



A-LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY

7182/3 Issues and options in psychology
Report on the Examination

7182
June 2022

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2022 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.
AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General

The availability of Advance Information meant that many students were well prepared for questions on their chosen topics with the result that some very high scoring answers were seen. Research Methods questions tended to be less well answered, particularly those in Section C. As ever, there was widespread misuse of terms such as ‘reductionism’ and ‘determinism’ in answers to extended writing questions.

Most students answered all the required number of questions and few seemed to have run out of time. Schizophrenia remains the most popular option topic on this Paper and Eating behaviour the least popular. Despite clear instructions, some students answered questions on more than one optional topic per section. Where students did this, they received credit for the best topic. A number of scripts were designated by examiners as ‘unreadable’. Students should be aware that presenting barely legible work is likely to prejudice performance; in such cases students would be well advised to use a keyboard.

Section A – Issues and debates in psychology

Question 01 was generally well answered although some responses lacked clarity. Completely contradictory answers describing soft determinism simultaneously as behaviour that is pre-determined but also down to free will were not creditworthy.

Question 02 was usually very well answered and sometimes accompanied by a decision diagram.

Question 03 was a good discriminator, with better answers responding appropriately to the cues in the stem and noting how a ‘controlled laboratory experiment’ would enable causality to be inferred. Many students completely missed the point, apparently having misread the key word in the question, as they focused on how researchers looking for a ‘casual’ explanation would be relaxed and unscientific.

Most answers to Question 04 received some credit for outlining the term although examples were often not of a study, but rather an approach such as behaviourism or the cognitive approach. Useful studies tended to be those that had most obviously resulted in a general law or theory, for example Ainsworth’s study which resulted in the understanding of attachment types.

Answers to Question 05 were creditworthy providing a behaviour had been identified in the answer to Question 04. Students using Pavlov or Skinner in their answer to Question 04 often had difficulty in Question 05 as they tried to argue that carrying out an in-depth case study of a rat or a dog would allow insights into reasoning and private experience.

Answers to Question 06 tended to score well by using the recommendations of Sieber and Stanley as the basis for suggestions of how to deal with issues related to socially sensitive research. A fair number of discussions scored lower marks as they focused solely on implications for participants in a study.

Section B – Relationships or Gender or Cognition and development

Relationships

The stem in Question 07 elicited some excellent application, with students working successfully to make links between various aspects of the text and the different relationship theories. Equity theory and Rusbult's investment theory were usually very well applied. Some students failed to attend to the command in the question and wasted time here by offering redundant discussion.

Answers to Question 08 varied; some were well-focused on self-disclosure and gating, others consisted of pre-prepared answers to a rather different question along the lines of 'Discuss virtual relationships.' More general discussion could be credited where it was applicable to either self-disclosure or gating, but quite often students failed to make any link.

Gender

The stem in Question 09 tended to elicit effective application, particularly in relation to gender schema theory. Use of Kohlberg's stages sometimes focused more on lengthy description of the theory than on application and there was often some confusion over the different stages. Unfortunately, some less well scoring answers read more like application of social learning theory with the emphasis on observation, imitation and stereotypes.

Answers to Question 10 were generally strong on knowledge and understanding but less competent when it came to discussion. In some cases, the whole of the discussion seemed to focus on evidence supporting the role of testosterone and/or the Y chromosome on aggression, often without any reference whatsoever to gender. Whilst such material might not be wholly irrelevant it could have been made much more effective had it been shaped better to the question.

Cognition and development

The stem for Question 11 usually triggered application of the appropriate theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. Students seemed less well able to make explicit application between aspects of the text and the theory than in the other two topics in this section, although better students worked effectively with key words and phrases such as 'experiment', 'make mistakes', 'levels of guidance' and 'potential,' drawing parallels with the relevant developmental theory. Answers to Question 12 were usually strong on knowledge and understanding, perhaps with greater emphasis on Selman's theory than on theory of mind. Discussions tended to be variable with many consisting solely of use of evidence to support the theory.

Section C – Schizophrenia or Eating behaviour or Stress

Schizophrenia

Most students answered the first multiple-choice question correctly but many answered the second incorrectly. It should be noted that tokens are secondary reinforcers and as such, they are not enjoyable in themselves but acquire reinforcing properties because they can be exchanged for a primary reinforcer that is intrinsically enjoyable.

There were many competent answers to Question 15 although students sometimes mistakenly stated that metarepresentation and central coherence explained schizophrenia rather than failure of metarepresentation and central coherence. A considerable number of students used the wrong theory here, typically family dysfunction or occasionally the dopamine hypothesis.

Question 16 was generally not well answered because students focused on aspects of the design of the study rather than on the data in the table. Despite the stem clearly stating that mood was assessed before the therapy began, relatively few students recognised that this data should have been included in the table. Other acceptable reasons included problems with interpretation of the mean and absence of any measure of dispersion. Even where students identified a creditworthy reason for the first part of the question, they sometimes forgot to attend to the second part of the question, offering no solution.

Question 17 was very poorly answered by most students, mainly because entirely new ways of collecting data were suggested rather than ways to convert the existing scores. Converting interval data into ordinal data and then into nominal data is a useful classroom activity, but evidently many students had not benefitted from such experience.

Question 18 was usually well answered except where students wasted time describing drugs and their mode of action. Vague and unsubstantiated assertions that ‘drugs work’ and points about time and cost without reasoned argument were not creditworthy.

Eating behaviour

Many answers to the multiple-choice questions were correct.

Answers to Question 21 tended to be quite well done although a number seemed to have very little to do with learning, referring instead to how parents could restrict available foodstuffs which wouldn’t really explain how preferences might be learnt. The most usual creditworthy limitation was a comparison of learning theory with evolutionary preferences.

Question 22 was generally not well answered because students focused on aspects of the design of the study rather than on the data in the table. Despite the stem clearly stating that mood was assessed before the support programme began, relatively few students recognised that this data should have been included in the table. Other acceptable reasons included problems with interpretation of the mean and absence of any measure of dispersion. Even where students identified a creditworthy reason for the first part of the question, they sometimes forgot to attend to the second part of the question, offering no solution.

Question 23 was very poorly answered by most students, mainly because entirely new ways of collecting data were suggested rather than ways to convert the existing scores. Converting interval data into ordinal data and then into nominal data is a useful classroom activity, but evidently many students had not benefitted from such experience.

Question 24 was generally not as well-answered as the matching question for the other two topics in this section, perhaps because this question was about explanations rather than therapy.

Stress

Most answers to the first multiple-choice question were correct whereas roughly half the answers to the second multiple-choice question were correct.

Question 27 often elicited sound knowledge and understanding which included useful detail of the SRRS and life change units. The limitation tended to be less well done than the description with a tendency to focus on evaluation of the scale rather than on life changes as a source of stress. The simplest and most effective limitation tended to be the subjective nature of life change experience so that a given life event might not be stressful for everyone.

Question 28 was generally not well answered because students focused on aspects of the design of the study rather than on the data in the table. Despite the stem clearly stating that mood was assessed before the therapy began, relatively few students recognised that this data should have been included in the table. Other acceptable reasons included problems with interpretation of the mean and absence of any measure of dispersion. Even where students identified a creditworthy reason for the first part of the question, they sometimes forgot to attend to the second part of the question, offering no solution.

Question 29 was very poorly answered by most candidates, mainly because entirely new ways of collecting data were suggested rather than ways to convert the existing scores. Converting interval data into ordinal data and then into nominal data is a useful classroom activity, but evidently many students had not benefitted from such experience.

Question 30 was usually well answered except where students wasted time describing drugs and their mode of action. Vague and unsubstantiated assertions that ‘drugs work’ and points about time and cost without reasoned argument were not creditworthy.

Section D – Aggression or Forensic psychology or Addiction

Aggression

There were some low scoring answers to Question 31, usually because the answer consisted of a detailed description of a study. In such cases, the only part of the response that really answered the question was the conclusion that playing computer games might lead to more aggressive behaviour. Better answers came to the same general conclusion but explained the increased aggression in terms of desensitisation, disinhibition and cognitive priming. It was rare to see answers suggesting that playing computer games might lead to a decrease in aggression due to catharsis.

Catharsis occasionally appeared as an effective counterargument in answers to Question 32, with use of studies and contrasting explanations such as biology also used to good effect.

Answers to Question 33 varied considerably, possibly because students often misconstrued it as a question about biological explanations in general. On the one hand there were detailed, accurate descriptions of genetic influences on aggression with associated evidence, whereas at the other extreme were answers that barely mentioned genetics but focused almost exclusively on neural explanations. This neural material could have been made relevant if students had noted the likely genetic underpinnings and shaped their content to the question, but often this did not happen.

Forensic psychology

Answers to Question 34 often scored well although even quite detailed answers sometimes neglected the fundamental point that the bottom-up approach is data driven. Some answers were restricted to marks in Level 1 because they consisted of a list of terms (interpersonal coherence, forensic awareness, etc) without any explanation.

Question 35 was generally effectively answered. Students used evidence in relation to effectiveness or offered comparison with the top-down approach. Occasionally students completely confused the top-down and bottom-up approaches in both Questions 34 and 35.

Descriptions of how psychodynamic theory might be used to explain offending varied in detail and depth of understanding. Many students could name Blackburn's three types of superego, but explanations often sounded more like social learning theory, reinforcement and differential association than the Freudian conceptualisation of identification as an unconscious process. A fair number of students wrote about Eysenck's theory of the criminal personality instead. Discussion points were often not very convincing, although falsifiability was usually well argued.

Addiction

Most answers to Question 37 showed good knowledge of the theory of planned behaviour although some otherwise very good responses omitted the key point that the three factors combine to affect intention.

Evaluations varied for Question 38. Some students made good use of evidence to support the role of some/all factors in behaviour change whereas weaker evaluations often consisted of vague suggestions that the theory was somehow reductionist or deterministic.

Answers to Question 39 tended to be extremely well-prepared in terms of knowledge and understanding. Students often raced through a whole range of risk factors offering evidence for discussion of each. Higher achieving students took the trouble to explain factors in psychological terms, for example, how parental influences could be linked to social learning theory and how the influence of peers could be explained in terms of conformity/normative influence. The implications of understanding risk factors for intervention proved to be a useful discussion point in some of the higher scoring answers.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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