

**GCE**

**Psychology**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H167**

**OCR Report to Centres June 2016**

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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## H167/01 Research methods

### General Comments:

Overall candidates performed well and were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of research methods in response to the questions. Higher achieving candidates were distinguished by their more extended, detailed responses that focused more specifically on the question rubric and, where appropriate contextualised their answer to the research proposal outlined. It was evident that some candidates struggled with some terms and concepts from the specification content and worthy of noting that in order for candidates to be fully and best prepared for the examination that all aspects of the specification should be covered.

### Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

#### Section A

- 1 Mostly correct responses which occasional incorrect choices of repeated measures design
- 2 Majority of correct responses here
- 3 This proved to be a challenging question and shows the importance of teaching terms and concepts well
- 4 Mostly correct
- 5 Mostly correct
- 6 Mostly correct, although some incorrectly chose the results section
- 7 This proved to be a challenging question and shows the importance of teaching terms and concepts well
- 8 Most candidates were able to identify this was a negative correlation but some struggled with the strength of the correlation
- 9 Mostly correct
- 10 Generally quite poorly answered and shows the need to prepare candidates to answer questions related to choice of inferential statistical tests
- 11 Mostly correct
- 12 Mostly correct
- 13 Mostly correct
- 14 Generally well answered, but with some occasional responses indicating this type of research had no independent variable at all
- 15 Generally well answered

#### Section B

- 16 Many candidates struggled with the concept of a target population in response to this question and were unable to identify the specific home ('The Oaklands') referred to as the focus of the research.
- 17(a) Strong responses described a process that would include all members of the target population in response to this question. Those that struggled with the previous question (to identify what the target population was) often did not do this.
- 17(b) The best responses here were characterised by outlining two separate evaluation points related to the use of random sampling in context of the research outlined. Candidates who had struggled with the concept of what a target population is and how to obtain a random sample on the previous related questions found this more difficult.

- 18(a)** Generally well answered. However, some candidates were too vague / ambiguous in their responses by simply referring to 'pets' as the independent variable, without clarifying what aspect of pets was specifically manipulated (the 'care' of pets).
- 18(b)** Generally well answered. However, some candidates incorrectly stated that emotion in general, or 'mood' more specifically was the dependent variable rather than explicitly referring to 'loneliness' as the variable that was measured.
- 19** This question needed candidates to refer to three required features (RFs) as part of explaining how a piece of research could be conducted in the specified area. It is worthwhile noting that this rubric will be consistent on all other subsequent papers and use the comments that follow to guide preparation to answer this question in future. To achieve high band marks each required feature needed to be addressed (an explanation provided about how it would be used / implemented), justified (a rationale for why it was being used in the prescribed way) and linked to the candidates own practical work in some way. Strong responses addressed each required feature in turn in a detailed and clear way and justified the decisions made in relation to each required feature in context of the research to be conducted. The candidates then went on to make explicit reference to their own practical work they had conducted to explain how this had informed them of the way to plan the proposed research. 'Explicit reference' requires some details relating to what the research was about (the research question / hypothesis that was investigated).

To access the highest marks candidates needed to address each required feature and justify their decisions, and make explicit reference to their own practical work. Some candidates only referred to one or two of the required features (not all three), and/or failed to justify why the decisions being discussed had been made. There were also some candidates who made no reference at all to any of their own practical work as a way to inform their responses.

Only the three required features stated in the question needed addressing. Other aspects related to how the research could / would be conducted (such as details of the sample and sampling technique) were not required and were not creditworthy (although candidates were not penalised for including such details but may have lost time for reference to required features that were needed). It was evident that some candidates adopted the more traditional 'who, what, where, when and how' approach in responding to this question which would have led them to include details that were not required. It may be worth highlighting this when practicing such questions in class and drawing attention to the need to address the specific required features stipulated.

- 20** Most candidates correctly attempted to state a null hypothesis, with just a few citing an alternative. The best responses were characterised by candidates who fully operationalised both variables (the IV and DV). Quite a lot neglected to operationalise the DV (simply referring to it by name only ('loneliness')).
- 21** To access the highest marks the answer to this question needed to be presented in context of the research outlined. Many candidates answered in a very brief, non-contextualised way, simply stating that an advantage was that the research would be 'high in ecological validity', without outlining how or why (in context).
- 22** This question required two appropriate ethical considerations to be identified and addressed. The best responses here were characterised by candidates who presented two separate ethical issues in turn, first by identifying what the ethical issue was and why it was an issue and then going on to explain how it could be addressed. This also needed to be done in context of the research outlined to achieve the highest band marks.

## Section C

- 23** This question was generally answered very well with most candidates being aware that a structured observation involved the use of predetermined behavioural categories.
- 24** Although the majority of candidates answered this question correctly some responded with incorrect alternatives revealing that they did not have a good understanding of different levels of data (some incorrectly stated 'ordinal' and some 'interval'). Some also confused levels of data with 'types of data' (primary or secondary).
- 25** Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the concept of ratio in response to this question and went on to present their answer in its simplest form.
- 26** Most candidates demonstrated understanding of what the mode is as applied to the data collected from this study.
- 27** In order to achieve full marks on this question candidates needed to sketch a pie chart with sectors drawn in proportion to the amount of responses recorded for each of the five categories of behaviours studied. In order to do this accurately candidates needed to calculate what percentage, or proportion of the circle (in degrees) needed to be used to represent each of the behavioural categories. The answers to these calculations needed to be evident within the labelling of the pie chart or presented separately at the side. Candidates also needed to provide clear labels and an overall title. It was clear that some candidates struggled with this question by the fact that there were several different attempts to draw the sectors of the pie, with lots of crossing and rubbing out of original lines leading to a scruffy response at times. It is worth practicing drawing pie charts using a compass and protractor to get students used to this type of question.
- 28** This question was poorly answered on the whole. Many candidates simply referred to results / findings rather than conclusions (interpretation of findings). Another common misconception was that the total number of recorded behaviours for each category equated to the total number of individual people displaying these behaviours, rather than just the total number of behaviours for each category. If nothing else, this should have been clear from the title of the table, which referred to 'behaviours' and not 'number of people' exhibiting the behaviours. Candidates who did respond appropriately were able to generate a variety of different conclusions, with the ones achieving the highest marks contextualising their answers (e.g. saying the most common behaviour of avoiding eye contact suggests either people were shy or simply very busy and preoccupied with their work to acknowledge other people as they passed them in the corridor).
- 29** There was some confusion in this question with decimal places and significant figures. Most candidates successfully performed the calculation to express 125 as a percentage of 310, but then presented the answer to two decimal places rather than two significant figures. It is worth practicing different techniques for producing estimates of data to demonstrate the difference between decimal places and significant figures here.
- 30(a)** Most candidates were able to explain what is involved in a covert observation. However, there was sometimes a lack of clarity that prevented maximum marks from being awarded. For example, in referring to a covert observation as one in which observers "do not give informed consent", or "can't see the researcher". Some candidates also confused covert with overt observation and controlled observation.
- 30(b)** Most candidates were able to suggest two or more appropriate evaluation points related to the use of covert observation. However, in order to achieve high band marks responses needed to be contextualised to the research outlined.

# H167/02 Psychological themes through core studies

## General Comments:

Candidates, overall, seemed to be well prepared for this new examination. It was pleasing to see that candidates could go beyond recall, and apply what they had learned in the classroom by making connections between different parts of the specification and by applying it to novel scenarios and sources. This unit demonstrated that many candidates have a sound knowledge and understanding of the core studies – not just in terms of the detail of them but also in terms of how and where they can be used to illustrate psychological themes. Nearly all candidates addressed every question and the majority understood what they were being asked for even if they did not always score highly. Section A showed the best performance with candidates able to recall and describe key features of studies. However, candidates could improve their understanding of how studies compare with each other whether in terms of similarities or differences, and especially in relation to how contemporary studies change our understanding of the key issue that they relate to. Section B showed that candidates understood areas and themes well but that they need to be able to show more depth of understanding by explaining concepts further. Section C was a challenging section as candidates could only partially prepare for this, instead being left to apply what they know ‘on the spot’, in the examination. Many candidates coped admirably, with the variation mainly coming from how much psychological substance there was in responses.

## Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1(a)** Most candidates were able to suggest a reason for the high amounts of obedience, with many possible responses being credited. However, a number of candidates did not earn the second mark. Although the majority tried to explain the reason they gave, either the explanation did not match the reason given (e.g. authority being linked to obligation) or the explanation was essentially a re-wording of obedient behaviour (e.g. stating participants could not withdraw rather than explaining why they could not).
- 1(b)** Most candidates were awarded both marks here. Although there was some leeway on how precise the figures needed to be, many candidates recalled the findings very accurately. Where candidates offered raw figures rather than percentages, they needed to state more than one figure before being awarded the first mark so that there was some point of comparison. If candidates did confuse statistics, it was often the rates of disobedience and whistle-blowing that were mixed up. A common error was for candidates to state what was measured rather than give the actual findings.
- 1(c)** Weaker responses to this question tended to describe Bocchiaro et al.’s findings in general rather than focusing on the idea of change and what we have learned. Given the instruction in the specification to compare the classic and contemporary studies, it was assumed that responses were comparing Bocchiaro et al.’s research with Milgram’s if they did not explicitly state otherwise. However, candidates still had to state what was different (e.g. marks were awarded for references to the role of dispositional factors but not for stating that obedience to authority was high). Some candidates did compare what predictions were made at the start of the study with the actual results and this was creditworthy too.

- 2(a)** Most candidates were able to state how the use of different verbs influenced speed estimates. However, only a small number were able to explain how memory had been influenced for this to happen (e.g. distortion of memory). Many did not address this part of the question at all. Of those that did, too many simply quoted what was in the question already (i.e. memory was influenced) rather than going beyond this. Some candidates wrote about the wrong experiment by referring to ‘broken glass’ – however, it did not stop them from earning the mark for explaining the cognitive processes behind participant responses.
- 2(b)** The majority of candidates outlined two relevant controls which were clearly in the context of the Grant et al. study. A common error was to state that the time in which the article was read had been standardised.
- 3** Most candidates understood the question well enough to access some of the available marks. Some candidates made the mistake of focusing on observation as a social learning process rather than a research process which meant their responses were not worthy of credit. The best responses used technical language to identify the features of the observational method used in Bandura et al.’s study (e.g. covert observation) and then outlined how they specifically occurred (use of one way mirror). Not many candidates seemed aware of the behavioural categories used in the observation which was considered an essential piece of information for full marks.
- 4** Many candidates did well on this question, with three marks often being awarded. The main reason for missing out on the fourth mark was because candidates did not elaborate on the similarity they had identified. In some cases, it is possible that they chose a point that was difficult to explain further so candidates may want to be more selective in the future if faced with this kind of question. Investigating the brain and the use of quasi-experiments were commonly quoted similarities, and this were often illustrated to good effect using the named studies. Some candidates briefly referred to studies to earn the application marks.
- 5(a)** Most candidates understood that the strength of the way Freud collected data related to the fact it was qualitative but some candidates failed to adequately explain why this type of data can be advantageous. Most candidates who earned a mark referred to detail or validity, but only the best responses were able to consider this in the context of the study. It was not enough to simply refer to Little Hans – candidates needed to recognise the role of his father, or what it was that was being studied in depth.
- 5(b)** This question was a challenge for many students. Most mistakenly referred to other tests (e.g. gender recognition tasks), or to control groups. Answers that earned marks tended to refer to Happe’s strange stories task much more than the panel of ‘judges’. Where the strange stories task was used, candidates were often good at explaining how it would be used to establish validity.
- 6(a)** This was a well answered question with most candidates offering the idea of studying the influence of others on individual’s behaviour, although other types of responses were creditworthy. Some candidates were not clear that it was a social environment they were referring to rather than the environment in general. Some candidates made the mistake of describing a principle of behaviourism.
- 6(b)** This question challenged candidates in the sense that very few earned all three marks. Responses were not that well focused on the question with some giving a general definition of the social area (again). Sometimes by design (and possibly occasionally by chance), candidates were able to explain how the authority figure represented the influential other and how he impacted on levels of obedience of similar. What was missing in many responses was an explanation of the processes behind that influence.

- 6(c)** Although most candidates understood what was expected of this question – some were unable to identify a difference in the first place which meant they could earn no further marks. It was not that differences were absent from the answer but that either they were not valid, or were not made explicit enough. Candidates demonstrated a better understanding of the biological area but often struggled to be clear about the main principles of the individual differences area and how they differ from the biological area. Better responses focused on differences relating to ideas such as science, reductionism and generalisability. Even then, the difference was not always expanded on which is where two of the five marks were targeted. However, candidates were better at using the relevant core studies to illustrate the difference they had identified – again, tending to find this easier with the studies representing the biological area than those representing the individual differences area.
- 6(d)** In response to this question candidates were able to identify a number of strengths and limitations of breaking ethical guidelines but then they did not expand on the points that they raised which was a requirement for accessing the highest mark bands. Some responses needed to be better planned to avoid the same or similar points being made more than once. Studies were used effectively to illustrate points – with Milgram’s study being particularly popular - but sometimes there was too much focus on these studies rather than on the main debate. Sometimes more than one study was unnecessarily used to illustrate the same point. Weaker responses tended to be led by studies rather than the debate itself and as such were capped at 3 marks as they only partially addressed the question. The weakest responses tended to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of ethics, and so were only indirectly relevant and earned low marks. Responses could have been improved through more careful planning as some points were either the same or overlapped. The best responses were clearly structured, often identifying two strengths and two weaknesses – starting each paragraph with these points, explaining them and then using an appropriate study to succinctly make the point. The best responses also used psychological terminology in an effective way, as well as literacy in general.
- 6(e)** Most candidates were able to earn one mark by showing some understanding of reductionism. A common error was to suggest that reductionism was about focusing on one theory or one particular study. Fewer candidates were able to explain the usefulness of a adopting a reductionist approach which is what the other two marks were crediting. A number of candidates gave examples of reductionist research – sometimes correctly, sometimes not – but this rarely helped to show how being reductionist helps.
- 7(a)** This question attracted a wide range of responses, both in quality and in terms of issues raised. Surprisingly few candidates went for some of the most obvious issues, such as the process of observational learning, the effects of television on development or the nature/nurture debate. Some candidates were very broad in their thinking and raised some interesting points while a minority missed the points in the article. Better responses tended to focus on a broad issue, and then quoted from the source to support their point about the issue, finally returning to where they started with a summative statement or implication. Weaker responses tended to quote from the article while raising their issue at the same time – often limiting the mark to one.
- 7(b)** Most candidates chose appropriate studies to describe with reference to the article – with Bandura et al. and Casey et al. being the obvious ones to select. Some candidates chose studies that could not be credited because they did not make it obvious what the link to the article was. Most candidates were successful at making a link however, with the best ones making clear the relationship between the study’s findings (and sometimes procedure) and the article’s content. What limited most candidates’ mark was their tendency to outline their chosen research too briefly. The command wanted to discourage lots of unnecessary detail on studies but it was still important for candidates to focus on key features such as the aim, sample, variables, procedure, findings and conclusion.

- 7(c)** The vast majority of candidates were able to suggest techniques to promote positive behaviour in school children although some limited themselves by only offering one. The better responses were able to explain the psychological principles behind techniques – for example, relating sticker charts to operant conditioning and the effects of reinforcement. Better responses were also clear on implementation – for example, explaining how older children could practically operate as role models for younger children. A common error was to focus on addressing negative rather than positive behaviour, and there was also a lot of evidence of candidates' misunderstanding the process of negative reinforcement. Candidates that tried to include classical conditioning as part of their response often found they were unable to effectively apply it to this particular scenario. Some candidates evaluated their techniques in response to this question rather than the next one, showing they needed to read the command words more carefully.
- 7(d)** This question elicited a wide range of responses both in terms of quality and content. At the top end, candidates gave a balanced evaluation of their chosen techniques considering both their strengths and limitations. These candidates often raised broad psychological issues demonstrating very good insight into the concepts and principles of the subject. For example, there were some excellent responses that recognised that techniques may assume determinism, or ignore individual differences, or ignore the role of nature in behaviour. At the bottom end, evaluation was focused on basic issues of time and cost with little else considered. There was also a tendency for weaker responses to read like descriptions with techniques being outlined again with a bland statement about them being useful or appropriate.

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