



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

October 2020

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Subsidiary

In Psychology (WPS02/01).

Paper 1: Biological Psychology, Learning
Theories and Development

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Biological psychology

1a. Most candidates were able to accurately name the area of the brain that was indicated on the diagram.

1b. Candidates had to identify a weakness of brain structure for the AO1 mark and then justify/exemplify their answer for the AO3 mark. The most common weakness was the use of another explanation to show how brain structure was not a complete explanation of aggression. The best answers were able to do this and gain all the marks available for the question. Some answers were able to identify the weakness but then failed to justify/exemplify why it was a weakness. Some answers described the role of brain functioning in aggression, rather than explain a weakness.

2a. The best answers were able to give a non-directional hypothesis that fully operationalised both the independent variable and the dependent variable. Quite a few answers were able to give a partially operationalised variable but failed to operationalise both variables. Some answers gave a directional hypothesis when the question asked for a non-directional hypothesis.

Candidates should read the question carefully, so they answer the question that is asked.

2b. This question required candidates to explain a strength and a weakness of fMRI scans in relation to the scenario given. The very best answers were able to identify the strength and the weakness with a clear link to the scenario and then go on to justify/exemplify these. Others could identify the strength and weakness in relation to the scenario but failed to justify/exemplify them. A lot of answers were generic and did not link to the given scenario.

Candidates should ensure there are clear links to given scenarios, and not just insert the name from the scenario or give generic answers.

2c. Those candidates who knew how to use the statistics and formula table were able to gain both marks by correctly identifying whether there was a significant difference or not, and then using the critical value from the table and the calculated value to justify/exemplify this. However, there were a lot of blank answers for this question.

3a. McDermott (2008) was the most popular study for this question. For both McDermott (2008) and Hoefelmann et al. (2006) the best answers were able to accurately describe four results from the chosen study and give accurate figures. Some answers did not give enough descriptive points to gain all the marks. The answer should have been focused on the results, and most of them were, though some did include the aims of the study at the start of the answer, which was not creditworthy. A very small minority of the answers gave the results for a different study.

3b. Candidates had to identify a strength and weakness of their chosen study and then justify/exemplify them to gain the AO1 and AO3 marks. The best answers were able to do this with clear links to details from their chosen study. Some answers failed to exemplify the strength and/or weakness so did not gain the AO3 mark. The weakest answers were generic and could have been about several different studies rather than their specific chosen study.

Candidates should ensure that when asked to explain a strength and/or weakness they justify or exemplify their answer.

4a. Candidates were asked to describe how a stratified sample could be gathered in relation to the scenario. The best answers were able to do this, with the most common method mentioned being splitting the business up into job types. Some answers showed there was not a clear understanding of what a stratified sampling method was, with some describing other sampling methods. Some answers were generic and did not link to the given scenario.

4b. The most common improvement was to gather the sample from more businesses. Whilst most answers were able to identify an improvement a significant amount did not go on to justify/exemplify why this would be an improvement. A lot of answers wrote about a weakness of the sample used rather than focus on the improvement.

4c. The best answers were able to use the two figures given and state why there was not a normal distribution. A lot of answers were generic and not linked to the scenario, and some answers showed little understanding of why the distribution was skewed.

4d. Most candidates were able to give the correct calculation.

5. This essay required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of external zeitgebers for the AO1 and then apply this to the given context. The best answers were able to show accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding and then give a well-developed and logical discussion using relevant evidence from the context. Other answers were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, but their application was partially developed, and they only occasionally supported their discussion with relevant evidence from the context. Some answers included AO3 points in their essay which are not needed when the command verb is discuss.

Candidates would benefit from knowing the assessment objectives that are needed for the different command verbs used for essays.

Learning theories and development.

6a. Most candidates were able to correctly identify the Freud's stage in relation to Stijn.

6b. This question required candidate to describe the behaviour that would be shown by Lieke. The best answers were able to do this. Some answers did not link all their points to the behaviour that would be shown by Lieke as asked in the question and described the phallic stage. A very few answers incorrectly wrote about the wrong stage.

7a. This question required candidates to describe how qualitative data could be collected in relation to the scenario, and some candidates were able to do this and gain all the marks. However, a lot of answers described how quantitative data could be collected rather than qualitative so did not answer the question that was asked. Some answers were about a research method other than observation, as stated in the question. Most answers were linked to details from the scenario.

Candidates should read questions carefully to ensure they are answering the question that is asked.

7b. In order to gain both AO2 marks candidates had to write about how Nika could make her observation more reliable. The most common correct answer was to use other researchers to observe the children as well with clear links to the scenario. Some answers were about validity rather than reliability, and some answers did not link to the scenario so were generic.

7c. This question was answered better than 7a, with candidates being able to correctly describe how Niki could make her data quantitative. The best answers were able to give three descriptive points that were clearly linked to details from the scenario. Weaker answers did not link all their points to details from the scenario, with the weakest answers not giving any details from the scenario beyond the name.

8a. Candidates who knew Skinner's superstitious pigeons' study were often able to accurately describe it in enough detail to gain all four marks for points about the procedure. Unfortunately, a lot of answers described the procedure of one of Skinner's other studies using pigeons.

8b. Candidates who read the question carefully were able to focus on the ethics as asked by the question, though some answers were about a different strength and weakness. The most common weakness focused on the food deprivation, there were a number of different strengths. Again, a lot of candidates wrote about the wrong Skinner study and the pain from electric shocks.

9a. This question focused on two strengths of generalising results from animals to humans, where candidates had to identify each strength and then justify/exemplify them. The better answers could do this, though some answers failed to justify/exemplify one or both of the strengths. Some answers repeated the same strength twice so could only get the marks once.

9b. Candidates had to focus on why animal experiments may be more reliable, most answers could do this, but some wrote about validity. This was a justify question. A lot of answers were able to offer one justification but did not go on to offer further justification to gain the second mark.

10. This essay required candidates to show their knowledge of classical conditioning in relation to human behaviour and then assess it. The very best answers were able to show accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of classical conditioning and offer well developed and logical assessment that focused on it as an explanation of human behaviour. Other answers demonstrated accurate knowledge and understanding. Quite a few of the answers had weaker AO3, with some statements having development of form, or the assessment was superficial. A few answers evaluated classical conditioning rather than assess it, and some did not focus on human behaviour.

Section C

11. This question required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of research into the sleep wake cycle and then evaluate the research. Candidates could demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through the use of research methods used or through a variety of studies. Most answers focused on a variety of studies. The best answers showed accurate knowledge and understanding of a variety of studies and how they were carried out and were able to give a well-developed and logical evaluation. The evaluation was often weaker than the knowledge and understanding, at times the statements only had some development of form. Some answers were evaluating a study rather than research. The weakest answers wrote about the sleep-wake cycle rather than research into the sleep wake cycle.

12. Candidates had to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, apply that knowledge and understanding and give well developed logical arguments that led to a judgement or decision. Most candidates were able to write about both light therapy and psychoanalysis as a treatment, though some were imbalanced towards one of the treatments. The best answers were able to demonstrate all three assessment objectives, showing accurate knowledge and understanding of both treatments and apply them in a sustained way to evidence from the context. They were then able to show well-developed and logical arguments and come to a balanced judgement/decision. Weaker answers failed to apply evidence from the context more than occasionally, or they failed to produce AO3 statements that were mostly developed. The weakest answers wrote about seasonal affective disorder rather than the two therapies.