



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2023

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Psychology (WPS03/01)
PAPER 03: Applications of Psychology

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General Comments

There were few questions left unanswered and many candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding across both sections of the paper.

Option A remains the preferred choice of the majority of candidates and knowledge and understanding in respect of many aspects of criminological psychology was evident. For candidates that chose Option B in this series, the responses were on the whole more limited in both knowledge and understanding, application and justification.

It was pleasing to see higher levels of knowledge and understanding and exemplification in questions that required candidates to suggest an improvement to a piece of research as outlined in a scenario. There was a growing awareness of choosing an appropriate feature from the scenario and then justifying this in terms of the requirement of the question.

The levels-based response questions appeared to challenge candidates at two levels. Firstly, misunderstanding the requirement of the question. In questions that explore content such as theories of attachment, it is important that candidates understand that this does include learning theories as well as Bowlby's maternal deprivation hypothesis and Ainsworth's work on attachment. Some excellent responses were written in respect of Bowlby and Ainsworth but sadly, this did not address the question.

Secondly, to understand the skills to be applied in respect of the specific taxonomy of the question. When a question requires an assessment to be made, candidates must make a judgement. It is also important to apply the judgement accurately, therefore, as in assessing whether a study has furthered our understanding, elements of the study should be chosen to show how this many have benefited or negated society for example.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper candidate are offered the following advice:

- Candidates need to review the calculation techniques for the chi-square statistical test and focus on the number of decimal places required.
- Candidates would benefit from revisiting the use and application of standard deviation.
- Candidates need to understand that when a question requires an evaluation of a study, there should be an equal balance between knowledge and understanding and evaluation of the study.
- Candidates would benefit from revisiting the requirements of the questions by reviewing the taxonomies and working through how to apply these, particularly in respect of the AO3 requirement in the 8-mark essay questions.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Q01a

Question Introduction

The majority of candidates understood that the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is reference to the "gap" between what can be completed alone and with assistance. Few candidates could elaborate in sufficient depth in terms of understanding to gain the second mark. Those candidates that gained the second mark, successfully applied their understanding of scaffolding or a more knowledgeable other. Students who failed to score on this item primarily did so because they confused the ZPD with attachment theory or in some cases the work of Piaget and the stages of cognitive development.

Q01b

Question Introduction

Candidates were able to articulate the strength better than the weakness in respect of the ZPD. The most common strength suggested was based around the ZPD's applicability in classrooms, this was often exemplified for the second mark. Candidates found it harder to provide an appropriate weakness, typically suggesting that the model lacks scientific credibility or did not account for individual differences. These were not elaborated clearly enough to be creditworthy.

Q02a

Question Introduction

The majority of candidates did not understand or were not able to identify what the standard deviation tells us about data. Some candidates were able to discuss the spread/variation in the data between the two groups but did not use the data or calculate the difference between the two data sets.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to understand how to use data from a scenario in respect of both measures of dispersion. Repeating the data without application is not deemed creditworthy so some elaboration/application is required to be creditworthy.

Q02b

Question Introduction

The majority of candidates did not give creditworthy responses to explain one weakness of calculating the standard deviation in respect of the scenario. For those candidates that provided a response to this question, the most common response linked that the sample size was small and that would indicate that data is influenced by anomalous results or data sets. Some students suggested a strength rather than a weakness.

Q02c

Question Introduction

Many candidates suggested that the investigation could be improved by using a broader sample, for example, for other schools/areas, age, or groups. They were able to make the AO3 linking it with representativeness and giving a further appropriate example. Candidates that simply stated increasing the sample size did not gain credit as this is not a suitable suggestion for an improvement.

Q03a

Question Introduction

The majority of candidates only operationalised one variable and therefore offered a partial hypothesis, gaining one mark out of a possible two. The most common response suggested that mindfulness training will improve the emotional development of seven-year-old children. They did not go on to suggest how this could be measured, for example 'scored out of 10' for the second mark.

Examiner Tip

To achieve two marks when stating a fully operationalised hypothesis, both the independent and dependent variable need to be clearly operationalised. It is also important that the candidates are aware of whether it is a directional/non-directional or a null hypothesis.

Q03b

Question Introduction

The majority of candidates made reference to using a random number generator or a 'hat' method for the first mark. Many also elaborated their answer linking this to selecting the number of participants required for the experiment and therefore gained the second mark. A few candidates restated the stem or described a random sample and therefore gained no credit.

Q04

Question Introduction

This was a levels-based response and for a number of candidates there was a misunderstanding of the stem material, and their responses were framed around Bowlby, Ainsworth and occasionally Erikson which did not address the question.

Many candidates could present a basic account of a learning theory and apply it to the scenario. Some candidates chose classical conditioning but most used operant conditioning. These accounts were coherent, mostly focussing on the reinforcement of being fed for Julius and how this would lead to the building of an attachment. Some candidates were able to achieve the higher-level mark bands as they also considered how Vanessa was also reinforced by the cessation of Julius' crying, resulting in the attachment bond working in both directions.

Q05

Question Introduction

This was a levels-based response where the majority of candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of the Strange Situation procedure. Some candidates were able to give an overview in considerable detail providing AO1 knowledge and understanding in the higher-level mark bands.

Most candidates were able to contrast the ethical positive of fully informed consent from the mother against the visible distress caused to the child when left alone/with a stranger. Some candidates debated the issue of distress from the point of view that being left alone by the mother for a short period of time was an everyday occurrence in the baby's normal life, so should not be considered as a traumatic incident. They were also able to introduce the issue of culture and how it was inappropriate to use a Western methodology in countries such as Japan (referencing Takshashi) where culture leads to different attachment styles in infants, allowing them to achieve the higher levels in respect of the AO3 requirement of the questions.

Some candidates were restricted to the lower-level mark bands as they provided a generalised evaluation rather than focusing on ethical considerations.

Examiner Tip

When discussing informed consent as an ethical consideration in respect of infants/children, it is important that candidates do not suggest that infants/children cannot give informed consent as this is not creditworthy.

Q06

Question Introduction

The question required candidates to describe how attractiveness may influence jury decision-making and this was answered well by the majority of candidates. The candidates were able to identify that juries tend to find more attractive defendants less likely to be guilty and/or less attractive defendants more likely to be guilty, for the first mark. Responses were often elaborated for a second mark, with reference to the halo effect or, sometimes, contrasting it to jury responses to attractive defendants charged with fraud.

Q07a

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to justify why an independent groups experimental research design was used in respect of the scenario and most candidates were able to offer a justification based around the reduction of demand characteristics to achieve one mark. This was not always explained sufficiently to gain the second mark.

Q07b

Question Introduction

Few candidates achieved the full four marks for calculating chi-square from the data table making errors in calculation in all columns apart from O-E, therefore achieving just one mark.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to read the requirements of the question carefully. In this instance they were required to provide answers that were correct to two decimal places for all answers and many candidates lost marks by not rounding their calculations in each column.

Q07c

Question Introduction

Many candidates simply stated increasing the sample size which was not an appropriate improvement in respect of the scenario and so did not gain credit for the question. Some candidates used elements from the scenario, such as, showing the same video or using a standardised questionnaire and justified why this would improve the reliability of the experiment and gained the full two marks.

Q08

Question Introduction

Most candidates demonstrated an understanding of the self-fulfilling prophecy (SFP) process as it applied to Mina's situation. Many were not able to express that understanding clearly and were not able to achieve the higher marks. Some candidates repeated the stem without any application of SFP and therefore did not gain credit.

Q09

Question Introduction

Many candidates appeared to misunderstand the requirements of the question, which was to explain one strength of social learning (SLT) from the media as an explanation of the behaviour of the children at the nursery. The candidates provided an accurate account of how the SLT process applied in the scenario but did not explain how this applied in respect of the children's behaviour as influenced by the media.

Some candidates were able to achieve the full two marks, referencing Bandura and William's as support for the SLT process in relation to the children in the scenario. The Columbine High School shooting and the case of Jamie Bulger were also cited in many instances but not successfully applied to be creditworthy.

Q10

Question Introduction

Many candidates were able to describe the research however the command verb assess was not addressed and candidates evaluated the research and therefore were not able to achieve the higher-level mark bands.

Some candidates were able to give a detailed overview of Bradbury and William's procedure and results. However, the evaluation points were more limited, usually focussing on the ethnocentricity of the American sample and that results only apply to black defendants, limiting their applicability to defendants of other races.

Q11

Question Introduction

Many candidates found this essay question to be challenging. There were some higher-level responses which did describe post-event information and gave examples. However, the majority of candidates did not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of post-event information to make their knowledge and understanding detailed.

For the AO3 marks, some candidates discussed Loftus and Palmer in support of post-event information influencing the reliability of eye-witness memory. Yuille and Cutshall was used successfully to refute it. However, these were not developed and so responses were limited to the lower levels mark bands.

