



Pearson

Examiner's Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel International GCE
Advanced level in Psychology (WPS04)
Paper 4: Clinical Psychology and
Psychological Skills

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General Comments

This was the first examination of WPS04 and overall candidates achieved well. In general candidates attempted all elements of this paper with very few questions left blank, demonstrating strong skills in examination timing. Candidate responses were generally good and were consistent throughout the paper demonstrating some very impressive knowledge and understanding across clinical psychology and in psychological skills. Centres should be commended on how well candidates had prepared for the majority of this examination, and some very good responses were seen.

Candidates showed very good understanding in terms of statistical infrequency, cultural issues and also drug treatments for schizophrenia, and within these questions there was some impressive use of supporting evidence and research studies to exemplify responses with precision and clarity.

Difficulties seen tended to be in the long answer question in clinical psychology and the psychological skills section. Here, candidate responses were often limited to lower level mark bands as a result of a lack of developed AO3 material. Few justified their arguments and evaluations, little supporting evidence was seen and the content tended towards AO1 knowledge and understanding of the topic without the evaluation required.

Application for AO2 responses was an area that posed some problems for some candidates. Where generic responses were given candidates did not achieve well, and it is recommended that candidates practice their application to stimulus material in order to demonstrate their ability to draw on their understanding of content and show how this would apply in a given context.

Many candidates scored highly in the mathematical assessment, and centres can be commended for their candidate skills in this content.

Paper Summary

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

- Within their extended open responses, candidates should give balanced responses and exemplified points which lead to making informed conclusions or judgements (where appropriate to the taxonomy used) in relation to the question content.
- Candidates should clearly apply their understanding of psychology to the context in a given scenario, they should not

just give a name or single word as this is insufficient as an application skill.

- Generic points should be avoided, candidates should be able to give specific responses that are clearly linked to the question content and taxonomy, for example when evaluating content such as ethics it should be explicit how the point made relates to the argument being presented.
- 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, for example the differences between describe and explain in shorter 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 focus on the specific direction of the question to avoid going off topic, particularly in the extended essay questions.

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Sections A and B: Clinical Psychology

Q 01(a)

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 question about the use of a statistical infrequency. Candidates were expected to demonstrate their understanding of statistical infrequency. Candidates produced many accurate responses and generally achieved well on this question.

Q 01(b)

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question requiring candidates to explain a strength of statistical infrequency. Candidates were often able to state their knowledge of a strength of statistical infrequency, but many were unable to justify or exemplify why or how this was a strength.

Examiner Tip

With 'explain' questions, candidates should give an exemplified point that justifies their point.

Q 01(c)

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question requiring candidates to explain a weakness of statistical infrequency. Some candidates were able to state their knowledge of a weakness of statistical infrequency, but many were unable to justify or exemplify why or how this was a strength. The candidates often presented a point about desirability of abnormality, but could not fully justify why this was a weakness of statistical infrequency.

Examiner Tip

With 'explain' questions, candidates should give an exemplified point that justifies their point.

Q 02(a)

Question Introduction

This question was an AO2 application question that required candidates to identify two symptoms in relation to schizophrenia. Many candidates achieved very well on this question, showing they had good knowledge of symptoms. Where candidates did not achieve well it was often as a result of giving a symptom that was generic and therefore not clearly applied to schizophrenia.

Q 02(b)

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question requiring candidates to explain three weakness of drug treatments for schizophrenia. Candidates at times struggled with the clarity of their answers and this did lead to some repetition of responses. Many were unable to exemplify their identified weakness to show how or why this was a weakness of drug treatments. Good exemplified responses were seen through candidate understanding that side-effects may result in non-compliance. Some

candidates supported their points through research evidence that drug treatment is ineffective, or that alternative treatment is more effective, but this was not commonly seen.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should ensure they show how or why the point they have made is a weakness (or strength) of the topic they are presenting a response to.

Q 03(a)

Question Introduction

Many candidates were unable to demonstrating knowledge of the sample selection used for the control group in this study. Most candidates gave the experimental group and did not achieve the marks here.

Q 03(b)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application question where candidates were expected to draw from the conclusion of the study and apply this to improving patient care. Some candidates repeated the conclusions of the study without application. Few candidates were able to draw on their understanding of this study and demonstrate any practical use of the conclusions. Where candidates did show strong responses, they were able to make logical suggestions, such as diet-plans and food supplements.

Examiner Tip

Some candidates gave unethical responses here, such as to 'force-feed' patients, when making suggestions for practical applications they should be ethically considered.

Q 03(c)

Question Introduction

Candidates did not achieve very highly on this question. This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question that required candidates to explain two reasons why this study is not generalizable. Many were

able to identify one reason, but not exemplify or justify this. Few gave two accurate reasons. Candidates often gave a point and then repeated the question stem that it was not generalizable, rather than justify why or how it was not generalizable. Some simply stated that the sample was small at 333 patients without any understanding that as a sample size of 333 patients is only small in some circumstances. Many candidates attempted to exemplify their points with reference to generalisability of findings to the 'whole world', showing limited understanding of the aims and purpose of the study.

Examiner Tip

Where a candidate is directed to present reasons for something that is named in the question, such as generalisability in this case, they should give responses that go beyond replicating the point in the question and focus on the what/why/how that is the case.

Q 04(a)

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to complete the chi-squared using the data in the table provided and to give their answers to two decimal places. Many demonstrated good skills here and achieved well. Those who did not achieve higher marks often gave answers to more than two decimal places. The mathematical skills in the specification should give candidates an understanding of the ways in which mathematical questions can be framed and the embedded skills assessed within the mathematical questions presented.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should ensure they follow the guidance in the question with mathematical skills, for example the number of decimal places.

Q 04(b)

Question Introduction

Candidates were able to identify the correct value here and very often achieve the full mark for this question. Their skills in this area are evident and centres should be commended in how well the candidates were able to respond to this question.

Q 04(c)

Question Introduction

Candidates responded to this question in a mixed way. Many followed the process of the chi-squared and gave an accurate statement of significance that used the data from the calculated and critical values. Where candidates did not achieve well, they often negated to include the data as the question had instructed or they did not draw on critical and calculated values at all.

Q 05(a)

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question requiring candidates to explain one reason why cultural issues may affect diagnosis. Responses often identified an accurate reason, but candidates did not exemplify or justify this. Those who achieved well often utilised evidence from research that demonstrated that culture can impact on diagnosis.

Q 05(b)

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question requiring candidates to explain one reason why cultural issues may not affect diagnosis. This question was less well answered than 5a. Few responses identified an accurate reason and where an accurate reason was given, the candidates did not exemplify or justify this. Those who achieved well often utilised evidence from research that demonstrated that culture does not impact on diagnosis, or they exemplified with their understanding of the DSM/ICD.

Q 06

Question Introduction

This is the first-time candidates have been expected to respond to a 16-mark extended open response question in clinical psychology. The questions required candidates to evaluate whether psychological abnormality is now better diagnosed, treated and accepted in society. Many candidates demonstrated some good knowledge and understanding in this response, however the evaluation skills often

limited candidates to lower mark bands. Few utilised supporting evidence or developed justifications within their responses. Many gave a historical account of clinical psychology without addressing the evaluations of what this means in terms of improvements in diagnosis, acceptance or treatments. Where evidence was given, it was often Rosen Han (1973) and many candidates gave using this showed good understanding of the study but did not always show the link to how this study was relevant to the question asked.

There was little balance in many of the arguments seen, often candidates suggested that clinical psychology was simply 'better' without any evidence of this and few candidates were able to exemplify any points of evaluation about areas that were not 'better' or that clinical psychology could still improve in these areas.

Concluding points were not always evident, and many candidates presented their response without logical reasoning that answered the question being asked.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should present exemplified arguments and draw from a range of evidence or concepts to justify their points in extended essays. Logical chains of reasoning should be presented to show balanced arguments and these should draw to conclusions or judgements based on the evidence utilised in the response and in answer to the question presented.

Sections C, D and E: Psychological Skills

Q 07(a)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question. Candidates were required to draw from the scenario to make their AO2 point about why a naturalistic observation would be used. This was often well answered, many candidates were able to give the relevance of naturalistic observation in the context of babies or attachment, with common responses exemplifying the point in relation to increases in ecological validity or ethical considerations. Where candidates did not achieve well, they often gave generic points about naturalistic observations and did not apply their response to the use of this in relation to the scenario.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should ensure they very clearly apply their understanding to scenarios when these are used in order to achieve the AO2 marks.

Q 07(b)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question. Candidates were required to draw from the scenario to make their AO2 point about a weakness of self-reported data about mothers recording the behaviours of babies using diaries. Many candidates identified social desirability issues of mothers and achieved one mark. Most candidates did not exemplify why or how this was a weakness in the use of this data. Where candidates did exemplify this, they often gave issues of subjectivity in data collection impacting on results about attachment.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should always exemplify and justify the points they make when responding to explain taxonomy questions. Candidates may benefit from working through the taxonomy command words given in the specification as part of their examination practice.

Q 07(c)

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to give two open questions that were suitable to the scenario context. Most candidates achieved well here and gave two relevant open questions. The few candidates that did not achieve well, often combined multiple questions within their response or they used generic questions.

Q 07(d)

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question that required candidates to explain two ethical issues that should be taken into account in relation to a questionnaire about attachment. Many candidates were unable to apply their responses to the stimulus in this question, often giving generic ethical considerations. Some candidates were able to apply their responses, often this was the identification that attachment questions may be sensitive in nature and that this meant Tahseen should gain fully informed consent or promote a right to withdraw. A number of candidates referred to experiments which was not accurate to the questionnaire being used.

Examiner Tip

Application questions require candidates to draw on their knowledge and understanding in relation to a given scenario and they should ensure that the responses given show relevance and accuracy to the scenario presented.

Q07 (e) (i)

Question Introduction

On the whole, most candidates achieved well in this question and were able to calculate the correct answer.

Q07 (e) (ii)

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to draw a bar chart for the data they were given in Table 4. Most candidates were able to accurately plot the

bars, although some joined their bars as if the data were continuous rather than distinct and lost marks. Some were able to give an accurate title, although some missed components of the title and therefore did not achieve the mark. Some were able to label the axes, but many referred to the 'number of positive relationships' on the y axis rather than the number of people/males and females, thus losing a mark here.

Q (08)

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to justify using laboratory experiments in memory research, it is an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question for six marks. Overall, candidates were not always able to achieve high marks here. Many candidates gave generic responses about a laboratory method but failed to apply their points to the use of this method in memory research specifically. Some candidates gave strengths and weaknesses of the use of the laboratory methods, therefore not addressing the question of justifying the use of the method. A few candidates did achieve well and they were able to present the key features of a laboratory experiment that justify the use of this in memory research, with some of those candidates giving examples of memory research to exemplify their points.

Examiner Tip

Where a question directs a candidate to give a response in relation to a specified issue, in this case human memory, they should be explicit in presenting a response that discusses the issue specified to demonstrate how well they can apply their underpinning knowledge and understanding to a given area.

Q (9)

Question Introduction

This was a discuss AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO2 application question that required candidates to give an equal emphasis between their underpinning knowledge/understanding and an application to the context of the given key question in their answer. Candidates were able to approach this question using any relevant and accurate aspect of their psychology course content, many used social learning theory, some included biological explanations and a few also included psychodynamic explanations.

Overall, candidates were able to select appropriate theory/concepts/research relevant to the key question, although some gave limited understanding in the points they made from their chosen content. Most candidates were able to apply some of their understanding to the scenario given that underpins the key question. Some candidates discussed social learning theory, but were limited in their ability to apply their understanding to the novel context of the key question, instead their focus became aggression rather than gender behaviour.

A few candidates did not discuss the key question presented, instead giving disjointed points about theories or research that they did not link well to gender behaviours.

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 key question presented. They should draw on the stimulus material given and any relevant knowledge and understanding from across their studies.

Q (10)

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 ethical issues when using animals and humans in psychological research. The question required candidates to demonstrate AO1 knowledge and understanding, along with AO2 application to the scenario given and AO3 evaluation points to evaluate whether the outcomes of research outweigh ethical considerations.

Some candidates responded well to this question, although for the most part many candidates were unable to evaluate in their responses and gave a response that was more knowledge of ethics as opposed to an evaluation of whether these considerations are outweighed or not by the outcomes of psychological research.

Most candidates found this question challenging, and their argument about ethical considerations was often limited to content about when or how ethical issues have been maintained or breached with little development in terms of whether the outcomes of such research outweighed any ethical consideration. Some candidates were able to give both animal and human ethical concerns, but many gave just animal ethics and thus limited their response to lower mark bands.

There was some use of research from across the course to exemplify where ethical issues had been considered well maintained and not well maintained, most of which included Milgram and Watson and Rayner for human ethics, and Skinner, Harlow and Pavlov for animal ethics. Within these there were some misconceptions evident in the understanding of these studies, and few candidates were able to evaluate the outcome of them in balance to the ethical issue, instead giving knowledge and understanding of the strengths or weaknesses of each study in terms of ethics, but failing to evaluate in terms of outcomes balanced with ethical/unethical decisions.

A few candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the Scientific Procedures Act and fewer still drew upon the UNCRC, instead many concentrated on the BPS Code of Conduct and some inaccurately applied this to animal research, for example informed consent from animals.

Application to the scenario was limited in many responses, with few candidates drawing upon the example research to expand their responses. For most candidates, the answers given were unbalanced and there was little exemplification for AO3 in the evaluation given.

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. They should select the appropriate content in order to address the question being asked and it may be worth candidates practicing question techniques in order to ensure they are confident with strategies to respond to the specifics of a 20-mark question. Candidates do not need to include every element of content they have studied, but rather they should actively select what is an appropriate range of points and accurately utilise these for the specific direction of the question.

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