

Markscheme

May 2026

Psychology

Higher level

Paper 1

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Section A markbands

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The answer does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	• The response is of limited relevance to or only rephrases the question. • Knowledge and understanding is mostly inaccurate or not relevant to the question. • The research supporting the response is mostly not relevant to the question and if relevant only listed.
4–6	• The response is relevant to the question, but does not meet the command term requirements. • Knowledge and understanding is accurate but limited. • The response is supported by appropriate research which is described.
7–9	• The response is fully focused on the question and meets the command term requirements. • Knowledge and understanding is accurate and addresses the main topics/problems identified in the question. • The response is supported by appropriate research which is described and explicitly linked to the question.

Section A

Biological approach to understanding behaviour

1. Describe **one** research method used when investigating the relationship between the brain and behaviour, with reference to **one** relevant study.

[9]

Refer to the paper 1 section A markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “describe” requires students to give a detailed account of one research method used when investigating the relationship between the brain and behaviour.

Behaviour may include cognitive processes such as memory.

Research methods used when investigating the brain and behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- experiments (Crockett et al., 2015; Draganski et al., 2003; Antonova, 2011)
- quasi experiments (Maguire et al., 2000; Sharot, 2007)
- case studies (HM, Milner, 1966; SM, Feinstein et al., 2011)

As part of their response, students may address results of studies that use technologies (e.g., MRI, fMRI, PET) or additional methods used as data collection tools; however, the focus of the response must be on the chosen research method itself.

Animal studies are acceptable provided they are used to illustrate the research method.

If a student describes more than one research method or more than one study, credit should be given only to the first method or study.

If a student describes a research method without making reference to a relevant study, up to a maximum of [5] should be awarded.

If a student only describes an appropriate study without describing the research method used, up to a maximum of [4] should be awarded.

Cognitive approach to understanding behaviour

2. Describe the multi-store memory model with reference to **one** relevant study.

[9]

Refer to the paper 1 section A markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “describe” requires students to give a detailed account of the multi-store memory model. When describing a model, the student should go beyond simply identifying the components and outline their role in memory processing.

Relevant studies may include, but are not limited to:

- Peterson and Peterson (1959) on the role of rehearsal and memory consolidation
- Bahrick et al. (1975) on duration of long-term memory
- Glanzer and Cunitz (1966); Murdock (1962) on the serial position effect
- Sperling (1960) on the existence of sensory memory
- Studies of brain damage to support the theory: Milner’s (1966) study of HM; Sacks’ (2007) study of Clive Wearing.

Although it is acceptable for students to include a diagram of the model, the written description of the model is assessed on its own merits.

If a student describes the model of memory without making reference to a relevant study, up to a maximum of **[5]** should be awarded.

If a student only describes an appropriate study without describing the model of memory, up to a maximum of **[4]** should be awarded.

If a student describes more than one study, credit should be given only to the first study.

Sociocultural approach to understanding behaviour

3. Explain **one** cultural dimension with reference to **one** relevant study.

[9]

Refer to the paper 1 section A markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “explain” requires students to give a detailed account, including reasons or causes, of one cultural dimension with reference to one relevant study. Responses should present the core traits that define the chosen cultural dimension. For example, students may explain that individualistic societies focus on uniqueness, achievement and freedom whereas collectivist societies focus on family, relationships and a common fate or heritage.

Cultural dimensions may include, but are not limited to:

- Individualism versus Collectivism: Berry’s (1967) study of conformity; Kulkofsky’s (2011) study of flashbulb memory
- Long- versus short-term orientation: Chen et al.’s (2005) study of consumer behaviour
- Power distance: Zhang et al.’s (2010) study of impulsive buying; Eylon and Au’s (1999) study of empowerment in the workplace
- Uncertainty avoidance: Shane’s (1995) study of preference for innovation

If a student explains more than one cultural dimension, credit should be given only to the first description.

If a student explains one cultural dimension without reference to a relevant study, up to a maximum of **[5]** should be awarded.

If a student describes a relevant study without explaining the cultural dimension, up to a maximum of **[4]** should be awarded.

If a student describes more than one study, credit should be given only to the first study.

Section B assessment criteria

A — Focus on the question

To understand the requirements of the question students must identify the problem or issue being raised by the question. Students may simply identify the problem by restating the question or breaking down the question. Students who go beyond this by **explaining** the problem are showing that they understand the issues or problems.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below.
1	Identifies the problem/issue raised in the question.
2	Explains the problem/issue raised in the question.

B — Knowledge and understanding

This criterion rewards students for demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of specific areas of psychology. It is important to credit **relevant** knowledge and understanding that is **targeted** at addressing the question and explained in sufficient detail.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response demonstrates limited relevant knowledge and understanding. Psychological terminology is used but with errors that hamper understanding.
3–4	The response demonstrates relevant knowledge and understanding but lacks detail. Psychological terminology is used but with errors that do not hamper understanding.
5–6	The response demonstrates relevant, detailed knowledge and understanding. Psychological terminology is used appropriately

C — Use of research to support answer

Psychology is evidence based so it is expected that students will use their knowledge of research to support their argument. There is no prescription as to which or how many pieces of research are appropriate for their response. As such it becomes important that the research selected is **relevant** and useful in **supporting** the response. One piece of research that makes the points relevant to the answer is better than several pieces that repeat the same point over and over.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	Limited relevant psychological research is used in the response. Research selected serves to repeat points already made.
3–4	Relevant psychological research is used in support of the response, and is partly explained. Research selected partially develops the argument.
5–6	Relevant psychological research is used in support of the response and is thoroughly explained. Research selected is effectively used to develop the argument.

D — Critical thinking

This criterion credits students who demonstrate an inquiring and reflective attitude to their understanding of psychology. There are a number of areas where students may demonstrate critical thinking about the knowledge and understanding used in their responses and the research used to support that knowledge and understanding.

The areas of critical thinking are:

- research design and methodologies
- triangulation
- assumptions and biases
- contradictory evidence or alternative theories or explanations
- areas of uncertainty.

These areas are not hierarchical and not all areas will be relevant in a response. In addition, students could demonstrate a very limited critique of methodologies, for example, and a well-developed evaluation of areas of uncertainty in the same response. As a result, a holistic judgement of their achievement in this criterion should be made when awarding marks.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	There is limited critical thinking and the response is mainly descriptive. Evaluation or discussion, if present, is superficial.
3–4	The response contains critical thinking, but lacks development. Evaluation or discussion of most relevant areas is attempted but is not developed.
5–6	The response consistently demonstrates well developed critical thinking. Evaluation and/or discussion of relevant areas is consistently well developed.

E — Clarity and organisation

This criterion credits students for presenting their response in a clear and organized manner. A good response would require no re-reading to understand the points made or the train of thought underpinning the argument.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below.
1	The answer demonstrates some organization and clarity, but this is not sustained throughout the response.
2	The answer demonstrates organization and clarity throughout the response.

Section B

4. Discuss genetic similarity with reference to **one or more** behaviours.

[22]

Refer to the paper 1 section B assessment criteria when awarding marks.

The command term “discuss” requires students to offer a considered review of genetic similarity (twins, siblings, parents, adopted children) with reference to one or more behaviours.

Relevant concepts may include, but are not limited to:

- concordance rates
- degrees of relatedness
- monozygotic / dizygotic twins
- heritability and the models used to compute it, e.g., Falconer model.

Relevant studies may include, but are not limited to:

- Kendler et al.’s (2006) twin study investigating genetic influences on depression
- Bouchard et al.’s (1990) twin study into genetic influences on intelligence
- Gilbertson et al.’s (2002) twin study on PTSD
- True et al.’s (1993) twin study investigating genetic influences on PTSD symptoms among U.S. Vietnam veterans
- Weissman et al.’s (2005) kinship (parental) study of MDD
- Scarr and Weinberg’s (1983) adoption study on intelligence
- Plomin and Petrill’s (1997) research into the heritability of IQ in adoption studies.

Discussion points may include, but are not limited to:

- examining the underlying assumptions
- methodological considerations (e.g., equal environmental fallacy, selective placement, the inability to establish a cause-and-effect relationship)
- ethical considerations
- strengths/limitations of a reductionist argument
- supporting and/or contradictory evidence, e.g., the role of culture and/or environment on behaviour
- implications of the research findings: how the research findings have been interpreted and applied.

Students may discuss one genetic similarity in order to demonstrate depth of knowledge or may discuss a larger number of genetic similarities in order to demonstrate breadth of knowledge. Both approaches are equally acceptable.

Students may discuss one behaviour in order to demonstrate depth of knowledge or may discuss a larger number of behaviours in order to demonstrate breadth of knowledge. Both approaches are equally acceptable.

Research solely on genes rather than genetic similarities (e.g. Caspi et al.) would not be creditworthy.

5. Discuss the influence of technologies (digital/modern) on **one or more** cognitive processes. [22]

Refer to the paper 1 section B assessment criteria when awarding marks.

The command term “discuss” requires students to offer a considered review of the influence (which can be positive and/or negative) of technologies (digital/modern) on one or more cognitive processes.

Cognitive processes may include, but are not limited to: memory, thinking and decision-making, perception, attention, and language.

Relevant studies may include, but are not limited to:

- Mueller and Oppenheimer’s (2014) study on the influence of laptops on learning
- Storm et al. (2016); Sparrow et al.’s (2011) study on the Google effect
- Blacker et al.’s (2014) study on the effect of video games on visual working memory
- Rosser et al.’s (2007) study on the positive influence of simulations/videogames on cognitive processes involved in surgery
- Sanchez’s (2012) study on the influence of video games on visuospatial learning
- Rosen et al.’s (2013) study on media multi-tasking when studying
- Bavelier et al.’s (2011) study on the effect of video games on decision-making.

Discussion points may include, but are not limited to:

- methodological considerations
- how the findings of research have been interpreted and applied
- implications of the findings
- areas of uncertainty
- supporting and/or contradictory evidence
- cultural and/or gender considerations
- alternative explanations/findings.

Students may discuss only positive or only negative influence(s) in order to demonstrate depth of knowledge or may discuss both in order to demonstrate breadth of knowledge. Both approaches are equally acceptable.

Students may discuss one cognitive process in order to demonstrate depth of knowledge or may discuss a larger number of cognitive processes in order to demonstrate breadth of knowledge. Both approaches are equally acceptable.

6. Evaluate social cognitive theory.

[22]

Refer to the paper 1 section B assessment criteria when awarding marks.

The command term “evaluate” requires students to make an appraisal of social cognitive theory by weighing up the strengths and limitations.

Although a discussion of both strengths and limitations is required, it does not have to be evenly balanced to gain high marks.

The main concepts of social cognitive theory may include, but are not limited to:

- imitation (for example, of role models)
- vicarious learning
- the role of attention, retention, motivation and reproduction/potential
- self-efficacy
- the agentic approach
- reciprocal determinism.

Relevant studies may include, but are not limited to:

- Bandura et al.’s (1961) study on observational learning and aggression in children
- Joy et al.’s (1986) or Charlton et al.’s (2002) study on the impact of television on children’s aggressive behaviour
- Sprafkin et al.’s (1975) study on children’s prosocial behaviour and television
- Odden and Rochat’s (2004) study on the role of observation in enculturation processes among children in Samoa.

Evaluation may include, but is not limited to:

- the effectiveness of the theory in explaining behaviour
- the productivity of the theory in generating psychological research
- methodological, cultural and gender considerations
- contrary findings or explanations
- practical applications of the theory.

If the student addresses only strengths or only limitations, the response should be awarded up to a maximum of **[3]** for criterion D: critical thinking. All remaining criteria should be awarded marks according to the best fit approach.

If a student evaluates only the research with no broader evaluation of theory, the response should be awarded up to a maximum of **[3]** for criterion D: critical thinking. All remaining criteria should be awarded marks according to the best fit approach.