer candidates opportunities to ensure when in an evaluation question, they are well practiced in responding to the demands of the question rather than providing interesting (often correct) responses that serves little purpose than simply to contextualise the material that follows. The time to complete this question is short – so a focus on the hub of the question is expected and needed. Better candidates in this question achieved range by looking at a sequence of evaluation points – the evidence for, the evidence against, practical applications, and alternatives. Depth was achieved through reference to research or relevant examples to substantiate the points made. With regard to AO2 examiners reported varied level of success. Candidates that achieved 5 marks were those that ensured that all commentary and research was relevant, and that application was made from each point back to the statement. Those that did not achieve well on this criterion often made relevant points in their responses but provided no means of applying their point back to the statement. Use of sentences such as 'from this evaluation point it can be seen that whilst individual differences explanations provide a way of understanding bullying behaviour, it might not be the most effective…..' would be a simple illustration of this.

Criminal Behaviours

Q.4 **(a)** There were some well-developed responses seen from most candidates here. The question requires the assessment of AO1. Candidates chose a full range of explanations including Differential Association theory, gender socialisation, and normalisation theory. Better candidates provided responses where the description made was clearly 'informed' by research / theorists relevant to the area. For example, in describing Differential Association theory, referring to the person that put the theory forward – Sutherland (1939). Weaker candidates failed to describe adequately the terms. In the case of differential association – seeing things in a mathematical sense and understanding how individuals will vary in their frequency of contact with others. Some of those 'others' will have positive / negative attitudes / behaviours. If a person is in very frequent contact with such another person – it is highly plausible that the attitudes and behaviours of the other will affect you. Such a level of explanation was absent in all but the better responses. Centres could encourage their students to ensure that descriptions of theory / explanation shows clearly what the theory involves linking it in to an appropriate research or theoretical context. There is a tendency in question on this topic for candidate responses to be very vague and lack clear structure or meaning.

(b)   Candidate performance on this question varied widely. The weakest responses did not make any application to the statement nor make reference to relevant supporting (or contradictory) research. Indeed, often what was seen in the weakest candidates was generic evaluatory statements that often-lacked depth and purpose. Such candidates talked about the deterministic nature of biological explanations without elaborating on their point showing the implication of it – why is the determinism of biological approach a negative / positive of the explanation? Such responses thus lacked depth. Better responses ensured that evaluatory commentary was linked to the varied (range) evaluation points made. For example, a problem with the biological explanation of crime is that it is reductionist. This is a limitation because as an explanation in reducing the cause of behaviour down to its most basic form, there is an ignorance of other equally plausible explanations – for example important cognitive factors such as cognitive distortions that may equally play a part in determining if a person shows criminal behaviour. Centres may look at developing conjunctive exercises that helps the candidates formulate argument and add depth to the responses made. With regard to AO2 for this question, candidates lost marks where no or limited engagement with the statement was noted. Candidates need to be encouraged in such questions to ensure they explicitly apply their commentary to the statement in the question.

Schizophrenia

Q.5   **(a)**   Schizophrenia as a topic remains the mostpopular behaviour. On the whole candidates performed very well on this question. The question requires the candidate to make use of AO1 and AO2 skills. Knowledge of the characteristics was very good with candidates being able to define what type of disorder schizophrenia is, better candidates being able to place the classification within systems such as DSM-V or ICD-10. Many candidates were able to explain symptoms under headings of positive and negative symptoms. What lacked in some weaker responses was the ability to add depth through examples. For example, when talking about delusions – it would be useful to be able to fill detail here by 'illustrating' types of delusion (grandeur, reference, control etc.) or when talking about disordered thinking being able to illustrate forms of disordered thinking that can occur. With regard to AO2 in this question – the ability to apply the knowledge base to the scenario of Ronald and Rory – candidates ranged in their performance. It is pleasing to report that there were plenty of examples where candidates achieved full or near full marks for AO2 as their responses illustrated a thorough application of the characteristics of schizophrenia to Ronald and Rory. Weaker responses either placed a single reference to Ronald / Rory at the top of the response – or just did not refer to them at all. Centres would be encouraged to continue giving practice opportunities to students to further develop their timed application skills on topics. Centres might also take advantage of the wealth of on-line support the Psychology pages of the WJEC / Eduqas Psychology website holds relating these and other exam skills.

(b) This question required the candidate to illustrate AO3 skills. The candidate was expected to refer to at least two explanations in their evaluations – which most candidates were able to execute. This question, in comparison to 5a, was more challenging for candidates as measured by their limited ability to provide depth and detail to evaluatory comments. As noted at the top of this document – timing was an issue. It might have been that more time was spent on the 5a at the expense of 5b. The weakest responses here provided generic evaluation statements often very brief in their content. The better responses here were those that ensured the commentaries made were sequential, well referenced to research and ended with a 'concluding statement'. For example: one problem with urbanicity - a sociocultural explanation of Schizophrenia – is that it is very difficult to establish cause and effect. By this I mean – it is unclear as to whether it is the urban environment that has caused the condition – or if the urban environment is effect of the condition – a drift from rural (or suburban) areas to urban ones. As a result, the ability of this social psychological explanation is undermined since it cannot clearly and unequivocally explain the cause of schizophrenia; as a result psychologists favour composite approaches embodying more than one theoretical approach. Centres would be encouraged to regularly test candidate's evaluation skills – at least initially by small focused tasks – allowing them the opportunity to develop gradually the understandings of structure, depth and range needed for effective evaluation skill.

Stress

Q.6 **(a)** Stress remains a popular choice of study for candidates. This question required candidates to make use of AO1 skills. Whilst as with other questions a full range of qualities of responses were seen, it was impressive to see in better candidates such a logical and systematic structure in response to the question. Typical responses tended to look at on the one hand the sympathomedullary pathway and the HPA axis on the other to formulate the two parts to their response. Other centres chose evolutionary adaption with very few choosing stress genes. Weaker candidates provided superficial knowledge of the systems involved and lacked understanding of the sequence or functioning of physiological characteristics of stress. The better candidate illustrated a detailed understanding of physiological systems, their sequence and function in an accurate manner. On questions such as this, centres would be encouraged to allow practice opportunities for candidates to focus on accuracy and detail. If centres find it difficult to generate questions themselves a question bank can be found on the Eduqas Psychology pages of the website: http://www.wjec.co.uk/question-bank/ In addition centres might also be interested in making use of the varied teacher resource links that are available on the Eduqas Psychology webpage: http://resources.eduqas.co.uk/Pages/ResourceByArgs.aspx?subId=25&lvlId=0

(b) This question required both AO2 and AO3 skills. Candidate performance on the AO2 element of this question varied. Better candidates were able to articulate the evaluatory comments needed in the response in a way that allowed thorough application to Mehdi. Such application was not a 'token reference' but rather ensuring that comments made were naturally linked to Mehdi. So, for example in evaluating Beta Blockers one might make the point of saying that Beta Blockers are 'off label' for anxiety related conditions. For Mehdi this might pose a problem since he might take such medication with good intention of it reducing anxiety levels. But such medication, as it is off label, has not undergone rigorous clinical trials to see long terms effectiveness, and safety to the consumer etc. Linking on from this point, candidate performance on AO3 – the ability to evaluate - in this question showed great variance. Better candidates formulated points that were sequential and moved beyond the basic and generic response. The responses were phrased in such a way that allowed examination of evidence for, evidence against, application and reference to alternative explanations. Plenty of examples were seen where time had been misjudged and compromises made on questions such as this. Centres would be encouraged to offer regular timed assessment – using the guides for time at the start of this document to ensure that their candidates are well advised and clear about suitable expectations of time for each question.

Controversies

Noticeable differences in approach to these questions have been seen this year with more candidates strategically completing the controversies question first. Such a decision is logical, but candidates need to remember the time limits per 25 mark section at approximately 33 minutes. All too commonly in this exam series some exceptional controversies questions were observed, but were then followed by poor applications questions as the candidates 'raced' to complete the rest of the paper in time.

Q.7 Of the two controversies questions, this controversy was less popular. What was pleasing however in this question was the wealth and range of examples that candidates brought to their responses. It is also pleasing to see that centres are working with candidates to more explicitly illustrate debate / controversy though the style of language used. Wording like 'however', 'alternatively', 'a counter view' etc. were expressions used commonly in the articulation of controversy responses. This articulation helps students structure better and more coherent controversy responses. Better candidates in this question illustrated with reference to varied research from across topics in Psychology as to how the subject is culturally biased. Some very good analyses of studies such as Myers and Diener, Buss, Milgram and many more were used in illustration. Better candidates equally showed how studies tried to avoid cultural bias and techniques of how this achieved. Better candidates also showed how culture as defined by period of time can equally present bias. Compared to last year, candidates seem to have a clearer idea that points made have to relate back to the title. This was observed in most (but not all) cases. In most but not all responses, a conclusion that was appropriate to the controversy and summed up the weight of evidence in the response was seen. Centres need to remind students that effective conclusions (AO3 criteria) can be achieved through consistent mini-conclusions throughout the response or equally from a more traditional conclusion at the end of the response. Candidates should not add new material in the conclusion or use this paragraph to extend existing points further. Conclusions are a skill that most students need still to work on and develop further.

Q.8   A popular controversy question, and one that illustrated a wide variety in quality of student responses. In the main centres should be congratulated on ensuring that candidates make appropriate use of language to formulate argument. Many responses here illustrated good synoptic understanding, and examples of studies used to show particularly the unethical nature of psychological research with animals was very broad – with examples coming from beyond the confines of specification content. Better responses for this controversy engaged with the title centrally examining core aspects of both sides of the debate. For example, showing how non-human animal research was useful there would be detailed reference to established legislation (Animal Act) and British Psychological Society guidelines with reference to research with non-human animals that structures, guides and monitors such research to ensure that unethical practice is avoided. Better answers would go beyond this making further varied points e.g. ethological research as an alternative to lab experimentation, research that has benefited the lives of humans with conditions such as schizophrenia, depression etc. Reference to Bateson's decision cube, to illustrate the decision-making process so as to avoid the costs of animal research outweighing the gains, was successfully applied. Core arguments against centred in a detailed way around examples of unethical research such as Brady's Monkeys (stress), Harlow's Rhesus Monkeys (attachment), Rechtshaffen's rats (sleep deprivation) to name but a few. Better answers went beyond this examining other issues such as speciesism, animal rights viewpoints amongst others before concluding in an appropriate way. Given the synoptic nature of the debates question, it was refreshing to see examples of research from the breadth of psychology being used to inform and enrich student responses. To this end centres need to be congratulated on ensuring that candidates have an appreciation of issues in psychology that go far beyond the limits of specification content.

In conclusion, a very pleasing attempt by candidates has been seen in meeting the demands and rigours of this paper. The quality of responses by most candidates illustrates that centres are working very hard to ensure that both content and more importantly assessment skill is being delivered and practiced. To build on this success, centres should further refine student evaluation skill, ensuring that that it is coherent, structured and most importantly well informed.

Congratulations to all centres and students for their hard work in preparing for and executing this June's Component 3 exam.

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