



Pearson

Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2018

Pearson Edexcel International GCE
In Psychology (WPS01)

Paper 1: Social and Cognitive Psychology

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January 2018

Publications Code WPS01_01_1801_ER

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General Comments

The majority of candidates attempted all the questions in this paper including the three essays. There were very few blank responses, demonstrating that the candidates have good awareness both of exam skills and timing under exam conditions.

The mathematical assessment questions were generally answered well but candidates must ensure that they read the instructions carefully. Many candidates engaged with the scenarios in several of the questions and linked their responses back to the given context. Nevertheless, particularly in the smaller questions, generic responses were still a significant issue and candidates should be encouraged to apply their knowledge and understanding to the scenario.

Overall candidates demonstrated a high level of psychological knowledge and frequently gained the identification or knowledge marks. Understanding was equal across the Social and Cognitive topics. Only a very few candidates were confident with justification of evidence and offering an explanation which could be used as part of a balanced conclusion. As in previous series, candidates would find it helpful to analyse the different command terms and recognise how they should approach that type of question.

The essay question about the practical investigation from the Social Approach proved challenging for many candidates. Whilst most could give a basic description of their practical, very few were able to discuss the design decisions. Candidates appeared to have clear ideas about the aims of the practical and could evaluate it to some extent but did not address the question being asked.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice

Candidates should ensure that they apply their knowledge and understanding clearly to a given scenario.

Candidates should use supporting evidence or more fully developed justification points within their responses.

Candidates must analyse the command terms so that they have a clear awareness of the type of response required.

Candidates must learn studies thoroughly so that they can incorporate accurate details into their answers.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Q1a

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 knowledge and understanding question which required a definition of secondary data. Most candidates attempted this question and it produced a wide range of answers. Although candidates had a general idea of secondary data, often this was not confidently and clearly expressed.

Q1b

Question Introduction

This was an AO1 identification and an AO3 justification/exemplification question. The candidates were required to give a strength and weakness of secondary data. Knowledge and understanding of secondary data was weak so many candidates experienced difficulties with this question. Most managed to achieve an AO1 mark for a strength. A popular answer was that secondary data requires less work and is easier to obtain. Such responses lacked depth. Most candidates did not proceed to explain why this was a strength. Suggested weaknesses were very limited.

Examiner Tip

Add a justification or example to show how the point you have identified as a strength really is a strength

Q2a

Question Introduction

There were two AO1 knowledge and understanding marks for an accurate description of internalisation. Although most candidates had some idea of this concept and they referred to private/public beliefs but were not able to extend this to include changes to beliefs and behaviour.

Q2b

Question Introduction.

There were two AO1 knowledge and understanding marks and two AO3 Justification marks. This question produced a wide range of answers. When candidates understood the concept of identification they achieved the AO1 marks but rarely elaborated or exemplified their response to attain both of the AO3 marks. Many candidates did not have a clear understanding of this concept and confused identification and internalisation.

Examiner Tip

Candidates must ensure that they write in enough depth and elaborate their response for a 4 mark answer.

Q3a

Question Introduction

This question targeted a mathematical skill. Most candidates could calculate the fraction successfully.

Q3b

Question Introduction

The mathematical skill in this question was to calculate a percentage. Whilst most candidates could carry out this calculation successfully, some did not read the entire question and did not present their answer to the nearest whole number.

Examiner Tip

Always read the question and instructions carefully.

Q3c

Question Introduction

An AO2 mark is available for the identification of each weakness and an AO3 mark for justification of each weakness. Most candidates could identify at least one weakness of the sample. The more popular answers were that there were more females than males in Helen's sample and that all participants were 24 years or older. The justification of these points was weak and resulted in few candidates achieving all four marks. The candidates did refer to the scenario consistently in this part of the question.

Q3d

Question Introduction

There is just one AO2 mark here which requires application to the context. This answer must respond specifically to the scenario as directed in the question. Failure to achieve marks in this question were mostly because the responses did not relate to Helen and her interviews. Some candidates were unsure about the difference between a structured and unstructured interview.

Examiner Tip

Link all points back to the context in the scenario

Q4

Question Introduction

This is a levels- based question testing AO1 knowledge and understanding and AO2 application with equal emphasis. Candidates found this question challenging. The practical investigations described were varied and based on either obedience or conformity questionnaires. Where candidates had not carried out the practical they responded with generic answers detailing an investigation that they would have done. There were some interesting investigations but the majority of responses just contained a description of their procedure which lacked detail and accuracy. There was little attempt to justify design decisions although occasionally a candidate did recognise that using both open and closed questions was useful. AO1 points were not evident and could not be awarded so many candidates were limited to level 2 marks.

Cognitive Psychology

Q5a

Question Introduction

There are two AO1 knowledge and understanding marks awarded for describing capacity and two AO1 marks for describing duration of memory. Generally this question was answered confidently with most candidates demonstrating a solid knowledge and understanding and thus able to access at least 2 marks. The terms were usually identified in just enough detail to gain credit although some answers were very vague indeed. Many picked up extra marks by including an accurate example of capacity and duration. Duration in Short Term Memory produced inconsistent responses.

Q5b

Question Introduction

There are two AO1 knowledge and understanding marks and two AO2 application marks for this question. The question is asking about the how the HM case study demonstrates differences between Long Term Memory and Short Term memory. This was not often addressed by the candidates. There was some knowledge of the details of the case study which allowed these candidates to pick up the AO1 marks. Confusion about the memory stores was evident with candidates unable to identify which store was damaged. Several responses also introduced the evidence from Schmolck's study but this was limited and often incorrect. Most candidates struggled to find exemplification marks. There were some extremely sophisticated answers which achieve full marks but these were few and far between. Some candidates knew that this case study showed that STM and LTM were separate stores and could provide the evidence from the case study but they could not go on to make a different point for another exemplification.

Examiner Tip

Candidates must focus on learning this case study accurately so that they can access all the marks within a question

Q6a

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to identify the Independent Variable and the Dependent Variable in a research scenario. Many candidates could do this confidently and achieved both marks. The Dependent Variable was clearly identified but the Independent Variable was not always written in sufficient detail. A small number of candidates did not identify both levels of the Independent Variable or gave a limited answer such as computer games.

Q6b

Question Introduction

There is an AO1 knowledge and understanding mark and an AO2 application mark for this question. There was a large range of answers to this question. Some imaginative participant variables were proposed but the most common were straightforward such as age. Some candidates did not know the difference between a participant variable and a situational variable. Unfortunately many responses were generic and did not link specifically back to the scenario. Candidates struggled with justification.

Q6c

Question Introduction

This question asks for the calculation of the mean. Most candidates could carry out this calculation easily but again they must give their answer to 2 decimal places.

Examiner Tip

Check calculations carefully to avoid simple mistakes

Q6d

Question Introduction

There is an AO2 application mark and an AO3 justification mark for this question. Candidates appeared to have a good understanding of conclusions and often included some idea of quantity in their response such as males took less time and linked this to the average time taken by each gender. Many candidates could elaborate their response to achieve full marks.

Q06e

Question Introduction

This question has an AO2 application mark. Candidates are required to identify the level of measurement Manon is using. Although most candidates did identify interval there were a variety of other suggestions including designs.

Q06f

Question Introduction

This question clearly asks about why the standard deviation might be an appropriate measure for Manon to use to analyse her data. The vast majority of responses were generic with no reference to the scenario. In addition, only a very few candidates had any understanding of standard deviation or when it is likely to be used.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should be confident with all the mathematical requirements of the specification

Q07

Question Introduction

This question was an 8 mark open response question which was assessed using the levels based marking criteria. The candidate was expected to assess whether the working memory model is a complete explanation of memory

Most of the responses struggled with the assessment of the Working Memory Model and in these cases candidates often presented good knowledge and understanding of this model but failed to assess how full an explanation of memory it presented. Candidates were able to elaborate points and evaluate using a range of factors but very few addressed the question in a detailed manner. Some limited comparisons with MSM were made. There was little or no awareness of the significance of competing arguments and few balanced judgements resulting in candidates largely achieving level 2 answers.

Examiner Tip

Candidates should look at the command term in a question carefully

Section C**Q8****Question Introduction**

This question was a 12-mark open response question which was assessed using the levels- based marking criteria. It is important to note that there is an AO1/AO2 and AO3 response required. Thus candidates were expected to give equal emphasis to knowledge and understanding, application to the context and justification in this answer. Candidates can approach this type of question in many different ways.

Most candidates had a basic understanding of Agency Theory and were able to achieve the AO1 marks readily by commenting on authority figures, agentic and autonomous states. Many responses did include references to the scenario and an attempt to explain Nisa and Tobin's findings in terms of Agency Theory. The significance of a business suit as opposed to casual clothes was often made clear. There were still some responses which made no reference to the scenario. Some candidates did include some evaluation points. These often referred to Milgram's variation study 13 which is an appropriate study to use. Infrequently there was some elaboration of these evaluation points which linked back to the scenario. Candidates who managed to combine knowledge, application and justification successfully did achieve the higher marking levels. The knowledge was supported through relevant evidence which was clearly linked and made relevant to the scenario. These candidates demonstrated a logical chain of reasoning and were able to show awareness of other arguments

Examiner Tip

Candidates should include more AO3 points in the longer essay questions.

