
AS

PSYCHOLOGY

7181/1 Introductory Topics in Psychology
Report on the Examination

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General

As with last year, it appears that many students had prepared well for this examination. There were relatively few scripts with unanswered questions and very little evidence that students had run out of time. The questions that seemed to differentiate well were 05, 07, 08, 09.4 and 14. Answers to these questions suggest that students should try to improve their higher order skills. For example, some questions required evaluation of procedures and not of findings; others required the application of knowledge to explain a new situation. There was more evidence of learned knowledge than of ability to use it effectively to respond to the demands of the question.

It is worth students taking time to read the specific demands of each question carefully, rather than simply writing everything they know about the topic. This was particularly the case for Question 04, which required careful selection of material i.e. only Zimbardo's procedures, not his findings or conclusions. Similarly the evaluation needed to be of the procedures themselves. This was also the case with Question 12, where much time was wasted in descriptions of the procedures of the chosen study, instead of addressing the specific requirements of the question.

Students need to take care with the balance of AO1 and AO3, particularly with the extended writing in questions such as 04 and 14. There should be an equal amount of each skill, however many students were producing much more AO3 than AO1 and consequently not gaining all the marks available for the latter.

Students should be reminded of the need to ensure that they do not write outside the spaces provided in the answer booklet, nor should they write answers to one question in the space belonging to another. They should ask for additional sheets if necessary. If they do so, they must indicate clearly that their answer continues on an additional sheet and also write the question number clearly as well on the additional sheet. Many students simply stopped in mid-sentence and all too often it was unclear exactly whether or not their answer continued elsewhere in the answer booklet, or on an additional sheet. Perhaps students do not know that the answer booklet and additional sheet are not marked together.

Section A Social Influence

Question 01

While the majority of students correctly identified relevant variables, such as task difficulty, unanimity of group and group size, they then failed to explain how it affected conformity. There needed to be some indication as to whether it increased or decreased conformity.

Question 02

This question was answered well, mainly focusing on the impact a minority had on bringing about social change. Concepts such as flexibility, consistency, role of conflict, and the augmentation principle were described well. However, students should avoid writing lists, there does need to be some elaboration of these concepts. Those students who offered concepts such as normative social influence and informational social influence were often unable to link them to social change, even though they could have been made relevant. While examples can sometimes help add to an answer, detailed descriptions of, e.g. the suffragettes or Rosa Parks seldom added much.

Question 03.1

Most students scored well and were able to identify the type of observation accurately.

Question 03.2

Very few students could identify the sampling technique as event sampling. It seemed that they interpreted the word “sampling” to refer to the way in which participants were obtained. Those who did correctly identify event sampling were able to give an accurate and detailed explanation.

Question 03.3

It was pleasing to see how well the majority of students performed on this question. Many were able to produce accurate and detailed answers, drawing some sensible conclusions from the data. For example, the school needs to do more to encourage the recycling of food, the initiative seems to work better with younger years, so they need to try harder with the older groups. The pitfall for some students was to go beyond the data in the table and refer to conformity and obedience. For others it was to interpret the table as if it was a correlation.

Question 03.4

This question asked for one way in which this particular observation could have been improved. This is not the same as asking for a completely different study, which was not creditworthy. Better answers referred to the use of more than one observer, or to carry out the observation over several different days or locations.

Question 04

There were some excellent answers to this question, with students showing very detailed knowledge of the procedures together with some extremely effective evaluation. For example, students were able to criticise Zimbardo for his dual role of prison superintendent and researcher and the impact it had on his study. However, this question also demonstrates the importance of reading the question carefully. Students were required to describe the procedures, not the findings or conclusions. They were also required to evaluate the procedures, not the implications of the study. It shows the importance of selecting relevant material and shaping it to the specific question.

Section B Memory**Question 05**

At the top end were some extremely accurate and well-described answers, showing very good knowledge. Such answers referred to the type of material encoded, the sub-division into phonological store and articulatory process. These answers could go beyond simply naming and were able to explain their role. Weaker answers confused aspects of STM with the multi-store model.

Question 06

Most students could suggest one way, that the working memory model was not a unitary store.

Question 07

This is an example of a question where students could benefit from developing their ability to “use knowledge of explanations of forgetting”. It appears to be an area in which they struggle. Using their knowledge requires them to select appropriate studies and/or theories to explain what is going on in the scenario. Some students simply described in great detail relevant studies or theories, but without any reference to either Sarah or Toby. Other students described what was going on in the scenario, almost re-writing it, but without any reference to relevant research. The question also asked which student is likely to perform worse in their final exam. Many students failed to state this, even though their knowledge was evident, thus failing to get full marks for this question. Better answers were able to include reference to the encoding specificity principle.

Question 08

The outline of the techniques used in the cognitive interview was usually very detailed. However, the discussion of their effectiveness in terms of the accuracy of eyewitness testimony was limited. While using studies as support of their effectiveness is a successful strategy, evaluation of the studies is not relevant unless it is linked back to the question of effectiveness. Similarly, the police not having time or not wanting to use the cognitive interview are not relevant to the effectiveness in terms of accuracy. This is another example where students need to shape their material to fit the requirements of the question.

Question 09.1

This was an easy question for most students. However, they do need to be very careful with the clarity of their handwriting in questions such as this one. It was sometimes difficult to determine whether the answer was 250 or 230. There were some careless maths errors, such as “losing” a zero, or by giving the answer in minutes rather than hours.

Question 09.2

This was another question students found easy. The most common answer was quantitative data because she used closed questions. Credit was also given to those who chose qualitative data because she recorded what they said; or primary data because she collected the data specifically for this study.

Question 09.3

While some students were able to provide accurate answers showing good understanding, others merely described what the investigator effect was, rather than how to reduce it. This is yet another example of the need to read the question carefully. Better answers were able to suggest getting someone else who had not been at the concert to ask the questions, or to avoid having the investigator present by using a questionnaire.

Question 09.4

It was very clear from the answers to this question that a large number of students had no idea what the purpose of a peer review is. They seemed to think that a journal was something the psychologist kept herself. However, a small minority of students were able to explain that the process was to determine whether or not the journal should publish her report. This would involve a group of experts in the same field evaluating her report to make this decision.

Section C Attachment**Question 10 and 11**

The majority of students answered both questions accurately.

Question 12

Once again, this is a question where students must select the relevant material and shape it to the specific requirements of the question. The question asked for findings, not procedures and for one criticism not two or more. Lengthy descriptions of procedures were not creditworthy. Students often could not separate procedures from findings, especially with Lorenz's study. The criticism of the study needed to be explained, not merely stated. However, with Harlow's studies, there were some effective criticisms made. For example, the two wire monkeys were not only different in terms of what they were made of (cloth or wire) but also their heads were also very different, thus introducing a confounding variable. Other effective criticisms involved the difficulty of extrapolating from animal behaviour to human behaviour. Ethical issues were also considered, but needed to be explained carefully.

Question 13.1

The term "identify" merely requires naming the attachment type and so lengthy descriptions were not needed. Most students could correctly identify Bhavi as being (insecure) Avoidant or Type A. It was Ola and Pippa who were often muddled. Students were less successful in identifying Ola as Secure or Type B and Pippa as (insecure) resistant or Type C.

Question 13.2

It was important for students to focus on the behaviour shown by each child. Some students were unable to capture this aspect of the question. Bhavi would ignore her mother or be "not bothered" by her return. Ola would show joy, happiness, greet her mother enthusiastically. Pippa would show ambivalence by going to greet her mother and then reject her as well.

Question 14

This was a challenging question, which showed good discrimination. The meta-analysis by Van Ijzendoorn and Kroonenberg was the most common study used, with some students showing excellent, accurate and detailed knowledge of their results. At the other end were those students with very muddled knowledge of the findings. If students are to use such findings effectively, they do need to be clear which country had greater percentages of different types of attachment. Other studies were also used effectively either as knowledge or as discussion. These included research by Takahashi; Simonella; Grossman and Grossman among others. While knowledge was often very well detailed, the discussion was not as effective. For example, while many students knew that West Germany had the highest levels of avoidant attachment, few could explain why this appeared to be the case. The same was true for the high levels of resistant attachment in Japan. Students seemed unaware that it was the quality of the measuring tool that was important in the labelling of attachment type. Better discussion focused on the issue of an imposed ethic; the limited number of studies in some countries; the validity of using the strange situation. Lengthy descriptions of the strange situation itself were of little relevance and did not add much to the answer. Ainsworth's research was not looking at cultural variations, but was the tool used in the meta-analysis.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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