

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. With reference to **one** relevant study, explain the use of twin studies **or** kinship studies. **[9]**

Refer to the paper 1 section A mark bands when awarding marks.

The command term “explain” requires students to give a detailed account including reasons or causes, for using twin/kinship studies. This includes, but is not limited to:

- To investigate genetic influences without unethical manipulation of human subjects
- To study heredity in humans when controlled experiments are not possible
- Because psychologists cannot ethically manipulate genes or early life experiences in experiments
- Because animal studies cannot fully replicate complex human psychological processes and social environments
- To examine naturally occurring genetic similarities rather than artificially creating conditions in a laboratory
- To study the interaction between genes and environmental factors
- Prior to the Human Genome Project, researchers were able to support a potential genetic link for behaviour, which later spurred further research.

Relevant studies may include but are not limited to:

- Bouchard et al. (1990) – Minnesota Twin Study exploring a range of characteristics including IQ
- Gottesman and Shields (1966) – twin study of schizophrenia
- Kendler et al. (2006) – twin study of major depressive disorder (MDD)
- McGue et al.'s (2000) twin study of adolescent addiction to tobacco and marijuana
- Mednick et al. (1984) – kinship study of criminality
- Nestadt et al. (2000) – kinship study of OCD
- Weissman et al. (2005) – kinship study of MDD.

Twin studies may be referred to as kinship studies and still be given full credit.

If a student refers to more than one example of a twin/kinship study, then credit should be given only to the first study.

If a student explains the use of twin/kinship studies but without reference to a relevant study, award a maximum of **[5]**.

If a student describes a relevant study but does not explain the use of twin/kinship studies, award a maximum of **[4]**.

Cognitive approach to understanding behaviour

2. Explain rational (controlled) thinking with reference to **one** relevant study. **[9]**

Refer to the paper 1 section A mark bands when awarding marks.

The command term “explain” requires students to give a detailed account, including reasons or causes, of rational (controlled) thinking, with reference to one relevant study.

Students may use the dual process theory, but they must make a clear connection to rational thinking. Merely describing the characteristics of System 1 and System 2 thinking is not sufficient.

Relevant studies may include but are not limited to:

- Alter and Oppenheimer (2007) – increasing cognitive disfluency can activate rational thinking and override intuitive thinking
- Chaiken (1980) – demonstrates activation of rational thinking as a result of increasing the apparent importance of information
- Bechara et al. (2000); Goel et al. (2000) – neural correlates of rational (and intuitive) thinking
- Griggs and Cox (1982) – Wason Selection Task demonstrates rational (and intuitive) thinking
- Grimm and Richter (2024) – rational thinking (ability to suppress heuristics) predicts academic success in university students
- Kvaran et al. (2013) – priming activates rational (controlled) thinking in response to moral dilemmas.

If a student explains rational (controlled) thinking without making reference to a relevant study, a maximum of **[5]** should be awarded.

If a student only describes an appropriate study without explaining rational (controlled) thinking, a maximum of **[4]** should be awarded.

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

Sociocultural approach to understanding behaviour

3. Describe the formation of stereotypes **and/or** the effect(s) of stereotypes on behaviour with reference to **one** relevant study. **[9]**

Refer to the paper 1 section A mark bands when awarding marks.

The command term “describe” requires students to give a detailed account of the formation of stereotypes and/or the effect(s) of stereotypes on behaviour.

Relevant studies may include but are not limited to:

- **Formation of stereotypes:**

- Hamilton and Gifford (1976) – illusory correlation
- Hilliard and Liben (2010); Johnson, Schaller and Mullen (2000); and Park and Rothbart’s (1982) studies on social identity theory.
- Kimball et al. (1986) on the role of social learning in gender stereotype development
- Rogers and Franz (1961) – the role of normative social influence

- **Effects of stereotypes:**

- Allport and Postman (1947); Payne (2001) – racial stereotypes affect eyewitness testimony
- Martin and Halverson (1983) – gender stereotypes affect recall
- Spencer et al. (1999); Shih et al. (1999); Steele and Aronson (1995) – stereotype threat can affect academic performance
- Stone (2002) – stereotype threat can affect effort in sports performance.

If a student describes the formation of stereotypes or the effect of stereotypes on behaviour without reference to a study, a maximum of **[5]** should be awarded.

If a student describes a relevant study, but the formation of stereotypes or the effect of stereotypes on behaviour is not described, a maximum of **[4]** should be awarded.

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 effect of **one or more** hormones 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 how one or more hormones affect behaviour. Students may focus their response on one or more behaviours.

Responses should make a clear link between the function of the hormone(s) and behaviour.

Relevant hormones may include, but are not limited to, adrenaline, cortisol, testosterone, oestrogen, oxytocin, and vasopressin.

Examples of how hormones influence behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- adrenaline and emotional memory/flashbulb memory
- cortisol and recall
- oxytocin and trust/social bonding or post-partum depression
- testosterone and risk-taking/aggression
- vasopressin and pair-bonding

Relevant studies may include but are not limited to:

- Baumgartner et al.’s (2008) study of oxytocin and trust in economic behaviour.
- De Quervain et al.’s (2012) study of adrenaline and PTSD
- McGaugh and Cahill’s (1995) study on adrenaline and memory
- Newcomer et al.’s (1999) study on cortisol and memory
- Radke et al.’s (2015) study on testosterone and cognitive empathy

Discussion points may include, but are not limited to:

- the bidirectional relationship between hormones and behaviour
- ethical issues in manipulating hormone levels experimentally
- the extent to which findings from animal studies can be generalized to humans
- the extent to which hormones directly cause behaviour
- the interaction between hormones and environmental, cognitive, or sociocultural factors
- the measurement of hormones in research
- methodological challenges such as artificial hormone administration versus naturally occurring hormonal fluctuations
- the strengths and/or limitations of a reductionist argument.

Students may discuss one hormone to demonstrate depth of knowledge, or a larger number of hormones to demonstrate breadth of knowledge. Both approaches are equally acceptable.

5. Discuss **one or more** methods used to study the interaction between technologies (digital/modern) and cognitive processes. [22]

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

The command term “discuss” requires students to give a considered review of one or more methods used to study the interaction between technologies and cognitive processes.

Examples of interaction may include, but are not limited to:

- Computer use and transactive memory
- Technology and multi-tasking with regard to working memory
- Video games and attention

Examples of studies may include, but are not limited to:

- Correlational studies: Christakis et al. (2004), Vasile (2012), Chou and Edge (2012), Swing et al. (2010)
- Meta-analysis: Uttal et al (2013)
- True experiments: Mueller and Oppenheimer (2014); Sparrow et al. (2011); Storm et al.’s (2016); Wood et al. (2012)
- Quasi-experiment (field experiment): Rosen et al (2013)
- Interviews: Schaefer et al. (2011); Talarico et al. (2017)

Discussion may include, but is not limited to:

- Ability to establish causal relationships
- Controls for researcher and participant biases
- Ethical considerations
- Issues of validity (internal and ecological) and reliability
- Operationalization and measurement of variables
- The use of self-reported data
- The use of triangulation to increase the credibility of the findings

Students may discuss one method used to study the interaction between technologies and cognitive processes to demonstrate depth of knowledge or may discuss a larger number of methods to demonstrate breadth of knowledge. Both approaches are equally acceptable.

6. Evaluate social identity theory.

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

Relevant studies may include, but are not limited to:

- Abrams et al. (1990) – social identity and levels of conformity
- Cialdini et al. (1976) – social identification
- Drury et al. (2009) – social identification and helping behaviour
- Park and Rothbart (1982) - outgroup homogeneity in sororities
- Sherif et al. (1961) – Robbers Cave study
- Tajfel et al. (1971) – social categorization and social comparison

Evaluation may include but is not limited to:

- applicability to real-world group conflict and social behaviour
- areas of uncertainty: cannot alone explain why some situations lead to aggression
- cultural bias: focused on a dichotomy of “us” versus “them”
- difficulty of measuring constructs (e.g. social comparison, category salience)
- does not account for individual differences
- ethical constraints on intergroup research
- may underestimate the role of emotion
- oversimplification of human behaviour
- predictive value
- the productivity of the theory in generating psychological research
- replicability/reliability of experimental research
- use of lab research that limits ecological validity.

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

The focus of the response should be on the evaluation of the theory. If a student only evaluates relevant studies, 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.
