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# A LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY

PAPER 3 7182/3R

Report on the Examination

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7182

November 2020

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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**

The entry was much smaller than usual with many centres of just a single student. There were probably more incomplete scripts than usual where students had not attempted the required number of questions. All of the optional topics were represented although some options such as stress and addiction were seen only rarely. Not surprisingly, there was some evidence that students had been preparing independently for this series, with examiners sometimes using internet searches to verify less mainstream references. The overall performance was not as good as usual and there was widespread variation in the quality of responses.

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### **Section A**

Surprisingly few students could offer an appropriate explanation of cultural relativism but most answers gained some credit for an understanding that it is linked to cultural norms. Ideas for reducing cultural bias varied; a common error here was to offer the same way twice in two variations of 'studying different cultures'. Most answers on psychic determinism could make sensible links to the stem although a significant number had no psychodynamic references at all. The question on reductionism was not one that students could have pre-prepared with the result that performance tended to be quite limited. Many answers confused reductionism with determinism and/or reductionism with the nomothetic approach. References to objectivity and empiricism were sometimes sprinkled around without any real application. Better answers could offer specific examples of reductionist research and explain how they involved the empirical study of objective evidence. Quite a few answers were simply pre-learned responses on the holism versus reductionism debate.

### **Section B**

Multiple choice distractors appeared to have been particularly effective in relationships and gender. Most answers to the questions on statistical testing showed some relevant knowledge and understanding. Where an incorrect test was given students could still get some credit for relevant reasoning based on the scenario. Alternatives to the Wilcoxon test were credited (Sign and related-t) as these could have been made appropriate here, but once these had been credited any accompanying reasoning had to be consistent with the test given. Answers to the next question often showed misunderstanding with the suggestion that the participants themselves should choose the pictures/descriptions. The applied questions on filter theory, sex-role stereotypes and Selman usually evidenced sound knowledge and application but discussion was often brief or

absent. Approximately 25% of students did not attempt the question on Rusbult or wrote about the wrong theory. Limitations of Bem's research often consisted of weak generic points about the use of questionnaires. A few discussions of Vygotsky's work were excellent.

### **Section C**

The 4-mark study questions required both outline and evaluation. Outlines varied but the majority of students failed to offer any evaluation. Any study that could be linked to the validity of diagnosis of schizophrenia was credited, including studies of co-morbidity. Although not originally anticipated, studies of naturally occurring food aversions were creditworthy. For the application questions in this section most responses included relevant information but not all showed explicit application to the stem for Level 2. Students should be reminded that successful application involves clear engagement with the content in the stem and that simple name dropping is not enough. For the Stress question on biofeedback, very few students mentioned aspects of conditioning theory. In the extended writing questions knowledge was usually sound but clear and explicit comparison was scarce. Students should be reminded of the need to develop the higher-level skill of comparison in all areas of the Specification.

### **Section D**

The 6-mark questions required description only and were usually competently tackled. A few students wasted time by offering evaluation. The application questions elicited sound engagement from many students who used the hooks in the stems effectively. Weaker answers were those where students simply name dropped into an otherwise purely knowledge-based answer. Some answers showed confusion between covert sensitisation and aversion therapy. The strengths/limitations questions tended to yield high marks where students wrote enough to develop and sustain their points. Strengths and limitations of evolutionary explanations of aggression were sometimes not very effective because they showed fundamental misunderstanding, for example, stating that evolutionary explanations ignore biology. It is worth noting that in questions on neural mechanisms (Q29 aggression, Q36 offending), material about genetics/specific genes could only be credited if the student made some neural link ie linking genetics/genes to brain structure, function or neurochemistry.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Given the difficult circumstances in which students had to prepare for this series it was cheering to see some well executed scripts and students are to be congratulated for their determination and achievement in the face of adversity.

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

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