



Pearson

Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Psychology (WPS01) Paper 1
Social & Cognitive Psychology

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General Comments

All questions were attempted. There were very few blank responses in this paper, demonstrating that the candidates have good awareness both of exam skills, and timing under exam conditions.

The mathematical assessment questions were generally answered well, but candidates must ensure that they can define some of the concepts. In questions where there is a scenario it is important to take as much information from this as possible. Many candidates engaged with the scenarios in several of the questions, and attempted to link their responses back to the given context. This has to be more in-depth than just using a name. Thus generic responses were still a significant issue and candidates should be encouraged to apply their knowledge, and understanding, fully to the scenario.

Candidates showed equal levels of ability across both parts of the paper. Strengths and weaknesses were not attempted well and generic answers were often given. In the essay questions, only a very few candidates were confident with justification of evidence, and building up logical chains of reasoning to support a balanced conclusion. As in previous series, candidates would find it helpful to analyse the different command terms, and recognise how they should approach that type of question.

Questions about the practical investigations are often challenging and this was no exception. A surprising number of candidates are not sure which practical belongs to which approach. They should be able to write about any aspect of their practical.

Paper Summary

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

- Candidates should identify clear strengths and weaknesses of theories and studies.
- Candidates should be able to justify why a strength is a strength.
- Candidates must read a question carefully so that they answer the question asked.
- Candidates should avoid generic statements and try to make specific points.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Q1(a)

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding question which required a description of the procedure of Moscovici's experiment. Most candidates attempted this question confidently and it largely produced clear answers. The study was known in good detail, often including the number of slides, and many achieved full marks. Candidates wasted time if they added aims or results as only the procedure was credited. This emphasises the importance of reading the question carefully. Whilst the study was generally well known there were some recurring mistakes. There was considerable confusion over whether the slides were blue or green, the number of confederates and exactly what happened in the inconsistent / consistent conditions.

Q1(b)

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 identification and an AO3 justification/exemplification question. The candidates were required to give a strength and weakness of Moscovici's experiment. Many candidates identified an appropriate weakness. A popular answer was that the sample was all female. Fewer candidates said why this is a weakness, failing to link their response to generalisability or population validity. Generally, candidates struggled to identify a strength. Any attempt tended to be a generic response for a laboratory experiment.

Examiner Tip

Make sure that strength and weakness are made specific to a study.

Q2(a)

Question Introduction

There are three application marks for drawing the graph of the data in the scenario. Responses largely showed accurate plotting of the bars, although in a few cases the bars were not discrete. Labelling of the axes was good but there was a tendency to make the labels too concise, for example, Condition A alone is not enough. The title was poorly expressed in many cases and too vague for credit.

Q2(b)

Question Introduction.

There was an A01 knowledge and understanding mark and an A03 Justification mark. Candidates knew what the median was, and were able to describe it adequately. Few went on to consider a strength of using the median, and thus did not answer the question. A frequent comment was that the median does not take extreme scores into consideration, but this was not expanded.

Examiner Tip

Candidates must ensure that they read the question carefully and ensure that they answer the question asked.

Q2(c)

Question Introduction

Although some candidates had knowledge of what qualitative data is, and could outline a strength or weakness, the responses were mostly generic. As a result they did not relate to Michelle's collection of data about obedience and authority figures in particular.

Q2(d)

Question Introduction

Candidates scored well on this question and were able to define quantitative data in a simple way, which gained credit. Elaboration was not successful as there was often an unexplained link to closed questions.

Q3

Question Introduction

This is an evaluate question which has four A01 knowledge and understanding marks, and four A03 exemplification marks. As it is a levels-based assessment there is equal emphasis on A01 and A03. It was a very accessible question. Many candidates began by identifying and describing the autonomous and agentic states. Some gave good examples from real life applications, such as Nazi soldiers or My Lai massacre. Occasionally the concept of moral strain was developed, although this also led to some muddled accounts. A selection of Milgram's research was used to illustrate points about Agency Theory. More confident candidates tended to include an alternate theory, such as Social Power, and compare the two theories as explanations of obedience. Discussion of authoritarian personality was also offered as elaboration for the higher levels. The more able candidates made judgements about how well these theories actually explained the concept of obedience.

Cognitive Psychology

Q4(a)

Question Introduction

There are two AO2 marks here which requires application, so the answer must be about the candidate's cognitive practical. Most identified a simple DV which clearly showed a measurement. Some responses gave an aim instead, and a significant number identified a social practical.

Examiner Tip

Practice answering questions about your practical investigation.

Q4(b)

Question Introduction

There are three AO2 marks for this question, and the answers must refer to the candidate's own cognitive practical. The results were often vague, with few responses including figures or mentioning a statistical test. It was not always obvious that the design was repeated measures. The best responses included mean scores, and a clear comparison between the conditions being recorded. The results from Learning investigations were used in a few cases.

Q4(c)

Question Introduction

There were two AO2 marks for describing one control from the cognitive practical. Candidates showed a good understanding of controls although their responses were often quite brief.

Examiner Tip

Look at the mark allocation for the level of detail required in your answer.

Q5(a)

Question Introduction

There is just one AO1 knowledge and understanding mark, which is awarded for an accurate result from Schmolck's study. Generally this question was answered confidently, with most candidates demonstrating a solid knowledge. This is a complicated study and there are a considerable number of results. Some candidates displayed sophisticated knowledge, whilst others expressed the findings in too generic a manner. A popular response was the HF group got the

best results. This would need to include the other groups, and from which part of the experiment the results were taken to gain credit.

Q5(b)

Question Introduction

There are two AO1 knowledge and understanding marks, and two AO3 justification marks for this question. Candidates struggled to identify a strength of this study, suggesting that they did not know the study in sufficient depth. Many responses were generic and underdeveloped. A weakness appeared more easily identified with candidates talking about the small sample, but this was not linked to specific brain damage.

Examiner Tip

Remember to identify a strength, and then state why that strength is a strength

Q6(a)

Question Introduction

There were two application marks for this question, which had to relate to the scenario. Candidates were required to write a non-directional null hypothesis. There was a general lack of understanding of a non-directional hypothesis, and when it was combined with a null hypothesis it proved very challenging. The majority of answers used a directional hypothesis. A few candidates recognised that it should be a null. There was insufficient detail for two marks, as both variables were not elaborated. Any hypothesis should be fully operationalised.

Q6(b)

Question Introduction

There is an A02 application mark, so the response must relate to the scenario, and an A03 justification mark. Although many candidates mentioned Horatio, they did not relate their response to the scenario. There was understanding of some of the weaknesses of a volunteer sample, but it was not explained well.

Q6(c)

Question Introduction

This question has one A01 mark for description. Most candidates could identify that nominal data is in categories. This was just enough for the mark, but it would have been encouraging to see terms such as discrete data in the responses.

Q6(d)

Question Introduction

This question looked at mathematical skills. It was a simple calculation and most candidates attempted it confidently and achieved the mark.

Q6(e)

Question Introduction

This question has an AO2 application mark. Candidates are required to give a conclusion for the experiment discussed in the scenario. Most responses included a result, rather than a conclusion. It is important to note that there is only a very small difference.

Q7

Question Introduction

This question was an 8 mark open response question, which was assessed using the levels based marking criteria. The candidate was expected to evaluate reconstructive memory. Candidates were very confident with Bartlett's study, and there were many responses which did not gain credit because they only evaluated the study, and not the theory. Some candidates based most of their answer around the study, but did include some elements of the theory such as schema and 'effort after meaning'. The most able candidates described the features of the theory, and then used a variety of research evidence in support. Real life applications were also used to good effect.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should make sure that they can describe and evaluate a theory.

Section C

Q8

Question Introduction

This question was a 12-mark open response question, which was assessed using the levels based marking criteria. It is important to note that there is an AO1/AO2, and AO3 response required. Thus candidates were expected to give equal emphasis to: knowledge and understanding, application to the context, and justification in this answer. Candidates can approach this type of question in many different ways.

Most candidates could give a basic difference between a laboratory and a field experiment. Knowledge of laboratory experiments was more confidently expressed. A few candidates still think that a field experiment takes place in the field. There is also the belief that participants are unaware that they are taking part in a field experiment. The most popular discussion point was the fact that the lab experiment is in an artificial situation. Candidates were aware that they should link their responses to the scenario, and they made a real effort to do so; however, the points made were repetitive. A03 points circled around the idea of low ecological validity for a lab, and high ecological validity for a field. A few candidates included some good points about ethics. To achieve the higher marking levels candidates had to include some logical chains of reasoning, and reach a balanced conclusion. Many attempted a conclusion but it was rarely supported, although the question lent itself to a competing argument and candidates had a good grasp of this. Overall candidates found this a challenging question and it was difficult to apply their theoretical knowledge to this scenario.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should include more relevant A03 points in the longer essay questions.