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# AS LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY

7181/1 Introductory topics in Psychology  
Report on the Examination

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## **General**

The overall performance indicated that some students had been well prepared for this examination and demonstrated excellent understanding with some high quality responses. However, the amount of detail and specialist terminology students included in their answers varied. Very few wrote more than was required this year, other than a few students on question 12, where some students wrote 12-mark instead of 8-mark answers. However, some wrote very little and did not include sufficient detail, particularly in question 12 and 16. On some questions a number of students failed to address the demands of the question. This was most noticeable on question 11, where students were asked to evaluate the use of the cognitive interview. However, some students ‘described’ it, which was not creditworthy. Students generally tailored their responses to the actual question and did not waste time writing irrelevant or excessive material, which was an improvement on the previous exam paper. Performance across sections A and B were similar, with performance on section C (Attachment) being lower. This may have been because there were a couple of questions in the Attachment section that students found challenging, including the 12-mark essay at the end of the paper. Marks on the Research Methods questions were also lower compared to earlier exam series. The majority of students appeared to complete the paper in the time allowed.

Performance on questions 11, 12 and 16 suggested that many students should work to improve the higher order skills of evaluation/discussion. Students need to present contextualised arguments rather than generic points which do not constitute effective evaluation/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, some needed to apply their knowledge to the scenario and a small minority of students failed to answer some of the questions.

Most students wrote their responses clearly in the appropriate space provided. However, students should be reminded to avoid writing outside of the boxes as this material might 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 answer should use the additional pages at the end of the question paper and should clearly indicate that their answer continues here. They should also clearly write the question number on the additional page. These additional pages will then be reviewed by the marker 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. The quality of handwriting of a minority of students continues to make some responses very challenging to read.

## **Section A Social Influence**

### **Question 1**

This question was generally answered well, suggesting that students had a good knowledge of informational social influence (ISI). However, some students muddled ISI with normative social influence. Only a quarter of students gave sufficient detail in their answer for full marks.

### **Question 2**

Although it was acceptable to refer to resisting Sarah’s influence or resisting the teacher’s influence, some students failed to use knowledge of resistance to social influence to explain Emily’s behaviour, instead referring to conformity to Sarah or obedience to the teacher. Students need to read the question carefully. Lack of appropriate terminology and/or not fully explaining why Emily would also resist (eg through increased confidence) limited many responses to 2 marks.

**Question 3.1**

Most students clearly had knowledge of how a mean could be skewed by an outlier. However, some students lost marks by not applying their answer to the data set in the question. A minority of students just defined the term median without mentioning skew or applying to the scenario. Students found this the easiest of the Research Methods questions.

**Question 3.2**

This question produced a wide range of responses. The majority of answers were able to identify the strata and how many people from each strata were needed. However, few students then explained how the participants would then be chosen from the strata using random selection. Very few students achieved all 4 marks by explaining how the random selection method chosen would be used to choose the participants from the identified strata. Some students muddle stratified sampling with systematic, and some simply explained random sampling, not within the context of choosing from the strata. Students found this the hardest of the Research Methods questions.

**Question 3.3**

This question was answered well by some students but there were some answers that simply named a modification rather than explained it. Students would benefit from being able to discriminate between 'name' and 'explain' command words. Weaker students only gave one modification instead of two for this question.

**Question 4**

This was one of the less challenging questions on the paper, with over 70% of students scoring half marks or more. This style of question has been asked before but with a different scenario context. Students who did lose marks either did not apply their answer to the scenario or gave an example that illustrated consistency rather than flexibility or commitment.

**Question 5**

Whilst many students clearly had detailed knowledge of some of the findings from Asch's research into conformity, some answers gave muddled statistics. For example, some muddled '32% of critical trials' by saying that there was '32% conformity'. Some answers expressed the same finding in two different ways (75% conformed at least once/25% never conformed). It is worth reminding students that they should give different findings. Some students did not refer to percentages, but instead gave the direction of effect eg increasing task difficulty increased conformity. A number of students appeared to misunderstand the meaning of unanimity.

**Question 6**

This question was particularly well answered, with 80% of students scoring at least 2 marks, and half scoring full marks. Weaker answers lacked detail in their explanation of the limitation and/or lacked appropriate terminology.

## **Section B Memory**

### **Question 7**

Just over half of the students were able to identify the correct answer in this multiple choice question. Those who chose incorrectly, chose C and D in equal measure. Whilst most students marked only one answer, some marked more than one, with one student marking all four boxes. Students must read the instructions.

### **Question 8**

This question seemed challenging for a number of students, with few scoring full marks. Some students criticised models of memory, not studies of short-term memory. Some students were only able to give one criticism, not two. Weaker criticisms were often generic. The best answers offered criticisms that were tied to specific studies.

### **Question 9**

Many students scored at least half marks on this question. Some students used inappropriate studies as part of their description, where no post-event discussion had taken place. Students would benefit from understanding the difference between post-event discussion and post-event information. Better answers explained what post-event discussion was, explained how it could affect eyewitness testimony and used specialist terminology.

### **Question 10**

This question was one of the less challenging questions with many students scoring at least 2 marks. Some students continue to muddle retro-active and pro-active interference. A few failed to link their answer to the scenario, though this was not common on this question. Weak answers offered circular definitions of interference as one model 'interfering' with the recall of the other. Better answers recognised the role of similarity of the two models as contributing to Kaleb's forgetting.

### **Question 11**

This question appeared to discriminate well between students as a wide range of responses were seen. A number of students did not read the question and offered descriptions of the cognitive interview rather than evaluation, which was not creditworthy. Better student answers referred to research to support their evaluation. Students who referred to time consuming as an evaluation point needed to explain why it was more time consuming. Weaker students listed evaluation without elaborating and a small number of students did not attempt the question.

### **Question 12**

This was another question which discriminated between students. 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 the model and some students did this extremely well. There were a number of students who muddled the working memory model with the multi-store model. A few students wrote very long essays more suited to a 12-mark essay, and thus students need to be mindful of how much to write for an 8-mark question, and not use valuable time on material that is not needed.

**Section C Attachment****Question 13**

This question was a good discriminator of student responses. Many students appeared to have at least some knowledge of the internal working model (IWM) and its role in Bowlby's monotropic theory. Good answers outlined what the IWM was, how it developed from the monotropic bond with the primary caregiver and linked it to later development. Some students described Bowlby's monotropic theory and not the role of the IWM. Students should read questions carefully and would benefit from work identifying command and content words within questions, to enable greater focus in their answers. There were a number of students who did not attempt this question.

**Question 14**

This appeared to be a relatively straightforward question with many students scoring at least half marks. There was clearly a good understanding of the findings from Romanian orphan studies. The best answers were able to fully address the demands of the question by explaining how the development of the girls would have differed, by making explicit comparisons. Weaker answers only explained how one child's development would be affected. Some students only made one comparison which was too limited for this 6 mark question. Students should be mindful of the marks available and use this as a guide for how much they should write. A minority of answers gave long descriptions of the Romanian orphan studies which did not directly answer the question.

**Question 15**

This question was answered poorly. Whilst some students knew the findings of research into the role of the father, they failed to explain any economic impact. A number of students simply stated that the father's role was for play. A number of students did not even attempt the question. Economic implications of research is clearly an area where students struggle to answer exam questions and where they need further guidance.

**Question 16**

This was one of the least well answered questions on the paper. Whilst some students produced level 3 and 4 answers, poorer responses tended to focus solely on description or contained no/limited effective discussion. 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 discussion linked evidence to the theory and some students did this extremely well. It is important that students use appropriate classical/operant conditioning terminology here as this is required for top level responses. Some students used the appropriate terminology for the learning theory but used it incorrectly. It was pleasing to see fewer responses that did not focus their answer on how learning theory explained attachment and simply described the process of classical and/or operant conditioning. 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.

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

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