GCSE
PSYCHOLOGY

8182/1 Paper 1 Cognition and behaviour
Report on the Examination

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General comments

The purpose of this report is to highlight both areas of good practice and areas for improvement stemming from students' answers in Paper 1 in 2023. Where appropriate, it will also offer guidance as to how future performances might be improved.

Although this was the fifth sitting of 8182, it was only the second 'full' examination since Summer 2019. It was pleasing to see many impressive scripts, with students able to demonstrate their knowledge of relevant material, indicating effective teaching and learning. There were relatively few scripts with unanswered questions and little evidence that students had run out of time. However, there were also some weaker scripts that reflected a failure to apply some simple lessons to the examination – for example, where required, students should link their answers to the context of the stem. A significant number of responses were not contextualised and therefore failed to gain full credit.

There were a few questions that challenged students and there were examples of responses that were not related to the questions set in each section. These indicated that students do need to ensure that they read the questions – and any stem material - carefully if they are to provide answers that directly address the requirements of the question. Having said that, the paper performed well in allowing stronger students to show their ability through the higher-order skills of application to stems, and extended and elaborated evaluation. Questions that discriminated best were questions 4.1, 4.2, 11, 12 and 18; question 4.1 proved to be particularly challenging as it seems that many students did not read the exact requirements of the question and thus were not able to gain full marks. This was not a new style of question but many students did not seem prepared for it.

It was pleasing to see the small mark, maths-based research methods questions throughout the paper performed well, encouraging good responses from students. However – as in previous examination series - an area of particular weakness was seen in question 21.2, where students were asked to state their answer using two significant figures.

Once again, the majority of students wrote their responses to questions clearly and in the appropriate space provided. However, it is important to remind students that these papers are marked on-screen; answers written in the margins, or in blank spaces below other questions, can result in complete answers not being scanned correctly. Students who need to write more than the given space allows should use the additional pages; these will be matched with the response and marked as a complete answer. It is important to remind students to clearly identify the question number to which their response in the additional pages refers, for example, writing '21.4' rather than just '21', or providing no number at all.

Poor handwriting was once again an issue on some scripts; answers were barely legible, thus posing a challenge for examiners using on-screen marking. Where handwriting is known to be a problem, teachers would do well to make special arrangements to ensure that their students are not disadvantaged.

It is also recommended that centres are aware of the specification content contained in Appendix A: mathematical requirements, as this is not exactly the same as the Data Handling content listed as part of the Research Methods topic.

Section A: Memory

Question 1

This question was answered well, with over 85% of students gaining the one available mark. However, many struggled with the instructions about how to indicate their choice of response in the appropriate mark box and even more with how to correctly amend their choices.

Question 2

Again, this question was answered well, with most students gaining the one mark available.

Question 3

Several students seemed to have learnt a text book definition of encoding and were able to give the mark scheme answer that made reference to 'changing information' and 'storing' it in the brain, with over one-quarter gaining the two marks available. However, many students provided a limited answer to this question. Although a number of responses identified that encoding was related to storage of memory, relatively few seemed to appreciate that information was changed in order to do this. There were several answers that named and described forms of encoding; this was not in the requirements of the question and therefore gained no marks.

Question 4.1

This proved to be one of the most challenging questions on the paper and many students failed to get the first two marks as the task described did not investigate 'context'. It was common to see answers based on the War of the Ghosts study, or primacy/recency effect. Students who did describe a suitable task often based their experiment on the deep-sea divers study, or possibly something they had carried out during their lessons (learning/recalling in different classrooms). Although only just over 15% gained 5 or 6 marks, the opportunity was there for students to gain marks for identifying the independent variable, and for the third part of the question (identifying an extraneous variable and how it could be controlled), and over 50% of responses gained at least one mark.

This type of question is one for teachers to focus on with their students prior to the examinations. One of the main issues with this style of question is that students don't seem to read exactly what the question is asking of them. Each question in this style tends to ask for slightly different information, and students seem to want to write everything they know about designing a study, whether they need to or not. It would help if teachers encouraged students to tick each bullet point when they had answered it; the students who did this provided answers that were clear and accurate.

Question 4.2

There were some good answers to this question, and it was pleasing to see responses that were explained and elaborated well. However, less than one-quarter of students gained the full four marks; some students were unsure of what constituted an independent groups design and therefore struggled to identify a strength or a weakness.

Question 5

Given that this question focused on the higher-order AO3 skill, many students seemed to find it relatively straightforward, and it was pleasing to see that almost 40% achieved a Level 2 mark. However, there were several answers that described the multi-store model well, but failed to include any evaluation at all, or just a very brief evaluation worthy of 1 or 2 marks. Students need to be reminded that they must read the question carefully; if the answer does not meet the requirements of the question, marks cannot be awarded.

Question 6

This was generally answered very well, with most students able to provide accurate and detailed knowledge of Bartlett's methodology with over 85% gaining at least one mark. However, many responses were limited to 2 marks as they did not refer to a record being made of each version of the story. Several students also included the findings and conclusions of the study; again, students need reminding that marks can only be awarded when answers address the question – additional information, even when accurate and detailed, is not creditworthy.

Question 7

This question provided a lot of mixed responses. Several answers correctly referred to retroactive and proactive interference, but the definitions were sometimes reversed. Approximately 30% achieved a mark in Level 2; several students focused their answer solely on Uncle Bill and Dan, apparently forgetting that the question required them to use their knowledge of interference. These answers struggled to achieve the marks available for AO1.

Question 8

This multiple choice question was generally answered well, with over 70% of students gaining the one mark available.

Question 9

This question proved to be challenging for most students. Although many answers correctly stated 'perception', the explanation was not sufficiently detailed for the second mark to be awarded; students either referred to 'past experience' or 'interpreted' but very rarely both (and often neither). students who identified the stem as an example of sensation were usually unsuccessful at justifying this and therefore secured no marks.

Question 10.1

It was pleasing to see that almost three-quarters of responses gained the mark for this question. Several students could not spell 'quantitative' correctly, but they were awarded the mark.

Question 10.2

Again, this question was answered well, with over 80% gaining the two marks available. However, some students wrote an incorrect answer on the answer line, but gave no indication of how they had achieved their answer, so were unable to gain a mark for possible correct workings. Students should be reminded that marks are available for correct workings, even when the answer is incorrect.

Question 10.3

It was pleasing to see that over 80% of responses gained at least one mark, but it was a little disappointing that only 7% of students gained the full four marks available for this question. It was rare to see an informative title, with most answers referring to 'Condition A', which was not creditworthy. However, histograms were often drawn and plotted correctly, with the bars touching, and axes were labelled and numbered correctly. Some students drew a frequency density histogram, having added a 'frequency density' column to Table 1. This was not a requirement of the question, and students who drew a frequency density histogram could not achieve full marks.

Question 10.4

Although many students were able to outline a conclusion, the majority of responses only achieved one mark as there was no reference to 'readiness' or a similar term. Less than 20% of answers gained the full two marks.

Question 11

It was pleasing to see that over 40% of students gained a Level 2 mark for this question. However, it would seem that many do not understand that 'describe a study' requires the aim, method, results and conclusions; there were many excellent descriptions of the method but nothing else, therefore restricting the marks available to be awarded.

Question 12

This question was effective in allowing the more able students to gain a mark in Level 3, but also allowed students of all levels to access some marks. In general, Gibson's theory was described well, although there was often confusion over whether it was a top-down or a bottom-up theory; several identified it as being bottom-up but described top-down. Many Level 1 (and some Level 2) answers provided an imbalanced response – an excellent description but little evaluation; students need to be reminded how AO1 and AO3 marks are split on 'Describe and evaluate' questions.

Question 13

This multiple choice question proved to be more challenging for some students than expected, with less than two-thirds of answers gaining the mark available.

Question 14

This multiple choice question was answered well, with almost all students gaining the one mark available.

Question 15.1

Many students were not able to gain the two marks available for this question. Several answers showed an awareness of the need to measure performance, but with no consideration of how this would be done; 'performance in end of year exams' gained no marks as there was no reference to actual scores or grades. Many responses referred to only one condition of the IV, or simply wrote 'mindset'; neither of these responses were able to gain credit.

Question 15.2

It was pleasing to note that over half of all answers gained the full three marks. Most students displayed good knowledge of random sampling and were able to apply this to the stem. Where there were errors, it was often confusion with the sampling method; many of these answers described systematic or opportunity sampling.

Question 16

Most students could identify the correct ages for the two stages. The majority were able to identify that object permanence is a factor within the sensorimotor stage but many were unable to provide the necessary detail when writing about this feature, simply stating that babies did or did not have it during this stage. Several responses provided one very brief sentence for each stage; this meant that the knowledge demonstrated was not sufficient to achieve full marks. It would benefit students to be reminded of how much should be written for a 4 mark question.

Question 17

It was pleasing to see that many students addressed the question that had been asked and evaluated Piaget's theory. However, there were several answers that gave a detailed description of the stage theory, with little or no evaluation. Students must be reminded to both read the question carefully **and** answer the question that has been set.

Question 18

This 9-mark synoptic question was effective in allowing the more able students to gain a mark in Level 3, but also facilitated some achievement for the weaker students. Description of the 'naughty teddy' study was usually done well, although there were several answers that described the method in great detail but did not include the results and conclusion. Some students had labelled their margin with A, M, R, and C, and that seem to help them to include all the necessary detail. Students need to be reminded that if the question requires them to describe a study, all the components (and not just the method) need to be included in the answer.

'Evaluate the research method used' caused problems for many students. Several confused research method with experimental design and sampling methods, and these answers were not creditworthy for the AO3 component of this question. Many answers evaluated the study and not the research method used; these answers were limited to one AO3 mark only. It would be useful to remind students that approximately half the marks available in a synoptic question of this nature are for evaluation.

Question 19.1

It was pleasing to see that three-quarters of students correctly identified the type of experiment used in the study described, and gained the one mark available.

Question 19.2

This multiple choice question proved to be challenging for several students; over one-third of answers incorrectly identified the experimental design.

Question 20

There were some accurate and detailed descriptions of primary and secondary data, but because the difference between them was not made clear and explicit, these answers were not able to gain full marks. Using terms such as 'whereas' or 'however' in this type of question would make the difference clear.

Question 21.1

This question was generally not well answered, with almost half of all answers gaining no credit. Common errors included the definition of stratified sampling; stating 'it's biased' but with no elaboration; and outlining a strength of stratified sampling. A lack of reference to strata or subset made several answers very generic.

Question 21.2

It was pleasing to see that over two-thirds of students correctly calculated the percentage to two significant figures. However, whilst most responses gained some credit for this question, once again there were too many students who seemed not to know what was required for 'two significant figures'.

Question 21.3

Many students were able to gain both marks for this question. Some reversed the ratio and wrote 1:6; some answers had calculated 60:10 in the workings box, but had not divided both parts of the ratio by 10, and had written 6:10 on the answer line. Students should be reminded to check their answers if time allows.

Question 21.4

It was somewhat surprising to find that less than two-thirds of students gained both marks in this question, as all psychology students are expected to know about ethical issues.

Question 21.5

It was positive to see that most students were able to correctly sketch a frequency table and therefore gain some marks for this question. However, this question proved to be more challenging than expected, as it appeared that many students were unsure of appropriate examples of 'types of learning activity'. There were several answers that re-phrased the terms in the stem, despite the question informing students not to use these categories of behaviour. Some responses stated 'using a phone'; whilst the student might have meant this as a learning activity, it was not made clear and therefore was not creditworthy.

Question 21.6

Over half of all answers gained no marks for this question as many students were unable to correctly define interobserver reliability. Approximately one-fifth of answers gained one mark for referring to two or more observers but did not gain the second mark as 'similar results' was not included in the answer.

Question 21.7

It was pleasing to see that almost one-quarter of students achieved a Level 3 mark for this question, and that a large majority of students gained some credit. In some answers, questionnaires were evaluated but not applied, which meant that AO2 marks could not be awarded. Students tended to gain the higher marks when they structured their answer by stating the evaluation point followed by the application, then stating the next evaluation point followed by its application.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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