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# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2018

Pearson Edexcel International GCE  
In Psychology (WPS04)

Paper 4: Clinical Psychology and  
Psychological Skills

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## **General Comments**

There were limited entries for this January series, however of those seen most candidates attempted all elements of this paper with few candidates leaving questions blank, demonstrating skills in examination timing. Candidate responses demonstrated some good knowledge and understanding across clinical psychology and in psychological skills.

Candidates showed good understanding in terms of their knowledge about drug treatments and psychology as a science, although the evaluative skills did not always follow, and many extended essays were under developed in terms of evaluations that were either not logical, gave limited arguments or lacked evidenced points.

Application for AO2 responses was an area that posed problems for most 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.

Significant difficulties tended to be in the responses about the practical investigation. This often resulted in low grades as candidates had not completed a content analysis about attitudes to mental health as directed in the specification. It is with concern that there were some unethical practical investigations given here. Centres are reminded to revisit the specification content for guidance on the method and nature of the practical investigation and ensure all practical investigations adhere to ethical requirements.

## **Paper Summary**

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

- Centres should review the requirements for practical investigations.
- Candidates should develop skills in understanding 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 assess and evaluate in extended open response questions.
- Candidates should practice the skills of apply their understanding of psychology to the context of a given scenario.
- Generic and non-specific points should be avoided, candidates should be able to give specific responses that are clearly linked to the question content, for example when explaining a weakness of study it should be explicit how the point made by a candidate relates to the study itself.
- 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.

- 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.

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

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### **Sections A and B: Clinical Psychology**

#### **Q01a**

##### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question requiring candidates to explain two strengths of the study by Suzuki et al (2014).

There were some good examples of AO1 understanding of the study, where specific, clear and accurate information about the study was seen. Where some candidates did not achieve well this was often due to non-specific responses that could apply to multiple studies, or where the AO3 justification/exemplification contained basic statements such as 'strong ecological validity' without development.

#### **Q01b**

##### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question requiring candidates to explain one weakness of the study by Suzuki et al (2014).

There were some good examples of AO1 understanding of the study, where specific, clear and accurate information about the study was seen. Where some candidates did not achieve well this was often due to inaccurate responses that could apply to multiple studies, or where the AO3 justification/exemplification contained basic statements such as 'low generalisability' without development.

##### **Examiner Tip**

When giving strengths or weaknesses of a study, candidates should be clear that their points are specific to the study in the question, rather than non-specific points that could be applied to other studies in psychology.

#### **Q02a**

##### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 justification/exemplification question requiring candidates to explain one weakness of using failure to function adequately to determine abnormality. Few candidates were able to exemplify or justify their weakness here. Many gave the AO1 point of cultural differences but did not then continue to expand to show how or why this weakness the process of using failure to function to determine

abnormality. Some candidates gave generic responses that did not demonstrate understanding of this content.

### **Examiner Tip**

Candidates should be specific in their answers to clearly show their understanding of the specification content being assessed in the question.

### **Q02b**

#### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO2 application and AO3 justification question requiring candidates to justify whether John's behaviour is abnormal by using a characteristic from Rosenhan and Seligman's (1989) failure to function adequately. In this question candidates could justify either way (abnormal or not abnormal). Application to the stimulus material of John's behaviour was often missing in candidate responses. Those who did achieve well were able to give an appropriate characteristic, most commonly vivid/unconventional was used in connection with green hair and tattoos, however many candidates could not then justify their decision about whether John's behaviour could be considered abnormal or not.

### **Examiner Tip**

Where a question directs a candidate to give a response in relation to a specified scenario, they should be explicit in presenting a response that demonstrates an application of their underpinning knowledge and understanding to the scenario. A name is not sufficient as application of knowledge and understanding of a concept.

### **Q03a**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question was a mathematical AO2 skill requiring candidates to calculate the total number of siblings without schizophrenic symptoms by converting 25% of 1000 (500 pairs of siblings) to a number. Some candidates gave 25% of 500, and centres are directed to remind candidates to read the questions and stimulus material with care.

### **Q03b**

#### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO2 mathematical question requiring candidates to plot and label a bar chart from the data they were provided with. Some candidates were unable to give a suitable title and some candidates did not label their axis, limiting their achievement in this question. There were a few candidates who plotted converted data, with bars for number of siblings with schizophrenic symptoms present as opposed to the percentage of siblings from Table 1. These were often plotted inaccurately due to incorrect calculations of the percentage of total

siblings (1000), however, where this was plotted from a correct calculation or were plotted as the number of pairs of siblings, credit was given.

### **Examiner Tip**

Candidates should give an appropriate title and remember to label their charts. Bars in a bar chart should be distinct from each other for discrete data.

### **Q03c**

#### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO2 and AO3 question where candidates were required to use the data to give a conclusion. Many candidates were able to draw from the data for their AO2 credit, however a number of candidates continued to describe the results rather than giving a conclusion about what the data suggested about siblings and schizophrenia. Conclusions about genetic predisposition were often seen, although not all of these were linked to the scenario about siblings with a family history or the data in Table 1.

### **Examiner Tip**

Candidates should make judgements about what the results of a study show about the topic area being investigated when giving a conclusion.

## **Q03d**

### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to give a one-tailed (directional) fully operationalised hypothesis for the research scenario. Some students gave a two-tailed, non-directional or correlational hypothesis for this question, often stating that there will be a difference between siblings and symptoms of schizophrenia. Some students did not fully operationalise DV for their hypothesis and a larger proportion of candidates did not operationalise their IV.

### **Examiner Tip**

Candidates should fully operationalise an IV and a DV when asked to provide a hypothesis. The IV should always contain both elements of the variable being manipulated.

## **Q04**

### **Question Introduction**

Candidates were required to calculate a Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for two marks. Most candidates were able to substitute into the equation. Some candidates did not give their responses to two decimal places as instructed in the question.

### **Examiner Tip**

Candidates should always pay close attention to all instructions in a question, for example 'You must show your calculations by substituting into the formula' and 'Express your answer to two decimal places' are designed to direct the candidates and aid them in their answers.

## **Q05**

### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 exemplification/justification question where candidates were required to explain one strength and one weakness of a biological explanation of their chosen mental health disorder. Some candidates achieved well here. Where marks were limited, candidates often gave strengths and/or weaknesses of drug treatments rather than the biological explanations of their chosen disorder.

## **Q06a**

### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO2 question requiring the candidates to state the aim from the practical investigation in clinical psychology. Aims must relate to the directed clinical practical of a content analysis that explores attitudes to mental health. Most candidates were able to give the aim, although some candidates had not completed the content analysis practical as directed by the specification, of which some were unethical or inappropriate for students.



## **Q06b**

### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO2 question requiring the candidates to describe the results from their clinical practical investigation. Results must relate to the directed clinical practical of a content analysis that explores attitudes to mental health. Some candidates were able to explain their results with reference to both qualitative and quantitative data and achieved well here. Some candidates had not completed the content analysis practical as directed by the specification, of which some were unethical or inappropriate for students.

## **Q06c**

### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO2 and AO3 question requiring the candidates to explain one weakness of the methodology of a content analysis used in their clinical practical investigation. The weakness must relate to the directed clinical practical of a content analysis that explores attitudes to mental health. Some candidates gave general weaknesses of content analysis and did not link this to their own practical investigation. Some candidates had not completed the content analysis practical as directed by the specification, of which some were unethical or inappropriate for students.

### **Examiner Tip**

Centres are reminded that the practical investigation must adhere to ethical principles in both content and intention. It should also follow the methodological requirements of a content analysis. Candidates should not be investigating patients or individuals with diagnosed mental health conditions but instead conducting an analysis of sources in order to explore attitudes to mental health using secondary data as directed by the specification.

## **Q07**

### **Question Introduction**

This question was an extended open response question for 16-marks assessed using the levels based marking criteria. The question required candidates to evaluate the effectiveness of drug and family therapies in the treatment of schizophrenia.

Some of the responses did not engage with the taxonomy of 'evaluate' and in these cases candidates often presented some knowledge and understanding of two therapies without evaluating these in terms of the effectiveness of either therapy.

Several candidates presented two distinct essays, one half about drug treatments and another half about family therapy, without connecting the two or engaging in arguments about effectiveness. This did not always give rise to logical chains of reasoning, instead presenting disjointed content.

Few candidates have attempted evaluations in their responses, some commented that there was 'evidence to show' without giving any actual psychological supporting evidence. At the lower end of candidate responses, it was common to see candidates giving side effects as a weakness of drug treatment, but this was rarely linked to effectiveness. Equally, some candidates noted the time and commitment for family therapy, but again did not link this to effectiveness.

Concluding points were not always evident either throughout or at the end, and many candidates presented their response without logical reasoning or understanding of competing arguments when attempting this question presented.

**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 competing arguments, and these should draw to conclusions or judgements based on the evidence they have utilised in the response and in answer to the specific features of the question presented.

## **Sections C, D and E: Psychological Skills**

### **Q08a**

#### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 exemplification/justification question that required candidates to explain two weaknesses of using case studies of brain damaged patients to investigate human memory. Some candidates gave weakness of the case study method or of brain damage without any exemplification to human memory, sometimes giving examples such as Little Hans rather than memory examples. A few candidates discussed case studies such as HM but linked this to brain damage, medical operations, and/or brain functions, rather than memory.

#### **Examiner Tip**

Candidates should utilise the prompts within a question to aid the direction of their answers and ensure their response is linked to the question being asked.

### **Q08b**

#### **Question Introduction**

This is an AO3 question requiring candidates to justify the use of brain scanning/neuroimaging as a way to increase the credibility of case studies of brain damaged patients. Candidates sometimes gave a generic strength of brain scanning/neuroimaging but missed the link to how this would increase the credibility of case studies.

#### **Examiner Tip**

Candidates should review the taxonomy words and have a clear understanding of how these underpin the requirements of a question.

### **Q08c**

#### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding question asking candidates to describe one difference between PET brain scanning and fMRI brain imaging. Most candidates were able to achieve well on this question, giving an accurate difference between the two.

### **Q08d**

#### **Question Introduction**

This question required candidates to describe how Caleb could use a laboratory experimental method to test rehearsal. Most candidates achieved well here and were able to give accurate content about how this could be achieved. Where

candidates did not achieve well, they often gave generic responses about a laboratory method without making the link to Caleb testing rehearsal.

### **Q09a**

#### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO1 knowledge question requiring candidates to define participant observation. Most candidates were able to define this accurately, although some referred to researchers being part of experiments rather than observational situations. A few definitions of covert observation were seen in answer to this question. Some generic definitions of an observation were seen.

### **Q09b**

#### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO1 knowledge question requiring candidates to define structured observation. Most candidates were able to define this, however some gave responses that apply to all observational research and did not give any distinguishing features of a structured observation.

### **Q09c**

#### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 exemplification/justification question requiring candidates to analyse the use of covert observations when investigating socially sensitive topics in psychology. Some candidates were able to analyse covert observation in the context of the socially sensitive topics suggested, with good examples seen in links to prejudice and social desirability and mental health and vulnerability/ethics. Many candidates gave generic strengths or weaknesses of covert observations without any analysis nor link to topics in psychology.

### **Q09d**

#### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO2 mathematical question where candidates were required to identify from the data table the level of measurement for the data. Most candidates could not identify nominal data, commonly seen inaccurate responses included tallying and interval data.

### **Q09e(i)**

#### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO2 mathematical calculation of the range for the data given. Candidates performed well here, and most were able to calculate the range.

## **Q09e(ii)**

### **Question Introduction**

This was an AO2 mathematical application question where knowledge and understanding of why the range may not be a useful measure of dispersion was applied to the data in the category of 'plays alone'. Few candidates were able to draw from the data in response to the question, with many giving a generic weakness of the range or stating why standard deviation was better.

## **Q10**

### **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 can approach this question using any relevant and accurate aspect of their psychology course content.

Overall, candidates struggled to select appropriate theory/concepts/research relevant to the key question of whether memory can be manipulated to create false memories of events. Overemphasis on reconstructive memory was often seen without reference to other theories or concepts, such as psychodynamic. Some candidates were able to apply their understanding to the scenario, but often this was 'copied' content rather than developed from the scenario.

Some candidates discussed eyewitness testimony and weapon focus, rather than a focus on the question of whether memory can be manipulated and false memories. Some were limited in their ability to use their understanding from their studies across psychology topics to the novel context of the key question.

Several candidates did not discuss the key question presented, instead giving disjointed points that they did not link to whether false memory can be created of events.

### **Examiner Tip**

The use of understanding from across the course should be evident in their discussions of the key question presented. Candidates should avoid replicating the stimulus material word for word in an answer as this does not show their understanding or application of material to the novel context.

## **Q11**

### **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 psychology as a science. The question required candidates to demonstrate AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 assessment points to assess the claim that psychology is a science.

Some candidates responded well to this question, although for the most part many candidates were unable to assess the debate and gave responses that showed knowledge and understanding of examples in psychology that demonstrated science or non-science, as opposed to an assessment of whether it is or is not a science. Some candidates did not attempt this question.

Most candidates found this question challenging, and their argument was often presented as a range of scientific studies, occasionally referencing why they were scientific. This was sometimes followed by non-scientific studies and why they were non-scientific with no judgements of how these thus lend themselves to the assessment of whether psychology is a science. Evidently, a few candidates were unsure of the assess taxonomy essay question.

There was little use of theory from across the course, and the over emphasis on studies led to the exclusion of non/scientific methodology and non/scientific approaches, little evidence was seen of issues such as objectivity/subjectivity, reliability/validity or quantitative/ qualitative; therefore, assessments and judgements were often limited.

### **Examiner Tip**

Candidates do not need to include every element of content they have studied, but rather they should actively select an appropriate range of points and accurately utilise these to respond to the question. Candidates should practice question techniques in order to ensure they are confident with strategies to respond to the specifics of a 20-mark question. Centres are directed to the levels based marking guidance on the website in order to aid candidates with the requirements of the three taxonomy words that can be used for 20-marks.



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