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# A-LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY

7182/1 Introductory topics in psychology  
Report on the Examination

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## General

In this first full sitting of 7182/1 since 2019, it was clear that students benefited from the Advance Information that was provided on specific topics.

Perhaps the main message from students' performances was seen in the three 16-mark essays. In Question 04, for AO3 credit students were required to discuss what situational variables tell us about '*why we obey*'. In Question 12 they were required to discuss what the work of Lorenz and Harlow might tell us about '*human attachment*'. Virtually all responses could describe the relevant research, in varying degrees of detail, but the AO3 requirement was a clear discriminator. Many students produced evaluation of the original studies (Milgram, Lorenz, Harlow), without linking that explicitly to the AO3 requirements in the questions.

There were some areas of weaker performance. Questions 05 and 06 (ways of investigating capacity and duration of short-term memory) did pose problems for some students. Similarly, a significant number of students did not attempt Question 17 (interpreting statistical results).

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that there were many impressive scripts, reflecting excellent teaching, learning and preparation during what has been a difficult time for students and teachers.

## Section A – Social influence

### Question 1

This question was done extremely well, providing a positive introduction to the paper.

### Question 2

Most students could name either locus of control or social support. A few gained marks for alternative explanations, such as autonomous state or absence of Authoritarian personality.

### Question 3

Answers focused on social support or locus of control, and to a lesser extent, proximity (absence of the teacher) and legitimacy of authority. Although most students earned some marks, there was often a lack of detail and/or specialist terminology that prevented full marks being awarded, especially in relation to social support. Some responses used research support (eg Milgram, Asch) effectively.

### Question 4

Virtually all answers focused on Milgram's studies, with some impressive descriptions of his work on situational variables and obedience. Occasionally these descriptions were over-detailed. Better answers used specialist terminology in their description/discussion, such as legitimacy of authority, and autonomous and agentic states. Bickman's study was often used effectively to support Milgram's findings, and at the top end students discussed the value of the field study as making findings more generalisable.

Discussion should have focused on what research into situational variables has told us about why we obey, but many answers diverted into evaluating the work of Milgram. This was creditable where there were links to the question, but detailed accounts of, for example, ethical issues, rarely earned marks. Replications of Milgram's original study were sometimes used effectively, and there were some good discussions of cultural aspects of obedience. Also popular were real life examples, though accurate analysis was sometimes lacking. At the top end, students discussed the fact that other factors must be involved as obedience in Milgram's studies on situational variables was rarely zero or 100%. This was followed by a consideration of dispositional variables, such as Authoritarian personality and locus of control. However, many responses failed to provide any general discussion of what situational variables tell us about why we obey.

## **Section B – Memory**

### **Question 5**

Jacob's digit span study was the overwhelming favourite choice of investigation in responses to this question. Although a number of students could outline the study with impressive detail, this question was not done well overall. Some answers confused Questions 05 and 06, while others simply stated results of studies and not the methods used. Other answers were too vague for credit. A proportion of students did not gain the second mark as there was no reference to immediate recall.

### **Question 6**

Answers focused on Petersen & Petersen's trigram study, and there were some excellent outlines with reference to counting backwards to prevent rehearsal, and variable recall periods (up to 30 seconds). But, as in Question 05, many students simply stated conclusions or the responses were too vague or muddled for credit.

### **Question 7**

This question was done well. Virtually all students could pick up some marks, while many could provide two techniques, with elaboration (detail of how it could be applied to the scenario, or how it might aid recall) sufficient for 4 marks.

### **Question 8**

This question produced a range of answers. At the lower end there was confusion between the multistore model and working memory, but at the upper end there were excellent outlines of the WM model, its application to the scenario, and effective evaluation. Although most answers covered the basic components of the model, only a few referred to characteristics such as capacity and duration. There was also occasional confusion as to the role of the episodic buffer, which was sometimes confused with episodic memory.

Application was generally sound, but some students confused themselves over the roles of central executive, episodic buffer and retrieval from long term memory, rather than focusing on the phonological loop and visuo-spatial sketch pad.

Evaluation tended to focus on dual task studies, with some answers providing good detail of how these studies were carried out. KF was a popular case study, but a few students had his

impairments the wrong way round (he demonstrated intact VSSP, impaired phonological loop), and confused him with HM and/or Clive Wearing. The vagueness of the central executive was also popular, while at the top end of performance, brain scanning studies were used effectively. Some answers stated that a criticism of the WMM was that it was not clear on the role or structure of long-term memory. Students should be aware that it was not designed/modelled to do this, so this point was not creditworthy, although reference to the role of the episodic buffer in linking WM and LTM could earn AO1 marks.

## **Section C – Attachment**

### **Question 9**

Along with Questions 01 and 02, 09 was the best answered on the paper.

### **Question 10**

While answered well overall, the question asked for an example of cultural *variation* in attachment, so for two marks there needed to be some comparison made, for example between securely attached levels in China and in the UK. Some students simply stated that one country had high levels of, for example insecure resistant, without emphasising that they were the highest, or focusing on a comparison with other countries. An alternative means to elaboration was to link higher rates to cultural differences in childrearing.

### **Question 11**

Rather like Question 03, most students could access some marks on this question, but the key to full marks was to provide specialist terminology and understanding. The internal working model was a popular explanation, though a few students implied that Lenny would not develop an IWM at all, rather than his having acquired one based on his early experience. Other approaches used maternal deprivation and insecure attachment as explanations. Hazan and Shaver's study was occasionally used as effective elaboration.

### **Question 12**

Virtually all answers provided some detail of the studies of Lorenz and Harlow. Accuracy of detail of Harlow was very variable. The question asked for discussion of what these studies tell us about human attachment, and this was a great discriminator. Many students focused on evaluation of the original studies without linking that to the question, with many quoting other studies of imprinting or being side-tracked into a discussion of ethical issues, which were rarely made relevant.

Better answers referred to concepts such as critical periods, monotropy, maternal deprivation, long term consequences, internal working model, comfort versus learning theory, etc. Discussion was often justifiably critical, with species differences being a popular point with the better answers detailing this through reference to phylogeny and genetics.

While there was occasional irrelevant reference to improved treatment of animals in zoos, some answers did refer to identifying risk factors in vulnerable children and improved care for babies and children. But overall, there was a common failure to link the findings of Lorenz and Harlow to theories of human attachment.

**Question 13**

Most students accessed some marks on this question. The top level required some detail/ elaboration of the basic definitions, for example through reference to statistics, the normal distribution curve and standard deviations, or to Rosenhan and Seligman's criteria for failure to function adequately. Examples could earn credit if used explicitly to illustrate the definition. Overall, this question was done well, though a number of answers provided evaluation, which was not creditworthy.

**Question 14**

There was a variety of answers to this question, with most students earning some marks. The most popular response was the time issue, which could be elaborated by reference to multiple sessions, relaxation and exposure to the hierarchy of phobic stimuli. Appropriateness of SD was also popular, although there was often some confusion over which phobias were less susceptible to SD, for example social phobia and other 'free-floating' phobias. Other limitations, such as generalising outside the clinical setting or expense, were less common and treated on their merits. Elaboration had to be clear and coherent to earn marks.

**Question 15**

This question was answered reasonably well. Most students could identify parametric/interval/ratio data, but some failed to elaborate accurately, for example by reference to the nature of interval data, or to the actual measures used in the study.

It is important to note that a significant number of students failed to attempt Questions 15 and 17, potentially indicating a lack of preparation for the statistics element of the exam.

**Question 16**

This question was answered reasonably well, with many students accurately identifying the nature of the correlation.

**Question 17**

Most students who answered this question did reasonably well. There were four marks available, and if any were missed it tended to be because students hadn't grasped that it was a directional (one-tailed) hypothesis and/or hadn't identified the correct degrees of freedom. Marks were awarded if there was clear annotation of the critical values table.

**Question 18**

There were some excellent outlines of the involvement of genes in OCD, focusing on the SERT and COMT genes, serotonin and dopamine levels, and the aetiological heterogeneity of the disorder. In better answers this was linked to specific symptoms. Evaluation generally used family and twin studies, with some students able to link concordance rates in MZ twins as evidence for non-genetic factors. A few answers also provided impressive analysis of the 'similar environments' assumption behind the comparison of MZ and DZ twins.

The diathesis-stress model was popular, and at the top end this was combined with research evidence for the involvement of trauma in the onset of OCD. Surprisingly, few answers linked the SERT gene effect on serotonin levels with the effectiveness of antidepressants such as SSRIs in OCD, a key point of evaluation.

Some students confused genetic with biological explanations, and covered brain structure and neurotransmitters without any link to genetics.

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

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