

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. Explain **one** link between genes and behaviour 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 link between genes and behaviour with reference to one relevant study.

Relevant studies include but are not limited to:

- Bouchard et al.’s (1990) study on genes and intelligence
- Caspi et al.’s (2002) study on genes and aggression
- Caspi et al. (2003); Kendler et al. (2006); Weissman et al. (2005) on genes and depression
- Gilbertson *et al.* (2002); Yehuda et al. (2001) on genes and PTSD
- Kendler and Prescott (1998) on genes and drug addiction
- Holland (1988) on genes and anorexia
- Bailey and Pillard (1991) on genes and sexuality
- Cases et al.’s (1995) animal study on MAOA gene and aggression.

If a student explains one link between genes and behaviour without referring to a relevant study, award up to a maximum of [5].

If a student makes reference to a relevant study without explaining one link between genes and behaviour, award up to a maximum of [4].

If a student explains more than one example of a link between genes and behaviour, credit should be given only to the first link explained.

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

If a student makes reference to an animal study, it should be linked to human behaviour.

Cognitive approach to understanding behaviour

2. Explain reconstructive memory 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 and causes, for reconstructive memory, with reference to one relevant study.

The explanation of reconstructive memory could include but are not limited to:

- schema processing – memory processing based on prior knowledge in the form of schemas that could result in distortion
- misleading questions/post-event information
- confabulation/false memories.

Relevant studies could include but are not limited to:

- Loftus and Palmer’s (1974) car crash study
- Bartlett’s (1932) “War of the ghosts” study
- Brewer and Treyens’ (1981) study on in-office schema
- Loftus and Pickerell’s (1995) “Lost in a mall” study
- Shaw and Porter’s (2015) implanting false memories of a crime
- Yuille and Cutshall’s (1986) case study on (the accuracy of) eyewitness memory of a crime
- Neisser and Harsh’s (1992) Challenger disaster study.

If a student explains reconstructive memory without making reference to a relevant study, award up to a maximum of **[5]**.

If a student only describes a relevant study without explaining reconstructive memory, award up to a maximum of **[4]**.

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

Sociocultural approach to understanding behaviour

3. Describe **one** effect of enculturation on human cognition and/or 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 how enculturation affects cognition and/or behaviour, with reference to one relevant study.

Relevant effects of enculturation may include but are not limited to:

- effects on parenting behaviours: Fagot *et al.* (1974); Barry (1959); Keller *et al.* (2008)
- effects on memory: Demorest *et al.* (2008) on musical memory; Martin and Halvorson (1983) on reconstructive memory; Kearins (1981) on memory strategies among indigenous Australians
- effects on conformity: Berry (1967)
- effects on observational learning of fishing skills and respect for elders: Odden and Rochat (2004)
- effects on impulsivity: Lamm *et al.*'s (2017) marshmallow study of self-control in German versus Cameroonian children; Chen *et al.*'s (2005) study of online shopping behaviour

If a student describes one effect of enculturation on human cognition and/or behaviour without reference to a relevant research study, award up to a maximum of [5].

If a student describes a relevant research study without describing an effect of enculturation on human cognition and/or behaviour, award up to a maximum of [4].

If a student describes more than one effect of enculturation on human cognition and/or behaviour, credit should be given only to the first one.

If a student refers to 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 the role of animal research in understanding human behaviour.

[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 role of animal research in the understanding of human behaviour.

Relevant studies include but are not limited to:

- Meaney’s (1988) study on the role of glucocorticoids in memory; Rogers and Kesner (2003), Martinez and Kesner’s (1991) study on the role of acetylcholine in the formation of spatial memory
- Albert et al. (1986) on testosterone
- Sapolsky (1990) on stress
- Harlow’s (1958) studies on attachment
- Seligman (1970) on learned helplessness in depression
- Rosenzweig, Bennett and Diamond’s (1972) study on the effect of enriched environments and neuroplasticity in rats’ brains
- Lashley’s (1929) study on localization of memory in mice.
- Romero et al. (2014) on the role of oxytocin in social bonding
- Cases et al. (1995) on aggression
- Weaver et al. (2004) on maternal behaviour.

Discussion may include but is not limited to:

- justifications for using animals over human participants in research
- methodological considerations and generalizability of animal research
- operationalization of variables in animal research
- the issue of reductionism
- ethical considerations in animal research
- limits to the adequacy of animal research for social and cultural phenomena
- practical applications of animal findings
- alternatives to animal research e.g. vitro studies, computer modelling, neuroimaging with human participants

Students may choose to focus on one specific area of human behaviour (e.g. memory, depression, attachment) and discuss animal research within that domain, or may take a broader approach discussing animal research across multiple behaviours. Both approaches are equally acceptable.

Research using animals must be explicitly linked to its role in the understanding of human behaviour.

5. Evaluate **one or more** research methods used in the cognitive approach to understanding behaviour.

[22]

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

The command term “evaluate” requires students to make an appraisal by weighing up the strengths and limitations of one or more research methods used in the cognitive approach to understanding human behaviour. Although a discussion of both strengths and limitations is required, it does not have to be evenly balanced to gain high marks.

Research methods, may include but are not limited to, experiments, observations, interviews, surveys/questionnaires, case studies, meta-analysis and correlational studies.

Responses may refer to an additional research method that was not used as the main research method, or was used in data collection, and this is acceptable.

Relevant studies may include but are not limited to:

- questionnaires/surveys (Brown and Kulik, 1977, Kulkofsky et al. (2011), Loftus and Pickrell (1995))
- experiments (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981; Bransford and Johnson, 1972; Loftus and Palmer, 1974; Landry and Bartling, 2011; Robbins et al. 1992; Alter et al. 2007; Anderson and Pichert, 1978; Englich and Mussweiler, 2001; Maguire et al., 2000)
- case studies (Milner and Scoville, 1966; Warrington and Shallice, 1974; Yuille and Cutshall, 1986)
- the use of interviews (Neisser and Harsch, 1992)
- the use of correlation (Maguire et al., 2000).

Responses may refer to brain imaging techniques (MRI, PET scans) and be awarded marks for these as long as this is clearly used as part of a description/evaluation of the research method but not as a method by itself.

Responses may also refer to longitudinal/cross-sectional studies, cross-cultural studies and be awarded marks for these as long as this is used as part of a chosen research method (not as a method by itself).

Evaluation of the research methods may include but is not limited to:

- the ability to determine causality
- ethical considerations in the use of deception
- control of extraneous variables
- objectivity vs subjectivity
- ease of data collection, analysis and interpretation
- validity and reliability (internal and external)
- holistic vs reductionist approaches to the study of behaviour.

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.

6. Discuss the formation of stereotypes **and/or the effect(s) of stereotypes on behaviour. [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 formation of stereotypes and/or the effect(s) of stereotypes on behaviour.

Students may address the effect of stereotypes in relation to specific aspects of behaviour or address the effect of stereotypes on behaviour in general. Both approaches are equally acceptable.

Explanations for the formation of stereotypes may include but are not limited to:

- illusory correlation: Hamilton and Gifford (1976)
- grain of truth hypothesis: Campbell (1967)
- social identity theory: Hilliard and Liben (2010); Park and Rothbart (1982).

Effects of stereotypes on behaviour may include, but are not limited to:

- stereotype threat/boost (e.g. Steele and Aronson, 1995; Spencer et al. 1999; Shih et al. 1999)
- memory distortion (e.g. Martin and Halverson, 1983)
- misdiagnosis in mental health (e.g. Zhang, 1998; Van Ryn and Burke, 2000)
- prejudice and discrimination against individuals (e.g. Duncan, 1976; Buckhout, 1974; Gibbins, 1969)
- self-fulfilling prophecy (e.g. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968)).

Relevant discussion points may include, but are not limited to:

- methodological considerations
- cultural considerations
- ethical considerations, including the social sensitivity of this research
- implications of the findings, including how these may be used in an ethical way
- how the findings of research have been interpreted and applied
- alternative and/or contrasting explanations
- areas of uncertainty
- the productivity of the theory in generating psychological research
- the accuracy and clarity of the concepts.

Students may discuss only the formation of stereotypes or only the effect(s) of stereotypes, or both formation and effect(s) of stereotypes. All approaches are equally acceptable.

If a student addresses both formation and effect(s) of stereotypes, the response does not need to be equally balanced to access marks in the top bands.

Students may address one potential effect of stereotypes to demonstrate depth of knowledge or may address more than one potential effect of stereotypes to demonstrate breadth of knowledge. Both approaches are equally acceptable.
