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Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

October 2017

Pearson Edexcel International GCE
In Psychology (WPS03)
Paper 3 Applications of Psychology

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General Comments

Candidate entry for the October series was very low, therefore a broad range of content and responses was not seen to the extent that would normally be the case in January and June examination series. Centres should remind candidates to clearly indicate the option they have chosen by including an 'x' in the option box in the relevant section of the exam paper.

Candidates showed good understanding of key terms and some theoretical concepts.

Difficulties tended to be in the long answer questions. Here, candidate responses were often limited to lower level mark bands as a result of limited understanding of specific content coupled with a lack of developed AO3 material. Few justified their arguments and evaluations, and very little supporting evidence was seen.

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 to demonstrate their ability to draw on their understanding of content and show how this would apply in each context.

Many candidates scored well 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 candidate 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, especially in scenario based questions.
- 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

Section A

Q01a

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 understanding and AO2 application question that required candidates to identify a relevant feature of Bowlby's maternal deprivation and apply this to the behaviour of Kareem. Most candidates were able to show understanding, however application to the scenario was limited, with few candidates making an accurate application to Kareem.

Q01b

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application question that required candidates to apply privation to the scenario of Mateus. Most candidates were able to show some understanding of Mateus having not had primary care givers as he is an orphan, but few candidates fully described this in relation to the scenario, with some giving generic responses.

Examiner Tip

With application questions, candidates should use their understanding in relation to the content of scenario they are given.

Q02a

Question Introduction

This was an AO3 question requiring candidates to draw a conclusion. Few candidates were able to do this, with most stating or describing the results rather than interpreting these and coming to a conclusion about what the results demonstrated.

Examiner Tip

When drawing a conclusion, candidates should be careful to the interpret data or information they have been provided with and come to a conclusion, rather than a statement of the results.

Q02b

Question Introduction

This question was an AO1 knowledge and understanding question that required candidates to define caregiver sensitivity. Most candidates achieved well on this question, giving accurate definitions.

Q02c

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application question where candidates were required to describe the research methodology of the procedure used in the scenario. Few candidates were able to identify that the method was a structured observation despite the cue that this was a scenario was a replication of the strange situation procedure.

Q02d

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question that required candidates to explain one reason why cross-cultural research is undertaken. Most candidates were able to identify a reason, but few exemplified or justified this reason.

Q03a

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 mathematical skills question where candidates were required to plot and label a bar chart. Most candidates achieved well on this question, being able to label, plot and give a clear title to their bar chart.

Q03b

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application skills question requiring candidates to give a strength of closed questionnaires in relation to the study given in the scenario. Candidates did not achieve highly on this question as a result of limited application to the scenario or misunderstanding of the research method that Claudio and Sasha used.

Q03c

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to give their improvement in relation to the scenario for AO2 application and to justify/exemplify this for AO3 skills. Candidates sometimes gave a weakness of the study in the scenario rather than giving an improvement. Where they did give an improvement, there was rarely exemplification of improvement. Some candidates gave generic responses about questionnaires without application to the study about employment and education.

Q04

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that evaluated Piaget's stages of cognitive and language development. Candidates did not always achieve well on this question, often giving AO1 understanding of Piaget but with limited AO3 evaluation of the points made. There was a lack of supporting or refuting evidence used and very few candidates evaluated Piaget by drawing on alternative explanations, such as Vygotsky. Some candidates were able to show relevance to society as a strength, but this was often presented as an assertion rather than with specific detail or with evidence. Concluding points were rarely evident, and many candidates presented their response without logical reasoning, failing to answer the question being asked.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should present exemplified evaluations and draw from a range of evidence or concepts to justify their points in extended essays. Logical chains of reasoning should be presented, rather than bullet pointed strengths and weaknesses, to show balanced arguments and they should draw to conclusions based on the evidence utilised in the response and in answer to the question presented.

Q05

Question Introduction

This question targeted the 'issues' requirements of the topic assessing the scientific nature of a study and drawing on units 1 and 2.

There was little balance in many of the arguments seen, often candidates suggested that the study was simply not scientific with limited evidence of why this was the case and few candidates were able to exemplify any points of evaluation about areas that could be considered scientific. Few candidates were able to draw on any understanding from units 1 and 2 in their responses to support their assessment that the study is scientific or non-scientific.

Judgements were not always evident, and many candidates presented their response without logical reasoning.

Examiner Tip

As outlined in the specification, an essay question on this paper will assess issues in psychology and draw upon prior understanding and skills from units 1 and 2. Limited use of examples, evidence, or methodological knowledge was seen in answers to this question. Candidates should review their unit 1 and unit 2 content as preparation for this question in order to demonstrate wider understanding of psychology.

Section B: Option 1

Q06

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application question. Candidates were required to draw from the scenario to make their AO2 point about self-fulfilling prophecy in relation to Ben. Few candidates fully applied their response to the scenario, often giving generic descriptions of the theory without reference to the material given in the question.

Examiner Tip

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

Q07a

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question. Most candidates did not exemplify their responses. Candidates quite often did not distinguish which participants they were discussing in their responses, and application to the scenario was often limited. Some candidates misunderstood the question and gave a positive and negative of the study, rather than the positive and negative effect of stress and trauma on recall.

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.

Q07b

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to describe why qualitative data was preferable to quantitative data in Donal's investigation to demonstrate AO2 application skills. Most candidates achieved some marks for this question, but many of the responses were not fully applied to the scenario and did not describe why this was preferable for the study of the effects of trauma and stress on recall. Few candidates addressed the question in full, often not describing why qualitative was preferable to quantitative data, but simply stating what it is or why it may be good to use.

Q08a

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question that required candidates to justify the conclusion they were given. Most candidates were able to use a relevant piece of data from the table, however few developed this to justify how it supported the conclusion, often simply giving the data without interpretation.

Examiner Tip

When using data to justify or explain the candidate should interpret the data in a meaningful way rather than copy the data from a given table or chart.

Q08b

Question Introduction

Similar to 8a, this was an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question that required candidates to justify the conclusion they were given. Most candidates were able to use a relevant piece of data from the table, however few developed this to justify how it supported the conclusion, often simply stating the data without any interpretation.

Q08c

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to describe an ethical consideration demonstrating their AO1 understanding of ethics. Most candidates were able to give an ethical consideration, but did not always develop this.

Q09

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that evaluates their chosen contemporary study. Many of the responses were able to demonstrate understanding of the study, although the AO3 development was limited in many answers and often it was not clearly linked to the study in question. Candidates did not always present logical, reasoned evaluations and many did not attempt to draw to conclusions during their arguments.

Examiner Tip

When evaluating studies, candidates should clearly demonstrate how their evaluation links to the study itself and avoid giving generic statements that could be applied to any number of studies.

Q10

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that assessed whether mock jury research was an effective way to research jury decision making. The responses seen were limited, often missing the requirements of the question to assess mock jury's as a research tool for investigating jury decision making. Limited supporting evidence or examples of mock jury research were seen in candidate answers.

Examiner Tip

When making an assessment, candidates are required to judge the topic and express their judgements through logical reasoning that can include evidence, theoretical concepts and/or methodological features.

Section B: Option 2

Q11

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application question. Candidates were required to draw from the scenario to make their AO2 point about one physiological response to the accident given in 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.

Q12a

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 positive and negative effects of social support systems. Some candidates were not able to identify the positive and negative effects.

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.

Q12b

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to describe why qualitative data was preferable to quantitative data in Alain's investigation to demonstrate AO2 application skills. Many of the responses were not applied to the scenario and did not describe why this was preferable for the study of the effects of social support systems and stress. Few candidates addressed the question in full, often not describing why qualitative was preferable *to* quantitative data, but simply stating what it is or why it may be good to use.

Q13a

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question that required candidates to justify the conclusion they were given. Some candidates were able to use a relevant piece of data from the table, however few developed this to justify how it supported the conclusion, often simply giving the data without interpretation.

Examiner Tip

When using data to justify or explain the candidate should interpret the data in a meaningful way rather than copy the data from a given table or chart.

Q13b

Question Introduction

Similar to 13a, this was an AO2 application and AO3 exemplification/justification question that required candidates to justify the conclusion they were given. Some candidates were able to use a relevant piece of data from the table, however few developed this to justify how it supported the conclusion, often simply stating the data without any interpretation.

Q13c

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to describe an ethical consideration demonstrating their AO1 understanding of ethics. Most candidates were able to give an ethical consideration, but did not always develop this.

Q14

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that evaluates their chosen contemporary study. Many of the responses were able to demonstrate understanding of the study, although the AO3 development was limited in many answers and often it was not clearly linked to the study in question. Candidates did not always present logical, reasoned evaluations and many did not attempt to draw to conclusions during their arguments.

Examiner Tip

When evaluating studies, candidates should clearly demonstrate how their evaluation links to the study itself and avoid giving generic statements that could be applied to any number of studies.

Q15

Question Introduction

This is an extended open response question requiring candidates to present a written essay that assessed whether type A personality was a negative factor in stress. The responses seen were limited, often missing the requirements of the question to assess whether (or not) type a personality was negative. Limited evidence of research or alternative concepts was seen in candidate answers.

Examiner Tip

When making an assessment, candidates are required to judge the topic and express their judgements through logical reasoning that can include evidence, theoretical concepts and/or methodological features.

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