



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2023

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Psychology (WPS04/01)
PAPER 4: Clinical Psychology and Psychological
Skills

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General Comments

Across the paper, candidates showed basic understanding of key terms and some theoretical concepts, along with some good mathematical skills, especially in the chi-squared calculation.

A concern remains that some candidates appear to be conducting practical investigations that do not meet specification requirements or ethical considerations. Candidates must conduct a content analysis of secondary data. Centres are directed to the specification instructions to ensure that the practical investigations meet requirements:

*8.4.1 One practical research exercise to gather data relevant to topics covered in clinical psychology - a **content analysis** that explores attitudes to mental health. This practical research exercise must adhere to ethical principles in both content and intention.*

Difficulties tended to be in the long answer questions candidate responses were often achieving at the lower-levels of the mark bands as a result of very limited understanding of specific content coupled with a lack of developed AO3 material or an absence of AO3 skills, few justified their arguments and evaluations, and very little supporting material was seen in the 16-mark essay or 20-mark essay.

Application for AO2 responses was good for some candidates, however it remains an area that poses significant problems, with many candidates giving generic responses or simply using the name of a person in the stimulus rather than applying their knowledge to the stimulus material they are presented with.

Paper Summary

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

- Within their extended open responses, candidates should give balanced arguments and exemplified points which lead to making informed conclusions or judgements (where appropriate to the taxonomy used) in relation to the question content.
- Where candidates are asked for improvements, they should focus on an improvement and justify how or why this would be an improvement. Many are still presenting a weakness of the study/scenario/practical rather than a justified improvement.
- Generic points should be avoided, candidates should be able to give specific responses that are clearly linked to the question content and taxonomy, especially in scenario-based questions.
- Where candidates are expanding their points, the use of evidence and supporting/contesting concepts could aid them in exemplifying their knowledge and understanding as appropriate.
- Candidates should write in full sentences in responses that require detailed information in the answers. Bullet pointed lists of key terms or brief phrases are not appropriate, particularly in the extended open response questions.
- Candidates should review the taxonomy expectations within the specification to aid them in understanding the key requirements of the questions and the distinctions between these.

The remainder of this report will focus on specific questions from the examination.

Comments on Individual Questions

Sections A and B: Clinical Psychology

Q01a

Question Introduction

This question assessed knowledge and understanding of the HCPC guidance. Some candidates were able to identify an appropriate point, but few could develop this in any depth. Where confusion was seen, it was often muddled with the ethical code of practice for undertaking research.

Q01b

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to explain one strength of the HCPC guidance. Some candidates were able to identify an appropriate strength, but few could justify how or why this was a strength. Where confusion was seen, it was often muddled with the ethical code of practice for undertaking research.

Q02

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to explain two strengths of using the DSM to diagnose mental health disorders. Most candidates achieved some marks for this question. Where candidates performed less well, they often described the DSM rather than giving strengths of the DSM for diagnosis. Very little supporting evidence was seen to justify the strengths for the AO3 marks.

Q03a

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to describe the procedure used in their chosen contemporary study from either the topic of unipolar depression or anorexia nervosa. Most candidates achieved marks for this question, where candidates performed less well it was often due to inaccurate content or giving results and conclusions rather than the procedure of the study.

Q03b

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to explain two weaknesses of their chosen contemporary study. Most candidates achieved marks for this question, some were able to identify appropriate weaknesses and justify them. Where candidates did not achieve well, the responses were often unrelated to the study they had chosen.

Q04a

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to describe the procedure for their clinical psychology practical investigation. Some achieved well on this question, although a number of candidates gave generic responses that were not related to the practical. However, there were a

proportion of responses where candidates had conducted inappropriate practical investigations and centres are reminded to meet the specification requirements of a content analysis using secondary data. It is not appropriate to undertake primary research with mental health patients, such as interviews or observations, and, for example, it is not appropriate to use diagnostic criteria to determine whether an individual has an eating disorder or depression.

Q04b

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to describe the results and/or conclusions for their clinical psychology practical investigation. Some achieved well on this question, although a number of candidates gave generic responses that were not related to the practical. However, there were a proportion of responses where candidates had conducted inappropriate practical investigations and centres are reminded to meet the specification requirements of a content analysis using secondary data. It is not appropriate to undertake primary research with mental health patients, such as interviews or observations, and, for example, it is not appropriate to use diagnostic criteria to determine whether an individual has an eating disorder or depression.

Q04c

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to explain two ways that you could improve the reliability of their clinical psychology practical investigation. Some achieved well on this question and were able to clearly identify improvements in relation to reliability, although a number of candidates gave weaknesses of their practical rather than improvements. However, there were a proportion of responses where candidates had conducted inappropriate practical investigations and centres are reminded to meet the specification requirements of a content analysis using secondary data. It is not appropriate to undertake primary research with mental health patients, such as interviews or observations, and, for example, it is not appropriate to use diagnostic criteria to determine whether an individual has an eating disorder or depression.

Examiner Tip

A number of incorrect and unethical practical investigations were seen in candidate responses. Centres are reminded of the specification requirements below:

8.4 Practical Investigation

8.4.1 One practical research exercise to gather data relevant to topics covered in clinical psychology - a **content analysis** that explores attitudes to mental health.

This practical research exercise must adhere to ethical principles in both content and intention.

In conducting the practical research exercise, students must:

- perform a content analysis
- analyse at least two sources (such as radio interviews, newspapers, magazines) to compare attitudes towards mental health
- make design decisions when planning and gathering sources for a content analysis, including credibility of secondary data, ethical considerations, controls, and reliability
- collect, present and comment on sources gathered
- consider strengths and weaknesses of a content analysis and possible design improvements
- complete the procedure, results, and discussion section of a report.

Suitable examples

- Comparing how attitudes to mental health have changed over time.

- How different sources report mental health.

Q05

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to explain two reasons why Peter may be concerned about the use of drug therapy for either his unipolar depression or his anorexia nervosa. Most candidates achieved some marks on this question, demonstrating a basic understanding of drug treatments for their relevant chosen topic area. Where candidates did not achieve well it was due to limitations in AO2 application to the scenario or confusion about how drug therapy would work for patients.

Q06

Question Introduction

This question was an extended open response question for 16-marks assessed using the levels-based marking criteria. The question required candidates to evaluate the function of neurotransmitters as an explanation of schizophrenia.

There were some good responses seen which was pleasing. Some candidates utilised research evidence for and against the role of neurotransmitters, although this was not in depth and many answers were brief. A few developed their evaluations with alternative explanations, reductionism, the wider nature versus nurture debate and genetic predispositions, although this was not always effectively presented.

Where the responses achieved lower marks, it was often due to multiple inaccuracies in the AO1 understanding of neurotransmitters, for example misunderstandings about dopamine and the relationship to schizophrenia. It was evident in some responses that the candidates did not know the role of neurotransmitters in relation to schizophrenia, many of these candidates described the process of synaptic transmission in generic form, genetics, or the monoamine relationship to unipolar depression rather than the role of neurotransmitters in schizophrenia.

Some of the responses related solely to the effectiveness of drug treatments instead of evaluating the function of neurotransmitters.

Examiner Tip

Extended open response questions for 16 marks require candidates to engage in depth with the content being assessed. Their responses should link to the question presented and they should avoid generic, simplistic content presented in list like, or bullet pointed form. Many candidates would benefit from using research evidence as a strength or weakness, rather than simply describing pieces of research with little or no link to what this may mean in terms of their evaluations.

Sections C, D and E: Psychological Skills

Q07a

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to identify how Sandeep will gather her primary data. Most candidates were able to identify that this was a questionnaire.

Q07b

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to describe how Sandeep could design a questionnaire to gather quantitative and qualitative data. While some candidates achieved well on this question, it was evident in responses that did not achieve marks that the candidates had not applied their understanding and instead given generic responses about what the types of data were or closed-ended and open-ended questions in general rather than in relation to this stimulus material.

Q07c

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to explain, using social learning theory, what Sandeep is most likely to find from her investigation. Many candidates achieved well on this question. Where errors were seen it was often a misunderstanding of what Sandeep was researching, or answers that were generic and not linked to the scenario of the teenage boys.

Q08a

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to calculate the ratio of girls to boys that played with their peers. Most candidates were able to accurately calculate this.

Q08b

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to calculate the chi-squared for the data gathered by Lisa in her observation. Where candidates were able to calculate this, they achieved well. Errors were largely seen in the decimal places or miscalculations of $(O-E)^2/E$.

Examiner Tip

Mathematical skills of computation, expression and presentation of data assess a range of skills, and candidates should ensure that they follow the direction given in the question.

Q08c

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to explain, using the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009), how Lisa could have ensured she had informed consent for her observation. Many candidates were able to achieve marks for some understanding of the process of parents and/or teachers giving consent, but the 'informed' element to gaining the consent was often missed.

Q09a

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to explain one weakness of Samad using a case study method for his research of memory. Some candidates achieved well here. Where errors

were seen it was often in generic responses that did not relate to the scenario given. Limitations were evident in the AO3 justifications. There is still confusion with some candidate responses using sample size in relation to generalisability instead of representativeness in relation to generalisability.

Q09b

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to explain two strengths of Samad using a case study method for his research of memory. Some candidates achieved well here. Where errors were seen it was often in generic responses that did not relate to the scenario given. Limitations were evident in the AO3 justifications of how or why the strengths would be strengths of the method.

Q10

Question Introduction

This was a discuss AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO2 application question that required candidates to discuss the key question of whether bullying in the workplace can be reduced through improved working relationships. They should give an equal emphasis between their underpinning knowledge/understanding and an application to the context of the given key question in their answer.

Some candidates were able to approach this question using relevant and accurate aspects of their psychology course content, for example from social psychology and conformity, or learning theories, although some candidates only made basic reference to these ideas and did not develop the link in the scenario especially well.

Some candidates discussed causes of bullying and gave a description of this rather than addressing the question posed.

Fewer candidates have simply copied the stimulus material, which was pleasing to see, and therefore have achieved well in the AO2 elements of application in this question.

Examiner Tip

The key question used in this section of the examination will require candidates to select appropriate content and apply these areas of their understanding of psychology to explicitly discuss the actual key question presented.

Q11

Question Introduction

This was an extended open response essay worth 20 marks that addresses a key issue and debate in psychology. The topic of content was centred on the issue and debate of assessing whether psychology can be considered a science. The question required candidates to demonstrate AO1 knowledge and understanding, and AO3 assessment points.

Few candidates responded well to this question. Many presented arguments about science with very limited understanding of the nature of science, rarely considering issues of falsification, hypo-deductive reasoning or the nature of scientific study. Much of the content seen was unbalanced, with descriptions of some research accompanied by statements of it being objective or reliable. Some candidates heavily focussed answers on elements of biology, such as fMRI scanning or brain structure, as a reason for

psychology being scientific with little development. Limitations were seen in many responses in the AO3 skills to address the question.

Examiner Tip

Extended open response questions of 20-marks in this section require candidates to draw on a range of content from across their studies of psychology. Candidates do not need to describe every element of content they have studied, but rather they should actively select what is an appropriate range of points from across the course and accurately utilise these for the specific direction of the question taxonomy to give a balanced response.

