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# A LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY

Introductory Topics in Psychology 7182/1  
Report on the Examination

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## **General Introduction to the November Series**

This has been an unusual exam series in many ways. Entry patterns have been very different from those normally seen in the summer, and students had a very different experience in preparation for these exams. It is therefore more difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the range of student responses seen in this series and those seen in a normal summer series. The smaller entry also means that there is less evidence available for examiners to comment on.

In this report, senior examiners will summarise the performance of students in this series in a way that is as helpful as possible to teachers preparing future cohorts while taking into account the unusual circumstances and limited evidence available.

## **Overview of Entry**

There were 787 entries, presumably independent students or students hoping to improve their centre-assessed grade from the Summer. Our usual entry is 40000+.

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### **Question 02 (2 + 2 marks)**

Good knowledge of minority influence was generally evident, (occasional confusion between commitment and consistency) but a number of answers lacked the element of elaboration necessary for 2 marks, while some did not refer to Samina, as required by the question.

### **Question 03 (3 marks)**

This was not done well. 'Replicability' was most popular, though some answers confused it with actual replications. Most students understood the importance of standardised procedures, but a significant number did not contextualise their answer. There were some good answers on 'hypothesis testing', though again occasionally lacking sufficient elaboration or clarity for full marks. There were few responses on 'theory construction'.

### **Question 04 (16 marks)**

This was a demanding question, requiring two aspects of obedience to be discussed, along with application to the stem. However, there were some excellent answers, with students demonstrating sound knowledge of legitimacy of authority and the agentic state, and the relationship between them. Application to the stem was usually competent. At the top end, evaluation focused on research support along with real-life examples, and the occasional reference to alternative explanations of obedience such as upbringing, locus of control and the Authoritarian personality. A significant number of answers provided far too much methodological detail of Milgram's various studies, and provided generic and ineffective evaluation e.g. ethical issues.

### **Question 07 (3 marks)**

This question was not done well. There were many incorrect answers, and even some of the correct responses failed to explain why the median should be used. Overall, students were not prepared for this research methods question.

Question 08 (3 marks)

A significant number of answers confused retroactive and proactive interference, while others failed to provide sufficient elaboration for full marks e.g. referring to similarity of material.

Question 09 (6 marks)

Most students demonstrated clear understanding of the principles behind the cognitive interview, but failed to apply it appropriately 'to help Danielle's recall of the event'; this required reference to details of the situation provided in the stem.

Question 10 (8 marks)

This question was not done well. Although the term 'research' can apply to theories and/or studies, virtually all answers focused on studies. Petersen & Petersen and Bahrick were uniformly popular, though the variety of methodological details indicated that many students were confused over precisely how these key studies were carried out. Evaluation was often rather generic and limited to the artificiality of the stimuli and setting (Petersen & Petersen), though better answers elaborated on this. They could also explicitly compare P & P with the naturalistic approach of Bahrick, and then discuss issues with the Bahrick study. Weaker answers gave general descriptions of memory stores, often inaccurately, and without a focus on 'duration'.

Question 11.2 (4 marks)

Although overall performance was reasonably good, some marks were missed by students not addressing the 'Distinguish between' injunction. A significant number of answers provided clear outlines of two other types of attachment, but with no effort to explicitly juxtapose or distinguish between them. A small number of students misread the question and distinguished between Type C and two other types of attachment.

Question 12 (3 marks)

The key weakness with this question was students making suggestions that were not specific to controlled observations e.g. use of behavioural categories, multiple observers, video etc. However, there were many very competent answers.

Question 13 (16 marks)

This was clearly the most demanding question on the paper. The question itself is taken directly from a specific subsection covering reciprocity and interactional synchrony. However a significant minority of students took the question to be generally about attachment, and produced answers focusing on e.g. Ainsworth, Bowlby, Schaffer, and even Lorenz and Harlow. Where there was explicit reference to *interactions* between infant and caregivers in humans, some credit could be given, but overall such answers did not do well.

Essays covering interactions had occasional problems distinguishing between reciprocity and interactional synchrony but often made good use of supporting studies. Further evaluation points included the problem of identifying 'intentionality' in babies, artificiality of settings, and the socially-sensitive nature of such research.

Question 14 (4 marks)

Although some answers provided too much detail of the IMH definition of abnormality, generally responses were focused on evaluation. The most common error was not to provide sufficient elaboration to access full marks. At the top end there was reference to e.g. cultural differences, or problems with satisfying specific examples of Jahoda's criteria.

**Question 15 (4 marks)**

Although most students could outline one cognitive characteristic of OCD (usually obsessive thoughts), many could not provide a second example. There were references to insight into the condition, and cognitive strategies for dealing with obsessions, but a number of answers veered off into non-cognitive characteristics such as compulsive behaviours and anxiety.

**Question 16 (16 marks)**

This question provided the greatest range of answers. At the top end there was impressive and accurate knowledge of the two-process model, with clear distinctions between classical and operant conditioning. Application to Max was usually accurate. Evaluation was varied, from Pavlov's dogs, Little Albert, alternative biological/evolutionary explanations, studies on the link (or not) between phobias and traumatic experiences, and therapies based on the two-process model. Weaker answers were unclear on the distinction between operant and classical conditioning and failed to apply them effectively to Max's situation. A number of essays referred e.g. to Little Albert or to systematic desensitisation without detailing their specific relevance to the two-process model.

**Concluding Remarks.**

This was a small cohort but overall performance was not vastly different to previous sittings of this paper. There was evidence of excellent teaching and learning, and less evidence of rote-learned and generic evaluation. At the lower end there were indications of lack of preparation and coverage of the Specification (e.g. Q13), while research methods questions were on the whole not done well (e.g. 03, 07).

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.