
A-LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY

7182/1 Introductory Topics in Psychology
Report on the Examination

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General

There were many impressive scripts in this first sitting of 7182/1 with students able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of relevant material, reflecting effective teaching and learning. There were also some weaker scripts that reflected a failure to apply some simple lessons to the examination.

Given the mix of short answer questions and extended writing, any part of the content for the paper can be sampled and therefore students needed to cover all sections to do well. It was also apparent that a few students were not prepared for research methods questions, though it is clearly stated in the specification that research methods will be assessed in all three papers. Students needed to read the questions, and any stem material, carefully and address the requirements of the questions set. 'Outline' questions do not require evaluative material and 'evaluate' questions do not require descriptive material.

In 'discuss' or 'outline and evaluate' questions, students often spent too much time on descriptive material, leaving too little time to develop effective discussion and evaluation. This was particularly the case in questions 10 and 16.

Effective application is a test of understanding of material and it was clear that some students were vulnerable in this respect. For instance, some could list Jahoda's criteria (question 19) but in their attempts to apply them to Rob demonstrated that they did not clearly understand them. In question 15 there were some excellent summaries of the effects of institutionalisation, but a number of students forgot to refer to Anca's new parents at all, as required by the question.

Students need to use the marks available to guide how much they need to write. They should realise that answering a three mark question requires more than one brief point but not two sides of material.

This paper is marked online with scripts scanned as separate questions/answers. It is critical that students follow the instructions and do not write in margins or across the answer spaces for different questions. If they do need extra space, they should use additional sheets and highlight this with a brief note on the appropriate answer space in the examination booklet.

Section A Social Influence

Question 01

This question was done reasonably well. Students could refer to quantitative, primary, or nominal/categorical data, and while some students could not then explain their answer, most provided enough information to earn the second mark. The use of questionnaires led some students to assume that this led to qualitative data, emphasising the need to read the stem material carefully.

Question 02

Most answers provided an accurate statement of the likely outcome of the experiment and could provide some sort of explanation. However, many students missed the final mark by not providing accurate detail of the type of social influence being displayed, especially in condition 2. Weaker answers were largely common sense, lacking psychological terminology.

Question 03

This was a demanding question as students had to explain how the researchers might have addressed this issue in sufficient detail for 4 marks. Many chose matched pairs as an appropriate method, but were vague about what participants might be matched on, how matching might be carried out, and how participants would then be distributed across conditions. There were, however, some very good answers covering all these aspects. A significant minority chose repeated measures as an appropriate method, but this was unlikely to be practical given the nature of the study. Such answers earned credit only if they showed awareness of the need, for example a very long interval between testing, the use of different but comparable questionnaires, etc.

Question 04

Despite the injunction a number of students still referred to the level of measurement as a reason for using chi-square. Otherwise this question was done well, with many answers covering the requirement for independent data and a test of difference (between conditions) or association (between variables). Answers referring to correlation did not receive credit.

Question 05

The majority of students demonstrated understanding the relationship between calculated and critical values, and the link to the chosen significance level. A few were confused as to which was the calculated and which was the critical value.

Question 06

Although there were some impressive answers to this question the majority of students spent far too long providing extensive descriptions of the authoritarian personality (AP) and the background to Adorno's work. The question required discussion of the AP as an explanation for obedience, not simply a description. Even when discussion was attempted, it was often unsuccessful; for instance, methodological issues with the F-scale only earned credit if linked to the discussion of the AP as an explanation for obedience. There were some effective references to the role of the AP in Milgram's studies, while at the weaker end answers confused the AP with 'legitimate authority'. Most common were general comments on the role of AP in Nazi Germany, a relevant issue but often presented with little detail or discussion; for instance this would have been an opportunity to introduce alternative explanations for obedience, but few students attempted this.

Question 07

This was done reasonably well, with the agentic state being the most popular alternative. Some answers failed to include sufficient detail for full credit, but others covered the autonomous state and legitimate authority impressively. Reference to locus of control was creditworthy, but a number of answers reflected confusion over internal and external versus 'high' and 'low', and which would be more or less obedient.

Section B Memory**Question 08**

Although most answers provided accurate descriptions of procedural and episodic memory these were sometimes not structured around 'differences', but simply presented as two separate

descriptions. To earn full credit, two clear differences had to be explicit, for example types of material, availability to conscious inspection, vulnerability to amnesia, location within the brain etc. Some students provided more than two differences, costing themselves time that could have been spent on other questions.

Question 09

This question was done well, with many answers showing an impressive grasp of coding differences between short and long-term memory (acoustic versus semantic). However some students failed to see this as a coding question and referred mistakenly to, for example pro- and retro-active interference, or to capacity issues. There were many references to Baddeley's key findings, but a few answers failed to link these findings to the specific study outlined on the question paper, and so received little credit.

Question 10

There were some excellent answers to this question that focused on the effects of misleading information, succinct outlines of relevant studies (mostly the various Loftus studies, but also studies on post-event discussion), and effective evaluation. This could be methodological (artificial materials, lack of consequences in lab studies, demand characteristics, etc), or in terms of applications, for example development of the cognitive interview. Weaker answers tended to provide inaccurate descriptions of relevant studies and rote learned evaluation not clearly linked to the specific question of misleading information and eye witness testimony. Stronger answers demonstrated effective use of material, for example using evidence for the effects of age and anxiety on eye witness testimony, as evaluative material (a failure in some key studies to control for confounding variables). Weaker responses simply wandered away from the question and discussed studies on age and anxiety (in particular the weapons effect) as though they were automatically relevant.

Section C Attachment

Question 11

This was a multiple choice question where the answers were A and C. Most students achieved full marks on this question.

Question 12

This question elicited the best performance on the paper, with most students able to name three of Schaffer's stages. In fact the most common error was for students to waste time explaining what was involved in each of the three stages. The question only asked for the stages to be named. A few answers confused Schaffer's stages with types of attachment in the strange situation.

Question 13

Although most students grasped the idea that reciprocity involved responses between caregiver and infant, many failed to outline the key element of reciprocity, that it is a two-way mutual process involving turn-taking. Analogies with 'a conversation' were an effective way of outlining this key element. Weaker answers confused reciprocity with interactional synchrony or imitation.

Question 14

This was a demanding question as students had to decide on their approach. As 'research' includes both specific studies and the whole body of research evidence, alternatives were to focus on one study and evaluate it, or to present a general evaluation of research into caregiver-infant interaction. Effective evaluation of single studies usually considered the implications of results for theory and/or practice. Effective general evaluation looked at problems such as the issue of correctly interpreting infant behaviour in terms of e.g. intentionality. Less successful evaluation tended to be generic, focusing on issues such as ethics and cultural relativity. A substantial number of answers also included far too much description rather than evaluation.

Question 15

Answers to this question showed reasonable awareness of the effects of institutionalisation, in terms of intellectual and emotional development, disinhibited attachment, lack of an internal working model for relationships, etc. However a common weakness was a failure to structure the material around advice to Anca's new parents, preventing access to the top level. There were some very sophisticated answers that considered the age of adoption as a critical variable. There is historical research, still relevant, that used terms such as 'mental retardation', and this phrase was quoted quite often. In the specific context of a particular historical research study this is acceptable, but as a general and contemporary description of the effects of institutionalisation it is not. Alternatives such as 'intellectual delay' should be used instead.

Question 16

Overall this question was not done well. The question required discussion of the findings of research into cultural variations, so extensive descriptions of the methodology of the strange situation were not creditworthy. There was great variability in the accuracy of the description of the findings of relevant studies, in particular of Van Ijzendoorn and Kroonenberg's metareview. Confusion between the insecure types of attachment was quite common, and discussion tended to be generic. Although better answers showed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of metareviews, weaker students clearly failed to understand that key studies were in fact metareviews and not single pieces of research. Much of the evaluation was methodological and could be effective, for example cultural specificity of the strange situation. Other creditworthy points, such as greater variation in attachment patterns within countries as opposed to between them, were also relatively common. However, many students focused on methodological evaluation of the strange situation (eg ethics) without making it relevant to cultural variations in attachment so earned little credit.

Section D Psychopathology**Question 17**

This was a multiple choice Question where the answers were A and E. This was done reasonably well, but it was clear that a minority of students had not read the question carefully and had missed the key word, 'cognitive'.

Question 18

This question required outlines of ways in which behaviourists treat phobias, and most students could provide some details of the procedures involved in systematic desensitisation and/or flooding. The key discriminator was the use of specialist terminology. Better answers referred to

classical conditioning, hierarchies, counter-conditioning, reciprocal inhibition, extinction etc. Moderate answers used one or two of these terms, but at the lower end there was little evidence that students understood the behaviourist background to these techniques. Other weaknesses included lack of detail and providing evaluation of the techniques which was not required by the question and may have contributed to a lack of effective detail of procedures.

Question 19

Perhaps the most demanding question on the paper, as students had to outline definitions of abnormality, evaluate them and at the same time apply their material to Rob's experiences. There was enormous variability in knowledge of failure to function adequately (FFA) and deviation from ideal mental health (DIMH) definitions of abnormality, with some candidates clearly unprepared for one or the other. When applying the definitions to Rob it also became clear that while some students could list most of Jahoda's criteria they did not fully understand what they meant. Similarly with FFA, where hearing voices in itself is not a symptom of FFA some students thought it was. Better answers accurately linked aspects of the definitions to Rob's symptoms, for example causing distress to self and others (FFA), or lacking an accurate perception of reality by hearing voices (DIMH).

In many answers evaluation tended to be generic and lacking in effectiveness e.g. cultural relativity was often mentioned in relation to both FFA and DIMH, but usually without sufficient specific detail to make it effective as an evaluative point.

This was a question with several elements that required planning and a coherent structure, and this was seen in better answers. It was clear that many less successful responses would have benefited from a few minutes planning at the start; with the same material but a clear and coherent structure they would have earned more credit.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

[UMS conversion calculator](#)