



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

October 2019

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Subsidiary In Psychology (WPS04)
Paper 1: Clinical Psychology and
Psychological Skills

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General Comments

Candidate entry for the October 2019 series saw a slight increase on the October 2018 series and as such the range of responses provided a slightly wider distribution to this previous cohort entry.

Across the paper, candidates showed good understanding of key terms and some theoretical concepts. There was some good understanding of neurotransmitters, Rosenhan and Suzuki et al. (2014).

Difficulties tended to be in the long answer questions 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 material was seen in the 20-mark essay.

Application for AO2 responses was improved in some candidates, however it remains an area that posed problems with some candidates giving generic responses rather than applying their knowledge to the stimulus material they are presented with.

Finally, there was evidence of unethical practical this series. Centres are reminded that candidates must conduct a content analysis for clinical psychology to meet the specification requirements, and that all practical investigations must adhere to ethical practice.

Paper Summary

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

- Practical investigations must meet the requirements of the specification, and candidates should conduct a content analysis on secondary sources.
- Within their extended open responses, candidates should give balanced arguments and exemplified points which lead to making informed conclusions or judgements (where appropriate to the taxonomy used) in relation to the question content.
- 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.
- 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 review the taxonomy expectations within the specification to aid them in understanding the key requirements of the questions and the distinctions between these.
- In the unseen 'key question' essay, candidates should apply their understanding of psychology from the course to the context in the given scenario, they should not just copy the information they are presented with as this is insufficient to show application of their knowledge and understanding.

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Sections A and B: Clinical Psychology

Question 01a

Question Introduction

This question assessed knowledge and understanding of 'disordered thinking' as a symptom of schizophrenia. Most candidates were able to achieve one mark here, some achieved both marks for a detailed description.

Question 01b

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to explain the function of neurotransmitters as an explanation of schizophrenia. Some candidates achieved well here, but many did not justify or exemplify their points to demonstrate the AO3 requirements in their answer. Often the answer was a description of neurotransmitter functioning linked to Dopamine or Glutamate but limited in the justification to show how or why the neurotransmitter was involved in schizophrenia.

Question 01c

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to explain two ways that family therapy can help patients with schizophrenia in their recovery. Few candidates achieved the available marks here, with many responses being limited in the knowledge and understanding of family therapy, often giving simplistic statements that 'family can help an individual' without the understanding of family therapy itself. Candidates would benefit from a stronger focus on the therapeutic intervention rather than the role of a family in general.

Question 02

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to describe the procedure used by Rosenhan (1973). Many achieved well here, but where errors were seen it was misunderstandings of the procedure, for example few candidates went beyond the procedure of the initial admission to the ward to describe the pseudo-patient covert participant observational aspect of this study. There was also confusion with the requirement of the question, often giving the results and conclusions of the study.

Examiner Tip

Where a question asks for a specific component of a study, such as procedure or results, candidates are only required to give that specific component in their answer.

Question 03

Question Introduction

This question required an explanation of two strengths of using failure to function adequately to determine whether Bryony's behaviour is abnormal. This required AO2 and

AO3 content as indicated by the link in the question to Bryony and the 'explain' taxonomy that answers should have exemplification or justification. Some candidates were able to apply their understanding to the stimulus to achieve some AO2 marks, but few justified or exemplified their response to show how or why their point was a strength or failure to function adequately.

Question 04

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to describe a procedure that Andreas could use to conduct a randomised controlled trial to investigate drug treatment for schizophrenia. Some candidates understood the basic principles of a randomised controlled trial, however a number of candidates were unclear of this particular methodology and how it would be conducted.

Question 05

Question Introduction

Most candidates were unable to explain two ways the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) guidelines help regulate professional practice. Candidates very rarely demonstrated understanding of the HCPC guidelines, often using the BPS ethical code of conduct. It appeared that most of the candidates did not understand that the HCPC related to clinical practice, many believing it was associated with research, and so were unable to exemplify how this links to professional practice.

Question 06

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to explain two improvements that they could make to their practical investigation in clinical psychology. Many responses related to unethical practical investigations, such as interviews with patients in hospital wards who are diagnosed with schizophrenia. The specification states the requirements of the clinical practical, and centres are reminded to meet the requirements of the specification.

Examiner Tip

8.4.1 One practical research exercise to gather data relevant to topics covered in clinical psychology - a content analysis that explores attitudes to mental health. This practical research exercise must adhere to ethical principles in both content and intention.

In conducting the practical research exercise, students must:

- perform a content analysis
- analyse at least two sources such as radio interviews, newspapers, magazines) to compare attitudes towards mental health.
- make design decisions when planning and gathering sources for a content analysis, including credibility of secondary data, ethical considerations, controls and reliability.
- collect, present and comment on sources gathered.
- consider strengths and weaknesses of a content analysis and possible design improvements.
- complete the procedure, results and discussion section of a report.

Question 07

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 contemporary study by Suzuki et al. (2014).

Some of the responses did not engage with the taxonomy of 'evaluate' and in these cases candidates often presented some good knowledge and understanding of the study by Suzuki et al. (2014). A few candidates presented knowledge and understanding of a study other than the named contemporary study by Suzuki et al. (2014).

Most candidates have attempted evaluations in their responses, however some presented undeveloped AO3 in their strengths and weaknesses, for example 'so it is valid' without giving any depth and detail about what is valid, why it is valid, the nature of the validity being discussed and so on.

At the lower level, candidate responses contained inaccuracies regarding the study, and were limited in the depth and detail presented.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should present exemplified strengths and weaknesses that are clearly related to the study. Logical chains of reasoning should be presented to show competing points, and these should draw to conclusions or judgements based on the balance of evaluation they have utilised in the response.

Sections C, D and E: Psychological Skills

Question 08a

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to identify the experimental/research design used by Marco in his investigation. Some candidates identified this as an independent groups design, but many gave a research method, such as observation, or a sampling method, such as opportunity.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should ensure they are able to distinguish between a design and method.

Question 08b

Question Introduction

This was an AO2 and AO3 question. Candidates were required to explain one strength of the sampling technique used by Marco in his investigation about employees helping each other at work. Some candidates gave generic responses here and could not access the

marks available as they did not apply their strength to the scenario. Where a strength was appropriately identified and linked to the scenario, candidates were often unable to exemplify or justify why this was a strength.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should practice application skills. Where the question clearly directs candidates to the scenario, the response a candidate gives should be in relation to the scenario in order to answer the question, in this case about Marco using random sampling of the employees in his workplace for his investigation.

Question 08c

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to explain two weaknesses, other than ethical issues, of Marco's investigation about employees helping each other at work. Where candidates achieved well they applied the weakness to his investigation in the stimulus material. It remained that there was some difficulty in the exemplification of the answers for the AO3 marks. Where they achieved less well, candidates gave generic weaknesses.

Question 09a

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to suggest why Kathryn chose to use a correlation research method for her investigation instead of a longitudinal method. Application was again weak in some responses, with candidates not applying their understanding of the methods to Kathryn's choice in her investigation. A few candidates did not engage with the direction of the question to say why Kathryn made her choice of correlation method, instead simplistically describing what Kathryn did in her investigation.

Question 09b

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to explain one weakness of Kathryn using a correlation research method for her investigation. Most candidates were aware that a correlation fails to find cause and effect, but few applied this to Kathryn's investigation. AO3 exemplification and justification of why or how this was a weakness was rarely seen.

Question 09c

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to describe why Kathryn would use Spearman's rank to test the significance of the data she gathered from the adult prisoners. Very few candidates were able to respond accurately to this question. Many stated she was looking for a difference, despite the stimulus and preceding questions indicating it was a correlation study. Few understood the level of measurement required for this statistical test. Some stated it was to test the significance of her data, which was given in the question.

Examiner Tip

Candidates could improve their mathematical understanding in terms of being able to give the reasons why a statistical test would be chosen by a researcher.

Question 10a

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to calculate the percentage of students who did not complete the questionnaire. Most candidates were able to give a percentage to two decimal places.

Question 10b

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to calculate the ratio of students with more friends studying the same subject to those having more friends studying a different subject. Most candidates were able to give the ratio in the lowest form.

Question 10c

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to draw a bar chart to represent the data given to them in Table 1. Most candidates were able to draw an appropriate bar chart for the discrete data given to them. A few were able to label this chart and give an appropriate title. A minority of candidates did not draw a bar chart, errors were seen with candidates drawing a histogram or a line graph.

Question 10d

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to explain, with reference to the data in Table 1, one conclusion Daisy could make about college students' friendship groups. Some candidates were able to use the data to give a conclusion. Most candidates however simply gave the data without developing this to make a conclusion about the college student friendship groups.

Question 11

Question Introduction

This was a discuss AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO2 application question that required candidates to discuss the key question of whether direct interventions to improve working memory can help children with dyslexia. They should 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 cognitive psychology and some developed this with links to theories of language.

Overall, some 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. Some candidates were able to apply some of their understanding to the scenario given that underpins the key question.

Many candidates discussed cognitive psychology, but were limited in their ability to show their AO1 understanding, although application skills to the novel context of the key question have improved. Fewer candidates engaged with content from the biological approach from the cue in the stimulus material, however a number used their understanding of language development to present an answer to the question.

It remained that a few candidates copied large chunks from the scenario rather than engaging with this and developing their answer to show how their understanding from their course can be connected to the stimulus material.

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 and not simply 'copy' from the material presented to them.

Question 12

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 the importance of the practical issues that psychologists should consider in the design and implementation of research. The question required candidates to demonstrate AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO3 assessment points about the practical issues that should be considered.

A few candidates responded well to this question, although for the most part many candidates were unable to give assessment in their responses and gave a response that was more knowledge of practical issues to consider, as opposed to an assessment, for example of the impact of these, the balance between the practical considerations and research choices or the limitations these practical issues can place on researchers.

Most responses included considerations of reliability, validity, generalisability and ethics, but few developed their understanding beyond these points to show what practical issues should be considered in order to achieve and balance these considerations in research.

There was a limited use of research in many responses to exemplify where considerations of practical issues were evident, for the most part the candidates described a piece of research but did not make it clear how this related to the choices in research about practical issues.

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 describe 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 taxonomy.

The LBMS weighting in 20-mark questions is heavier to AO3 content, therefore the focus of candidates should be the taxonomy used, for example Evaluate, Assess or To what extent? As opposed to the AO1 underpinning knowledge and understanding.