A-LEVEL
PSYCHOLOGY

7182/2 Psychology in context
Report on the Examination

7182
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General

Overall students managed their time very well and there was no evidence that they struggled to complete the paper or write full answers. Students generally demonstrated considerable knowledge and understanding, which was particularly noticeable in the approaches and biopsychology sections.

They seemed well prepared for questions on the advanced information topics although this, at times, was not well shaped to the question posed. As in previous series, it was the evaluation and application skills questions which students were more challenged by than a lack of knowledge.

Section A – Approaches in psychology

Question 1

Students were generally well prepared for this question and most were able to provide an accurate and often detailed response with specialist terminology included. There was some good knowledge of fixation demonstrated at each of the stages described. The most commonly seen confusion was between the phallic and genital stages.

Question 2

Most students demonstrated knowledge of Social Learning Theory but were more challenged by the demand for effective application of their knowledge. The application given by some students did not extend much beyond directly quoting from the stem, which made their answers limited.

There were some students who misread the question and provided material relating to mediational processes, which was not creditworthy.

Question 3

Overall, students demonstrated excellent knowledge of mediational processes. However, they found it harder to apply their knowledge effectively to explain how these may be involved in the students in the scenario becoming more active, limiting many responses to level 1 on the mark scheme. The most effectively applied point overall was attention.

Question 4

This question discriminated well with the full range of marks awarded. Many students appeared to have prepared for a question outlining and evaluating the humanistic approach and therefore some had difficulty focusing on the required elements of this question.

Although most students concentrated on self-actualisation, there was often too much focus on each level of Maslow's hierarchy with insufficient consideration of self-actualisation specifically. Knowledge of conditions of worth was variable with many students confusing the concept.

As in previous series, knowledge was much stronger than the evaluative discussion presented. Many students simply discussed the humanistic approach and issues and debates with no attempt to shape their answers to the specific question set, whilst others gave a series of generic evaluation points or focused entirely on knowledge. Teachers are advised to continue to remind students that there are only 3 knowledge marks available on an 8-mark question. They should

ensure they have discussed sufficient evaluative points thoroughly enough to access the 5 marks available for this skill.

Section B – Biopsychology

Question 5

This question was generally well answered with most students selecting the correct response. The most common incorrect response was distractor C.

Question 6

This question was generally very well answered with the majority of students selecting the correct response. The most common incorrect response was distractor C.

Question 7

This question discriminated well, with the full range of marks seen. Most students seemed to have prepared for this question and generally demonstrated excellent knowledge of the nervous system, with some good detail and use of specialist terminology. The discriminator here was accuracy. A frequent confusion was seen between the functions of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.

Question 8

Students demonstrated an excellent knowledge and understanding of localisation of function in the brain, giving detailed accounts of the various lobes and their functions. They also showed detailed understanding of Broca's and Wernicke's areas and where these are located.

The evaluative discussion was more varied. Stronger evaluative responses incorporated good lines of argument to create analysis, using research evidence and linking this back to the theory. Many weaker responses limited evaluation to descriptions of case studies, such as Phineas Gage, before providing generic evaluative points regarding population validity, etc, which lacked focus. Some used Sperry's research as evaluation, describing and/or evaluating the research without linking it to localisation.

Teachers should continue to encourage students to use evidence effectively to evaluate how it supports or refutes the theory, and the impact of this and any counterarguments, as opposed to simply describing or stating the supporting/critical research.

Section C – Research methods

Question 9

A number of answers for this question showed knowledge of a controlled observation and standardised script, without recognising the demands of the question being focused on applying knowledge to explain why the researcher used these in the study presented. This lack of explicit and appropriate application limited some students to level 1 of the mark scheme.
When a question says, 'in this study', students should ensure that their answer is explained in the context of the study described.

Overall, students explained why the researcher used a controlled observation better than the use of a standardised script, with a reduction in extraneous variables being a common response.

Question 10

This question was very well answered. Almost all students were able to provide one limitation of controlled observations with most focusing on a lack of ecological validity and fewer natural behaviours. There were a few students who muddled types of observation.

Question 11

This question proved challenging, with many students giving behavioural categories which were not explicitly linked to a child's interaction with other individuals, eg crying, laughing, etc. Students seemed to struggle to justify why the categories were appropriate. Many gave categories used in Ainsworth's 'Strange Situation', such as separation anxiety and free exploratory play. Most students did not understand that a behavioural category needs to be observable, measurable and specific. Those who did attempt to justify why their chosen categories were appropriate tended to focus on it being a social behaviour or objective.

Question 12

Students struggled with this question due to a poor understanding of what time sampling meant. They missed out on the point of sampling being completed at set time intervals during the five minutes. Many students described time sampling as timing how long a behaviour lasts.

Question 13

Despite struggling on question 12, students were generally able to give a strength and/or limitation of time sampling. Overall students gave more creditworthy limitations than strengths but most responses lacked appropriate application of the strength/ limitation to the observation described.

Only the most able students were able to give a clear strength and limitation with appropriate application for the full marks to be awarded and, although few, there were some very good responses seen.

Question 14

This question discriminated well. There was evidence that students understood inter-observer reliability, yet some missed the question requirements of '*how'*, resulting in a lack of necessary detail of the method/process, which limited the marks awarded. Some students focused on improving as opposed to assessing reliability.

Most students who addressed the question appropriately covered bullet point three of the mark scheme, regarding comparison of the observers' tally charts. Bullet points one and two discriminated better due to the requirement for the '*same'* behavioural categories and the need for '*independent'* observations to be made.

Question 15

This question discriminated well. Most students remembered to explain their reasons for their choice of statistical test in the context of the study and there were some very clear, accurate and effectively applied responses seen.

However, many students identified Chi-Squared test as an appropriate statistical test but did not explain how the data would be converted from ordinal to nominal. Some students suggested that the data was nominal because there were two conditions of the independent variable or because there were different behavioural categories used in the observation. Others incorrectly justified independent group design due to the children being observed separately/independently.

Overall, the best explanations for a reason given were those regarding a test of difference.

Question 16

This question was generally well answered, although many students were restricted to one mark due to a lack of appropriate elaboration in the context of the study. Additionally, there was some confusion between quantitative and qualitative data with students explaining why collecting qualitative data could reduce the validity of the study.

Question 17

This question was generally well answered, with most students demonstrating a good understanding of possible implications of the study for the economy. Many used additional paper for their answer and gave far more detail than was required for maximum marks, often giving a variety of possibilities. Some students focused their answers on minor financial implications of conducting the study, such as cost of carrying out the study, time off work for parents to participate in the study, etc, rather than the wider implications for society and the economy. These unexpected responses were limited to a maximum of one mark.

Question 18

This question revealed a poor understanding of features of an abstract section in a psychological report and a surprisingly high number of students did not attempt the question. There were some students that confused the abstract with an appendix or with features of science. Other students confused features of an abstract with the purpose of an abstract and wrote about why the abstract is beneficial, rather than what constitutes an abstract.

Those who understood what an abstract was generally covered the middle bullet point of the mark scheme (brief/summary), with only a small percentage of students accessing all three marks for this question.

Question 19

This question yielded a real spread of marks across the cohort. Students appeared more aware that only material relating to the bullet points would be creditworthy, as answers were more focused this year. Unfortunately, as in previous series, many responses were not practical or not sufficiently explained, eg simply naming the type of design or self-report method of data collection. The requirement for justification differentiated well, with only the best responses giving effective justification in context. Justification was often either missing or generic in nature, with comments such as ‘removes individual differences’ given.

Overall, students engaged best with the content on the self-report method of data collection whilst they seemed more challenged to offer a control for an extraneous variable. An extraneous variable was often identified without considering whether it could be appropriately controlled. Consequently, there were lots of impractical suggestions regarding sleep, social interaction or screen time for young children. Many confused experimental design with types of experimental method and some

missed the information in the stem about data being collected from the parents using a self-report method.

For this type of question, teachers should encourage students to consider why certain experimental designs/methods of data collection are better than others for a given research question and also why certain controls of extraneous variables are needed. Teachers are advised to try to incorporate planning and implementing practical investigations in class where possible. This is to enable students to gain practical experience and deeper understanding of designing experiments, which will help them when answering these types of questions in an examination. However, this may have been more challenging for the cohort this year, given the more limited contact teaching time.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.