OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

GCE

Psychology

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H167**

OCR Report to Centres June 2018

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This report on the 2018 Summer assessments aims to highlight:

- areas where students were more successful

- main areas where students may need additional support and some reflection

- points of advice for future examinations

It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

The report also includes links and brief information on:

- A reminder of our **post-results services** including **reviews of results**

- Link to **grade boundaries**

- **Further support that you can expect from OCR**, such as our Active Results service and CPD programme

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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

H167/01 Research methods

1.   General Comments:

This is the third examination of the new Psychology AS specification, and overall the standard of responses was good. There was a wide range of responses, suggesting that the paper differentiated fairly.

Some candidates struggled with the concept of correlation in section B (research design and response) and made suggestions related to the use of the experimental method instead. Some also struggled with the questions related to inferential statistics, probability and significance testing. Higher achieving candidates were distinguished by their more extended, detailed responses that focused more specifically on the question rubric and, where appropriate contextualised their answer to the research proposal outlined.

It was evident that some candidates struggled with some terms and concepts from the specification content and worthy of noting that in order for candidates to be fully and best prepared for the examination that all aspects of the specification should be covered. It is also important to ensure that candidates have had practice in the design and implementation of their own practical activities (including an analysis of the data collected and conclusions reached from this). This should hopefully reinforce their knowledge and understanding of research methods in general, as well as some of the specific terms and concepts they could be assessed on and enable them to comment on how conducting their own research has helped in the planning of novel research presented on the day of the examination. It is also important to be aware of the need (and the opportunity afforded) to reinforce the learning of research methods through the core studies. It would also be a good idea to produce a glossary, commencing early in the course to facilitate understanding of the many terms and concepts (many of which candidates will not have encountered previous to studying psychology). Finally, the use of examples should be encouraged to illustrate points, convey understanding better and enable elaboration.

2.   Comments on Individual Questions:

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Section A	**Max**	**Multiple choice**
1	1	Mostly correct answers
2	1	Mostly correct answers, although some candidates did choose option A ('no fixed number of questions')
3	1	Mostly correct answers, although some candidates did choose option D ('independent measures design')
4	1	There were a mixture of responses here to this question requiring knowledge of selection of inferential statistical test which demonstrates the need to become familiar with the criteria for use of each of the five inferential tests on the specification

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5	1	Mostly correct answers, although some candidates did choose option A ('opportunity' sampling)
6	1	Mostly correct answers
7	1	Surprisingly, some candidates struggled with this question, with a mixture of response options being selected
8	1	Mostly correct answers, although some candidates did choose option A ('negative' correlation)
9	1	This question proved to be quite difficult for candidates and highlights the need to cover all the different types of validity on the specification
10	1	Mostly correct answers
11	1	Mostly correct answers
12	1	Mostly correct answers
13(a)	1	All these related questions concerning the understanding and interpretation of data presented in a histogram proved challenging to many candidates and demonstrates the importance of covering graphical displays in detail and not relying upon a transfer of existing knowledge perhaps from level 2 mathematics courses undertaken by students prior to embarking on the AS Psychology course
13(b)	1	
13(c)	1	
B		**Research design and response**
14	3	Many candidates performed poorly on this question, probably as a combination of two things: a lack of understanding of directional hypotheses (especially allied to correlational research); and, a failure to operationalise variables. The best responses were characterised by the citation of a positive or negative prediction about the two variables that were quantified in a way that would produce continuous data for use in a correlation analysis and in context.
15	12	There was a mixture of different quality of responses to this question, although many candidates did find it difficult to achieve the higher band marks. The best responses were characterised by taking each of the three required features in turn. Firstly, demonstrating understanding of what was involved and how to address it for the research presented. Next by justifying the decisions made regarding how to address it. Finally, drawing upon the candidates own experiences of conducting research themselves and how they learned from this how to conduct the research presented. All of this needed to be discussed *in context* to obtain marks in the highest band. It is particularly worthy of pointing out the how it should be made clear how the candidates own experiences of conducting research involving the same required features using the same research technique (correlation) should be evident in the response here as an acknowledgement of how/why the suggestions are being made for the research proposed have been derived from the candidates own experiences of conducting practical activities. Many candidates also demonstrated a lack of understanding of what was involved in correlation research, often describing the measurement of the variables as if for an experiment instead, and sometimes explicitly referring the IVs and DVs.

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16(a)	3	These questions, requiring a knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the correlation technique were best answered using a PEC (point, example, comment) or similar strategy, where a strength/weakness is outlined in general first, then an example of this related to the proposed research (context) and finishing with a justification of how/why the point made was a strength/weakness (elaboration, providing detail for maximum marks).
16(b)	3	
17	1	Mostly correct answers here (with occasional, incorrect references to 'line graphs')
18	2	Mostly correct answers here
19	4	Some candidates clearly did not understand what the term 'social desirability' refers to (and some confused it with demand characteristics in general). The best responses were ones characterised by providing a definition of the term first, before a detailed discussion in context of an appropriate strategy to reduce social desirability that provided explicit examples.
20	3	This proved to be a very challenging question, with very few candidates achieving all 3 marks on offer. This highlights the importance of covering all the many different types of validity on the specification. Those that did demonstrate an understanding (often using the term 'predictive validity', which was perfectly acceptable) sometimes struggled to provide an example in context of the research proposed that would convey a detailed understanding.
21(a)	1	It was somewhat of a surprise, and disappointing that many candidates did not know the name of the relevant section or sub-section of a practical report where the things identified by these questions would appear. This shows the importance, not only of covering these things in general (report writing), but reinforcing this knowledge and understanding when students conduct their own practical activities and subsequently write them up.
21(b)	1	
21(c)	1	
21(d)	1	
C		**Data analysis and interpretation**
22(a)	2	Most candidates were able to explain what quantitative data refers to (the clearest responses were those that included an example)
22(b)	3	Most candidates were able to outline advantage of quantitative data. However, this was not always done in the context of the research presented and not always in comparison with qualitative data (which the question asked for). The best responses here began with an outline in general of an advantage of quantitative data, then went on to provide an example of this in the context of the study and making a contrast to why this was an advantage compared to qualitative data.

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23(a)	4	Many candidates struggled with this question and seemed to make a guess from any of the names of inferential statistical tests they could remember. This highlights the importance of making sure knowledge of the criteria for using the five inferential statistical tests in the specification is covered adequately. The best responses correctly identified the test then provided two justifications in context of the research presented.
23(b)	2	There was much confusion here regarded what the term 'critical value' refers to, with some candidates incorrectly assuming it was something obtained directly from the calculation of the inferential statistical test itself (e.g. as in 'expected values' from the Chi square test). Worst still, some discussed aspects of descriptive statistics, such as the mean or standard deviation. This highlights the importance of the need to actually perform some calculations using the inferential tests and gain familiarity with the use of tables of critical values and their role in significance testing.
23(c)	4	Candidates who struggled with the previous two related questions also found this question about probability levels and significance testing difficult to comprehend (with some not attempting an answer at all). Once again, the importance of actually carrying out some calculations using the inferential tests is highlighted in order to become aware of what happens after the answer from such tests is obtained that allows hypotheses to be accepted or rejected.
24(a)	2	This question required knowledge of both the range and the standard deviation. It was not sufficient just to describe what the range is / how it is calculated on its own. Many candidates did not seem to know what the standard deviation was or the basics of how it is calculated in order to access marks for this question. The best responses here outlined how the standard deviation includes all the data collected in its calculation, compared to using just the two extremes like the range.
24(b)	4	It was important for this question to understand that a conclusion is not simply a result / finding from a piece of research – it is the interpretation of a finding. Furthermore, many candidates here confused the range with a measure of central tendency (e.g. the mean), incorrectly claiming that the higher the range the greater the preference was. The best responses here quoted what the range was first then went on to speculate what this implied in terms of how much agreement there was or not amongst participants in the respective conditions of the experiment. This shows how, although simple and straightforward the range is in terms of how it is calculated, it is important to spend time covering what it actually informs us about the outcomes of a piece of research when used in an applied way.
25	4	Two bits of knowledge were required in order to perform well on this question (about what is involved in an independent measures design and what validity refers to). The best responses here began with a general definition of what validity refers to before discussing how the use of an independent measures design could affect this (in either a positive or negative way) in the context of the research provided. Some candidates became confused with reliability and made comments exclusively, or at least in part to do with this instead of validity).

H167/02 Psychological themes through core studies

1. General Comments:

There was a good range of marks across both candidates and the paper. The paper seemed fair and accessible.

Questions in **Section A** were generally well answered though marks were lost on several occasions through lack of contextualisation.

In **Section B** weaker candidates showed confusion between the principles/concepts of the social area and the behaviourist perspective; were unable to apply their evidence to support their identified strengths of the developmental area; gave study-specific answers in relation to 6(d) which asked for two ways in which the developmental area is similar to the area of individual differences; used inappropriate evidence to support their suggestions in 7(e) e.g. cited evidence from studies such as Milgram, Loftus and Palmer, Chaney et al. which, in this specification, have not been placed in the area of individual differences.

Section C answers were very varied in quality. Good candidates obviously read the article carefully and were therefore able to support their answers with appropriate evidence from the article. Weaker candidates used supposition and therefore misapplied evidence from the article and, although there were many good answers to 7(c), there was evidence of a general lack of knowledge and understanding of Loftus and Palmer's study. Responses to questions 7(d) and 7(e) also varied in quality with strong candidates suggesting appropriate improvements, backed up by a good application of psychological knowledge and then evaluating their suggestions from both a positive and a negative perspective whilst weaker candidates, although generally able to suggest appropriate improvements, were unable to back them up with any psychological knowledge and tended to only evaluate their suggestions by repeating what they had said in 7(d) and/or considering only the negative aspects of their suggestions.

The quality of written communication continues to prevent some candidates from attaining higher marks and there were many examples of handwriting that were difficult to decipher. Such candidates may be eligible for access arrangements.

2. Comments on Individual Questions:

<u>**Section A**</u>

1(a)(i). This was generally answered well though some candidates failed to refer to either the 5-point rating scale or who did the rating. Weak candidates showed confusion by referring to participants being rated for aggression whilst in the aggression-arousal room where they played with the nice toys.

1(a)(ii). Many candidates scored 1 mark here through references to ratings allowing researchers to match participants on aggression/ as a form of control/so not all the aggressive children were in the same group. Good candidates gave a full answer stating that participants were pre-rated for aggression before being placed into groups for the experiment so they could be <u>matched</u> on

aggression <u>so that those with similar levels of aggression could be distributed evenly across the two experimental groups and the control group.</u>

1(b). There were some excellent answers to this question with many candidates providing clear descriptions of how Chaney et al.'s study showed how behaviour can be developed. Appropriate references were made to how operant conditioning/external influences/positive reinforcement lead to the development of behaviours with good supporting evidence from the study itself. Some candidates however gave reasonable descriptions of how behaviours can develop but failed to support their descriptions with any evidence from the actual study i.e. they did not contextualise their answer.

2(a)(i). A well answered question with many candidates gaining the full 2 marks.

2(a)(ii). Many candidates scored full marks here though some only got partial marks as they merely identified a way the sample could be considered biased e.g. there was a gender bias as all participants were male i.e. no implication of the bias was considered.

2(b). There were a considerable number of instances where candidates provided an appropriate conclusion but failed to contextualise their answer/ support their conclusion with evidence from the study.

3(a). Many candidates scored 1 mark here by identifying an appropriate strength of study just one individual. However, very few candidates remembered to link their identified strength to Freud's study.

3(b). Overall, this question was not answered well. Few candidates actually explained how Baron-Cohen et al.'s study links to the key theme of understanding disorders as they failed to acknowledge that autism is cognitive disorder/autistic adults show an impairment compared to normal adults/ adults with Tourettes. Few answers were supported with clear evidence from the study.

4(a). Generally, a well answered question. Weak candidates did however fail to fully identify the independent variable by including all five verbs, some referred to the verb 'crashed' instead of 'smashed', and a few confused the independent variable with the dependent variable.

4(b). A well answered question.

5. Overall, a well answered question with many candidates scoring full marks. There were still a few candidates who confused 'eye' and 'visual field'!

Section B

6(a). There were some good answers here though some candidates provided answers that were principles/concepts of the social area rather than the behaviourist perspective.

6(b). Again, there were some good answers to this question. However, weaker candidates provided answers that merely referred to behaviour being influenced by other people/the environment/external influences, which were actually social explanations rather than behaviourist explanations. Supporting evidence from Bandura et al.'s study was generally very weak/vague/inaccurate.

6(c). Many candidates were able to suggest two appropriate strengths of the developmental area. Unfortunately, in many answers the evidence did not actually show support for the identified strength.

6(d). Some candidates gave good answers here, however many were unable to identify similarities between the two areas and/or support their identified similarity with appropriate evidence from studies from both areas. Some candidates either misread or misunderstood the question and referred to similarities between studies from the two areas i.e. gave study-specific answers.

6(e). Again, many candidates were able to suggest ways in which psychological is/is not useful. However, there were many answers which used inappropriate supporting evidence i.e. evidence not from the area of individual differences e.g. Milgram, Loftus and Palmer, Grant et al.

Section C

7(a). Many candidates were able to gain 1 mark here through references to the cognitive area being concerned with memory. Some candidates failed to link their answer clearly to the article and some merely said that the article can be placed in the cognitive area because it related to Loftus and Palmer's study which is in that area!!

7(b). Many candidates were able to identify an appropriate psychological issue though some struggled to support their issue with appropriate evidence from the article. Most candidates raised the issue of the use of leading questions which can have a negative influence on recall and went on to state that a leading question in the article was: 'Was the man wearing a bulky jacket?'/'Was the man carrying a gun?' This is incorrect; the article does not actually identify any leading questions.

7(c). Candidates who knew the Loftus and Palmer study in detail scored well here. Unfortunately, there were many extremely muddled and inaccurate descriptions of both of Loftus and Palmer's experiments. Links to the article were generally sound.

7(d). Many candidates gave good answers here. Appropriate improvements were suggested and supported by a good application of psychological knowledge e.g. interview witnesses at the scene of the crime rather than at the police station, supported by evidence from Grant et al.'s study into context-dependency.

7(e). Candidates tended to lose marks in this question as many of their evaluative points had already been used as justifications for their suggested improvements in the previous question part. This tended to leave answers only having creditworthy negative aspects of their suggested improvements. The quality of responses in this question part reflected the quality of responses in 7(d); those who could make several sound suggestions in 7(d) tended to score more marks in this question part as they had more to evaluate.