
GCSE PSYCHOLOGY

8182/2 Paper 2 Social context and behaviour
Report on the Examination

8182/2
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General comments

The purpose of this report is to highlight any areas of good practice and any areas for improvement stemming from students' answers in Paper 2 in 2023. Where appropriate, it will also offer guidance as to how future performances might be improved, for teachers and students.

This was the fifth series of examinations for the 'reformed specification' - the third sat by all of the students entered for the qualification.

As part of this specification, students are 'expected to draw on knowledge and understanding of the entire course of study'. There will be one 9-mark synoptic question in each paper for every examination cycle of this specification. In 2023, the synoptic question in paper 2 was question 16 and it asked students to draw on knowledge from a paper 2 topic (Language, thought and communication) and a paper 1 topic (Development). It is pleasing to note that students are becoming more able to successfully answer these synoptic questions as the life of the specification continues.

Students are required to show understanding of research methods, practical research skills and mathematical skills through-out all of the topic areas in both papers. Although there were some questions where many students did well, there were also some clear areas of weakness (such as in question 10.1 where students were asked to provide an alternative hypothesis). It is highly recommended that centres provide as many opportunities as possible for students to develop their research methods skills. This may be done by including these skills at appropriate places within other topic areas, and by carrying out actual practical work. 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.

Because scripts are marked online, there are some specific concerns about the ways students use the answer booklets and additional sheets, which centres need to be aware of so that they can advise their students accordingly:

- Most students are now using the additional sheets provided at the back of the booklet to continue answers that do not fit within the allocated area. Where the additional sheets are used to finish an answer, it is helpful if students indicate that they have done this.
- Students should be encouraged to clearly identify which question they are answering on the additional sheets. Where there are several questions with similar numbers, it is important that students identify the correct one - for example, writing '2.2' rather than just '2'
- Students should be encouraged to write in black ink because lighter colours do not scan well and make it harder for examiners to read students' work.
- Students should be encouraged to use sensibly sized writing as very small handwriting results in answers that are very challenging to read. They should also be encouraged to write as legibly as possible.

Comments relating to students' performance on specific questions are provided below. It is hoped that these comments will be helpful in guiding the teaching of the specification and the preparation of students for future exams.

Section A: Social Influence**Question 2**

Although many students showed some understanding of the cost of helping and gave examples of it, they did not state how the cost would affect bystander intervention. Another common error was giving a definition instead of an example.

Question 3

Many students showed some understanding of factors affecting obedience with over half of the answers gaining at least 1 mark. Students should be encouraged to identify all of the key information in the question. It appears that many just focus on the psychological knowledge being requested, missing other important elements such as the command terms and the amount of required information. It was common to see answers that were just naming rather than outlining, or answers that addressed more than one factor.

Question 4

This question was generally answered well, with almost two thirds of the answers gaining at least 2 marks. The main reason for answers not being awarded full marks was the lack of a comparison between working in a group with working individually.

Question 5.1

This question was not answered particularly well with less than 40% of students receiving 2 marks. Common errors included:

- misreading the question and writing about the strengths/weaknesses of a questionnaire rather than correlations.
- writing about the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

Question 5.2

Almost two-thirds of answers gained at least 3 marks for this question. The most frequent reason for full marks not being awarded was the title not making reference to a relationship/correlation being shown between both of the variables.

Question 5.3

Most students were able to suggest a study that was somewhat appropriate. Almost 60% of answers received at least 2 marks for this answer, however less than 10% received all 4 available marks. The majority of answers did suggest a field experiment. The most frequent reasons for full marks not being awarded were the failure to include the element of personality or designing a study on bystander behaviour rather than anti-social behaviour.

Question 6

In general, the answers to this question demonstrated knowledge of what the ethical issues are. There were varying degrees of success in applying this knowledge accurately to Asch's study. Almost half of answers were within the 'clear' or detailed' mark bands but less than 2% received the full 6 marks. Many students addressed the use of deception and confederates but fewer were able to also connect this with there being a lack of informed consent. There was also a lack of clarity regarding the duty to protect the participants from harm with this often being interpreted as just physical harm. There was occasional confusion of studies with some students writing about Milgram's study. It was pleasing to see fewer generic answers than with previous ethics questions.

Section B: Language, Thought and Communication**Question 8**

Only a quarter of students gained all 3 marks for this question. Some students misinterpreted the question and instead wrote about the differences between animal and human communication.

Other common errors included:

- only naming a function of animal communication rather than outlining it.
- addressing more than one function, all in less detail than required.

Question 9

Although some students answered this question very well, less than 20% of answers gained full marks. Instead of outlining how status can affect personal space, quite a high number of answers wrote about the effect of status on comfort levels and referred to the two students feeling intimidated by their boss/headteacher. The idea of the size of our personal space changing was also often misunderstood with many answers instead talking about being more or less comfortable letting other people into our personal space.

Question 10.1

This question was not answered very well with only a quarter of answers being awarded any marks at all. It appeared that the term 'alternative hypotheses was misinterpreted as being a different hypothesis. This resulted in many students either giving a null hypothesis or using different independent or dependent variables. A common reason for an appropriate hypothesis not being given full marks was the lack of an operationalised dependent variable. Answers often referred to 'perception' rather than the measurable concept of 'rating'.

Question 10.2

This question was answered fairly well with more than half of answers gaining at least 3 marks. Most students seemed to be familiar with Yuki's study of emoticons and most were able to give some form of results and a conclusion. The most common reason for full marks not being awarded was that the justification for the suggested conclusion was not addressing the results but instead an attempt to explain why people from Japan focus more on the eyes than people from the United States of America.

Question 11

Responses to this question were rather mixed with just over 10% gaining a mark at level 3. However almost 70% of answers were worth at least 3 marks.

Common errors included:

- describing Piaget's stages of cognitive development with no link to how language develops during those stages.
- evaluating Piaget's studies with no link to how this might impact on his theory.
- confusing Piaget's theory with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

Section C: Brain and Neuropsychology**Question 13**

This question was answered fairly well with over half of students gaining at least 3 marks. A common reason marks were not awarded was because answers were written in such a way as to indicate that an incorrect lobe was used. For example, 'tried to ignore how cold the ice cubes were', would use the frontal lobe. Whereas 'felt that the ice cubes were cold' would use the parietal lobe.

Question 14

This question was not answered very well with a third of answers not being awarded any marks at all and less than 2% getting all 3 available marks.

Common errors included:

- only addressing functions specific to the brain and/or spinal cord rather than the central nervous system as a whole.
- addressing the nervous system generally, or the peripheral nervous system instead of the CNS.
- simply repeating what was written in the conversation in the stem.

Question 15

Around 15% of students did not attempt this question but it was generally answered well by those who did answer it with a third getting at least 4 marks. The most common reason for marks being lost was writing about the fight or flight response but not putting this into the context of the James-Lange theory. Somewhat unusually, the evaluation of the theory was often the strongest part of the answer.

Question 16

This was the non-research methods synoptic question for 8182 this year. It was one of the most challenging questions across the two papers. However, students could pick up 4 of the 9 available marks simply by explaining what Dweck means by 'fixed mindset' and 'growth mindset' and briefly describing Hebb's theory. Given the difficulty level of synoptic it was pleasing that over 15% of students gave level 3 answers.

Common errors included:

- believing that Hebb's theory was about the role of praise and self-efficacy,
- writing a lot more about the theories of Dweck and / or Hebb than the question required and then putting very limited focus on the AO3 element of the question.

Section D: Psychological Problems

Question 17.2

This question was answered accurately by around half of the students. The most common reason for full marks not being awarded was not correctly rounding to three significant figures.

Question 17.3

Although almost 90% of students gained at least one mark, only a quarter gained full marks. Generally, students were able to identify an ethical issue. However, the suggested method of dealing with the identified issue frequently did not match. For example, identifying the issue as 'confidentiality' and suggesting that a way to deal with it would be to 'ask for consent'.

Question 17.4

Over 80% of answers gained at least one mark, however less than a third gained both available marks. Although most students were able to briefly outline a strength of questionnaires, these were often not appropriately developed.

Question 17.5

Responses to this question were rather mixed with only a quarter of answers being awarded all 3 available marks. However over 80% of answers gained at least 1 mark.

Common errors included:

- describing the target population rather than the way they would carry out the sampling.
- giving an explanation of how opportunity sampling would be carried out but with no mention of people with a mental health problem.
- asking questions that were not relevant to having a mental health problem and the negative effects of this on physical well-being.

Question 18

Although over 80% of students gained at least one mark, only around 5% gained full marks.

Common errors included:

- simply repeating what was written in the conversation in the stem.
- only addressing possible causes of trying drugs / addictive substances and not linking this to addiction.
- answering from their own perspective rather than using knowledge about a psychological explanation.

Question 19.1 and 19.2

Some students knew Wiles' study in a lot of detail and were able to cite details such as the locations that participants were drawn from and the correct percentages of reduction of depression symptoms (although this was not necessary for full marks to be awarded). Others seemed to be simply guessing about the nature of the study based on the question stating it was a study of the effectiveness of CBT. 19.2 was the question in the paper with the highest number of non-attempts but this is probably largely due to it also being the last question in the paper.

Common errors included:

- describing and / or evaluating CBT rather than the study.
- addressing CBT in the context of addiction rather than depression.
- giving generic / irrelevant evaluative points (such as it lacks ecological validity because it was carried out in a lab).

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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