



AS LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY

7181/1 Introductory topics in psychology
Report on the Examination

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General

The overall performance indicated that students had been well prepared for this examination. Many students demonstrated excellent understanding and some high quality responses were seen. However, the amount of detail students included in their answers varied. Some wrote much more than was required, which was particularly noticeable in questions 4, 8 and 14. However, others wrote very little and did not include sufficient detail, particularly in questions 9 and 14. On some questions a number of students failed to address the demands of the question. This was most noticeable on question 8, where the command word was 'evaluate' but many students 'described', which was not creditworthy. Performance across all three sections was similar, although marks in the research methods questions were slightly depressed compared to previous exam series. The majority of students appeared to complete the paper in the time allowed.

Performance on questions 4, 9 and 14 suggested that many students should work to improve the higher order skills of evaluation/discussion. It is important to stress the need to present contextualised arguments rather than generic points, which do not constitute effective discussion. On the application questions and on research methods questions students must apply their answers to the context of the question. Some students were able to do this effectively, whilst others needed to apply their knowledge to the scenario.

Most students wrote their responses clearly in the space provided. However, students should be reminded to avoid writing outside of the boxes as this material may not be seen by the examiner and thus may not be marked. Some responses stopped mid-sentence and it was unclear whether the answer continued elsewhere in the question paper, or on additional pages. Students who run out of space when writing their answers should use the additional pages at the end of the question paper and should clearly indicate that their answer continues there. They should also clearly write the question number on the additional page. These additional pages will then be matched with the response and marked as a complete answer. It is also important that students' handwriting is legible and they use black ink or ball-point pen as instructed on the front page of the exam paper. The quality of handwriting of a minority of students this year made some responses very challenging to read.

Section A – Social Influence

Question 1

Most students were able to correctly answer this question and appeared to have sufficient knowledge of Milgram's variations to be able to correctly identify the true statement.

Question 2

Most students scored at least half marks on this question. However, many only described minority influence or the snowball effect, and not social change. To gain full marks students needed to make it clear that whole societies and not just individuals changed (attitudes or beliefs). Some students did not have sufficient knowledge to answer this question and there were a small number who did not attempt the question.

Question 3

Most students clearly had knowledge of factors affecting minority influence and many were able to clearly and explicitly apply this knowledge to the scenario. However, some students simply named or outlined factors and did not apply them to the scenario as the question asked. Where students did attempt to apply their knowledge to the scenario, this application was varied with some fully applying the factors affecting minority influence, making good practical suggestions of how Steph could use the factors to persuade her class. However, weaker answers did not offer any suggestions of how Steph could put these factors into practice in the context of the scenario. It is important that students used appropriate terminology here as this was required for Level 2 and Level 3 responses.

Question 4

This question appeared to discriminate well between students as a wide range of responses were seen. Many students gained some marks on this question. Some students clearly had a detailed understanding of Zimbardo's research into social roles and wrote excessively long answers, often going on to the additional pages at the back of the question paper. Although students did not lose marks for this, they did potentially lose valuable time which could have been better spent elsewhere. Some students who wrote long answers did not focus on the requirements of the question, with a good number of students outlining findings, and not focusing on the procedure as the question asked. Good answers had accurate details of different aspects of the procedure. A small minority of students did not seem to realise that it was a 'mock' prison.

Question 5

This question was generally answered well, suggesting that students had a clear knowledge of the limitations of Zimbardo's research into social roles. The majority of correct responses were based around ethical issues, although some explained the issue of Zimbardo playing a dual role, and a few focused on demand characteristics. Better answers identified the limitation then elaborated on it in the context of Zimbardo's research. Weaker answers either did not elaborate or did not clearly identify what the limitation was.

Question 6.1

This was one of the most challenging questions on the paper, with many students demonstrating a lack of understanding of the research methods knowledge required to answer it. Many students were

unable to identify the type of distribution and then justify their answer. Some students did score full marks and had a clear understanding of negatively and positively skewed distributions. However, many gave muddled answers and approximately 10% of students did not attempt the question.

Question 6.2

This was another question that students found challenging and again appeared to demonstrate a general lack of understanding of the research methods knowledge needed to answer it.

Many students offered erroneous conclusions. Students needed to show that they understood what the mode of a set of data indicated: the most common score, and then compare the two age groups. A few students did score full marks, although most answers scored zero with a small percentage of these not having attempted the question.

Section B – Memory

Question 7.1

It was pleasing to see that a good number of students had understood the question and focused on experimental design. However, as with previous series, there were still a reasonable number of students that confused the term experimental design with experimental method. Of those who identified the design correctly, only just over half of these students were able to correctly justify their answer. The focus of future students should be on the correct definitions for experimental designs as many justifications were muddled or incomplete.

Question 7.2

It was pleasing to see that the majority of students could identify the dependent variable (DV). However, not all of them understood how to operationalise it by referring to how it was measured (in metres). As with previous series, a number of students are still confusing the independent variable (IV) and DV and those scoring no marks often gave the IV. It is important that students have sufficient practice at identifying IVs and DV so they understand the difference and can then apply this understanding to a novel situation in an examination setting.

Question 7.3

Most students scored half marks or more on this question. Most lost the second mark because they did not link their answer to the scenario/to 'this' study. This was a recurrent theme for the research methods questions and students need to practice applying knowledge to scenarios in order to prepare fully for the novel situation they will face in the examination.

Question 7.4

A reasonable number of students failed to identify the qualitative data because they referred only to 'the man's facial features'. It was the **description** of the man's facial features that provided the qualitative data and this was a crucial difference. As with previous examination questions, students tried to justify their answer by saying what qualitative data is not (numbers) rather than explaining what it is (words). Saying what something is not does not answer the question. Students must read and process the demands of the question carefully.

Question 8

This question appeared to discriminate well between students as a wide range of responses were seen. There were some students who simply described the retrieval failure theory and thus scored zero marks. This question highlighted that students must pay careful attention to the wording of the question and tailor their answer to it. Some students both described and evaluated, and thus wasted time writing about content for which they received no credit. Some students muddled retrieval failure theory with interference theory. Better answers identified a strength or limitation and then used research to back up their claim.

Question 9

A good range of responses were seen across the cohort with many students producing level 3 and 4 answers. These responses tended to accurately describe the multi-store model with some detail and also included some effective evaluation. Poorer responses tended to focus solely on description or contained no/limited effective evaluation. Some students simply provided a very brief and thus limited description. It is important to remind students that in these questions there should be an equal amount of AO1 and AO3. The best evaluation linked evidence to specific assumptions of the model and some students did this extremely well.

Section C – Attachment**Question 10**

Many students appeared to have a detailed and thorough knowledge of how learning theory explains attachment and used appropriate terminology in their answers. A significant minority of students did not focus their answer on how learning theory explained **attachment** and gave, what appeared to be, rote learnt responses which simply described the process of classical and/or operant conditioning. It was important for students to use appropriate classical/operant conditioning terminology in this question as this was required for top level responses.

A small number of students confused learning theory with Bowlby's theory of attachment or gave details of Pavlov's dog study, both of which were not creditworthy.

Question 11

This appeared to be a relatively accessible question with many students scoring at least half marks. Student responses indicated there was clearly a good understanding of Harlow's research. However, some students wrote everything they knew about the study and did not focus on the wording of the question: how he studied attachment. This meant many wasted time giving details that did not attract any credit.

Question 12

This question was relatively well answered with many students scoring level 2 marks. Some answers did not fully address the question, for example some students evaluated animal research but did not go on to explain why this was a limitation for understanding human attachment. It was pleasing to see that almost all students read the question carefully and only a very few offered an ethical issue in their answer.

Question 13

Most students were able to give some accurate explanation of at least one way of modifying the strange situation technique to make it more realistic. Many students focused on changing the setting to a more natural environment like the home. However, only a minority of students were able to give two suggestions.

Other students incorrectly evaluated the strange situation without giving any modifications. Some suggestions were inappropriate or not focused on modifying the technique. A small minority of students did not attempt the question.

Question 14

It was pleasing to note that nearly all students attempted this question and therefore did not run out of time on the paper. A good range of responses were seen across the cohort with many students producing level 3 and 4 answers. These responses tended to accurately describe Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation with some detail and also included some effective discussion.

Poorer responses tended to focus solely on description or contained no/limited discussion. Some students simply provided a very brief and thus limited description. Some students focused on Bowlby's attachment theory which did not fully address the question. The best discussion linked evidence to specific assumptions of the theory and some students did this extremely well.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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