Examiner's Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel International GCE Advanced
Level in Psychology(WPS03)
Paper 01: Applications Of Psychology

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General Comments

Candidates' responses were on the whole consistent throughout the paper demonstrating knowledge and understanding. There were few blank pages and the majority of candidates attempted to answer all questions.

Option A was the preferred choice of the majority of candidates and it was clear that candidates had a good working knowledge of many aspects of criminal psychology. Candidates who had chosen Option B, demonstrated a good knowledge of many aspects of health psychology but would appear to need a more detailed working knowledge of studies.

Candidates would benefit from an improved understanding of the mathematical components of the examination. Labelling of graphs was poorly executed by the majority of candidates meaning that one mark was readily lost. Plotting on graphs needs to be more accurate, bar graphs were often plotted as histograms. On the scatter-graphs, lines of best fit were misapplied and candidates drew lines between each plot on the graph. Standard deviation was asked at two decimal places and this was not given.

The contextual questions elicited a number of good responses. Candidates endeavoured to apply the scenarios in their writing. It is important that they understand however that just mentioning for example the name given in the stem is not application, they must apply appropriate concepts or theories in order to achieve the AO2 marks.

The longer response questions requiring AO3 appeared to challenge students at the lower end of the grade boundaries. The candidates demonstrated an awareness that they needed to use GRAVE in some of the responses but they failed to link them to the studies/theories/concepts in question and therefore provided generic responses that were not creditworthy. Higher level responses benefit from using studies and findings from supporting evidence. The strongest candidates provided answers that included justification and exemplification of points throughout the response.

Paper Summary

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

- Candidates when asked by questions need to relate their answers carefully to stimulus or scenario material and embed this constructively into their answers. This will allow them to effectively use the A02 applied skill element of some questions.
- Candidates need to develop further A03 justification in some of their answers; this evaluative element of many questions needs further clarity and depth.
- Candidates would benefit from knowing the differences between results and conclusions and make it clear which they are providing.
- Candidates need to understand the mathematical requirements of the paper and ensure that they have a working understanding of graphs and the interpretation of data and it's application.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Q (01a)

Question Introduction

The better candidates were able to identify Erikson's stages of psychosocial development giving the correct stages for each group named in the question. On the whole, however, this question was not answered well. There were many blank pages or students appeared to guess stating words such as adolescence. Students did not access the full range of marks.

Examiner Tip

Erikson's stages of psychosocial stages of development are named on the syllabus and students need to review these stages, ensuring they can apply the correct stage to the correct age range.

Q (01b)

Question Introduction

Candidates produced a variety of answers in an attempt to suggest why Diana's brother would display behaviour in keeping with his stage of development. Some candidates did not link the question to the expected behaviours of that stage so did not meet the question assessment requirements. A common response was to describe feelings he may have rather than the behaviour he would display.

Examiner Tip

When the question states that a behaviour has to be linked with a stage, candidates must ensure their answers reflect this requirement.

Q (02a)

Question Introduction

There was evidence from many candidate answers that they understood the LAD was linked to the ability to learn and understand language, so one mark was achieved. Further work was required to explain that it was a hypothetical tool/innate and very few marks were awarded for this as they were not clearly explained.

Q (02b)

Question Introduction

The better candidates were able to use the data from the study and suggest a justification that was not generic. On the whole, candidates did not use the findings in their answers and suggested only generic strengths which were not creditworthy.

Examiner Tip

Responses must use the findings from the study and justify why those particular findings are not representative. Just suggesting that they are not representative to the target population is not creditworthy as this is a generic response.

Q (02c)

Question Introduction

Candidates generally answered the identification of the weakness well. Most suggested that there was no evidence for the device. Fewer candidates were able to offer supporting evidence in respect of this fact.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need an awareness of supporting evidence or justifications of the key elements of a theory in order to achieve full marks in a 2 mark question.

Q (03b)

Question Introduction

Many candidates did not understand the requirements of the question. The command verb was to explain how the results would.., but many only described social learning theory and failed to suggest how this was linked to the results of the study. This was an AO2 and AO3 question so no marks were available for description of a theory.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to develop an awareness of how theories can be applied to a scenario and then justified.

Q (03c)

Question Introduction
Candidates were able to access the one mark if they understood that the weakness had to be related to the study (AO2). Candidates that gave a generic response achieved 0 marks.

Q (04)

Question Introduction

Candidates generally answered this question well demonstrating that they understood Bowlby's theory of attachment. A number of students however, confused Ainsworth's Strange Situation with the theory. As this was a levels question it was important to apply Bowlby's theory to the scenario in order to move into level 3. Only candidates that focused on explaining the 5 week period and role of the hospital caregivers for example linked to the theory, were able to achieve level 4. Demonstrating accurate knowledge and understanding (AO1) is important but equal relevance must be given to demonstrating competing arguments and application to the scenario for level 4.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to ensure that they contextualise their answer when asked by the question and always develop the justification/exemplification element of any discuss question. This will ensure candidates have access to full marks.

Q (05)

Question Introduction

Some candidates produced accurate and well developed answers focusing on the question of whether research involving children can be conducted with sufficient ethical considerations. These answers were balanced and detailed the ethical guidelines that should be applied in research with children. Their answers also successfully explained how studies such as Ainsworth (1969) could or could not be deemed unethical. A few candidates were able to produce well-developed and logical assessment answers which reflected competing arguments which were balanced.

Many candidates could not produce this balance of arguments which result in a limited accessibility to Level 4. Some candidates could name and give descriptions of various studies that could be used to explain ethical considerations but then failed to explain how the ethical considerations could be applied. Candidates' answers were not effective as they provided descriptions of ethical guidelines that did not demonstrate knowledge and understanding.

Candidates would have benefitted from being able to describe in some detail the ethical guidelines that apply to children. They should also ensure that when studies are used as supporting evidence for an explanation that they do not just describe the study but suggest why it supports, in this case whether it was ethical or not.

As a level based question it is important to note that an A01/A03 response was required which needed to show an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding versus assessment and conclusion. Those candidates who scored highly on both skills were able to demonstrate accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of studies that had ethical considerations. This A01 knowledge was displayed in a well-developed assessment containing logical chains of reasoning throughout the candidates answer, not just in the second part. This therefore allowed these candidates to demonstrate an awareness of the significance of competing arguments throughout their answer, allowing them to provide a balanced judgement.

Q (06a)

Question Introduction

This was a one mark question but few candidates were able to achieve this score. Many candidates' descriptions could have applied to a number of therapies and were not specific to CBT and were therefore considered generic.

Examiner Tip

Candidates must ensure that the description is focused enough to distinguish CBT from other talking therapies such as psychoanalysis

Q (07b)

Question Introduction

Many candidates did not provide a conclusion, but described the result so were unable to achieve one mark.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to ensure that they use the results to suggest what these show, rather than repeating them.

Q (07c)

Question Introduction

Most candidates were able to attempt this question with many getting the significance result correct. Better candidates were able to develop their answer with a justification in terms of the calculated value. Candidates who failed to complete this answer may have been unaware of the means to work out the significant result.

Q (07d)

Question Introduction

Candidates were able on the whole to gain two marks for this four mark response. Two rewardable points were given for identifying the strength. Two further marks were available for justifying the strength and this is an area that needs improvement. There was some

confusion about whether the strength improved reliability or validity and candidates were not clear on these points.

Q (08b)

Question Introduction

This was a question that required a conclusion to be given from the data shown in the scenario. Many candidates were unable to achieve the mark as they did not provide a conclusion but repeated the results from the study.

Q (08c)

Question Introduction

On the whole, candidates demonstrated their knowledge self-reporting questionnaires. They were able to identify the weaknesses and gain one mark. However, candidates did not always justify the weakness and were therefore unable to access the second mark. The better answers linked the weakness to validity, reliability or generalisability.

Q (09)

Question Introduction

Many candidates had a detailed knowledge of the studies that are used in criminal psychology to explain self-fulfilling prophecy. Candidates were able to describe the studies in detail, indeed, for many there was too much emphasis on the study and not how it could be used to support or negate self-fulfilling prophecy. Few candidates were able to successfully describe self-fulfilling prophecy. Candidates had knowledge of labelling, but not many of the other key features of the prophecy, such as internalisation of the labels. It is a requirement that knowledge and understanding at AO1 is mostly accurate for level 2, accurate for level 3 and accurate and thorough for level 4 and if these levellers were not met then candidates could not progress through the levels even if the AO3 was detailed.

Q (10)

Question Introduction

Some candidates struggled to provide a detailed response for this question. The AO1 knowledge of Bradbury and William's study could at times be very limited and there were a number of errors which

appeared to be candidates trying to apply generic points from other studies to support their statements. There was confusion about whether they were mock or real trials.

The AO3 responses were often generic and lacked the specific details of the study and were not therefore creditworthy. In applying GRAVE, candidates should pick specific parts of the study and apply these to gain the marks, for example, high in ecological validity because they were real life trials.

It is important to provide a balance answer that has knowledge and understanding together with a conclusion and competing arguments in order for the candidates to achieve the higher levels.

Q (11)

Question Introduction

Candidates were not clear on the different personality types, often confusing them with Eysenk's theory of personality. The response had to detail how the actual personality type could lead to stress and this was often missing and therefore candidates could not achieve the one mark.

Q (12b)

Question Introduction

Many candidates stated the results of the study and did not explain what the results showed. The better answers stated the result and then were able to demonstrate what this meant.

Q (12 c and d)

Question Introduction

Many candidates began this question in terms of using their knowledge of the multi-store model of memory, focusing on elements of the STM, LTM and rehearsal. They focus on the capacity, duration and encoding of the different memory stores where written about fully by a few candidates showing a thorough knowledge of the different memory stores and the overall model itself. There were some candidates who omitted key elements of the model and limited themselves straight away to lower mark levels.

Candidates were also successful in linking their knowledge of the multi-store model of memory to the context; there were clear examples throughout many student answers of the candidate's awareness of how the model works in terms of application to Mrs Hughes and her memory problems. When done well by some candidates this showed that they could integrate the stimulus material into their answers with success.

Candidate's responses to the effectiveness of the multi-store model varied in strength with few candidates achieving top level 4 marks due to a lack of logical evaluation and discussion of competing arguments. Issues tended to arise with application of A03 knowledge where candidates did not always elaborate on the points being made, presenting in a factual way rather than evaluative. A few candidates were able to provide accurate knowledge of the multi-store model of memory, integrating this into the stimulus material and evaluating in terms of evidence, studies and logical chains of reasoning; these candidates were able to access level 4.

As a level based question it is important to note that an A01/A02/A03 response was required which needed to demonstrate an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding versus evaluation and conclusion. Those candidates who scored highly on all three skills were able to demonstrate accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of the multi-store model of memory. This A01 knowledge was then supported through sustained application to the context of Mrs Hughes, demonstrating their ability to integrate and synthesise the relevant knowledge from the model. These candidates were also able to display a well-developed and logical evaluation, containing chains of reasoning and an awareness of competing arguments. This therefore allowed for a balanced conclusion and level 4 marks.

Q (12d)

Question Introduction

Many candidates were able to achieve two marks of the four by identifying a strength of self-reporting questionnaires. They were, however, unable to achieve the further two marks for justification as they did not explain why for example they were more valid or reliable. It is important to state a reason why they are valid rather than just state that they are as this is not creditworthy.

Q (13b)

Question Introduction

Most candidates described the result of the study but did not state what this meant and so it could not be classified as a conclusion. It is important to use the result and then suggest what this shows.

Q (13c)

Question Introduction

There was a general lack of understanding about what the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale. Candidates could describe it but were unable to suggest a weakness of the study.

Q (14)

Question Introduction

Many candidates could provide a detailed description of the HPA axis and Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome and therefore demonstrate knowledge and understanding. The responses were however limited in respect of the AO3 and candidates did not demonstrate relevant factual material that would support whether the explanations could explain stress. Responses would benefit from supporting studies that could be used to explain how stress is related to the HPA. It is also useful if candidates can apply the methodology of studies as these are useful in evaluation, for example, Selye's study used animals such as rats and therefore as it is an animal study, may not be generalizable to humans.

Q (15)

Question Introduction

Many candidates appeared to have a poor working knowledge of Brady's (1958) study. A number of responses were able to describe the study, giving pertinent examples and therefore demonstrated mostly accurate knowledge and understanding. AO3 points were, however, very limited. Many candidates could cite examples of it being unethical but were unable to offer any further points of evaluation. If a balance of knowledge and understanding and developed lines of arguments with a conclusion is not made, then scores are likely to remain in level 1 and possibly level 2 at best.