

GCSE

Psychology

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J611**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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

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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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B541 Studies and Applications in Psychology 1

General Comments:

Candidates' performance on this unit was strong, with most candidates attempting all of the questions on the paper, including the most challenging ones. Carefully prepared knowledge enabled candidates to produce fluent, detailed responses, notably in the essay question, although evaluative points still require more attention. Candidates seemed to understand how to provide good examples in application questions, although this appeared to be better in some areas, such as cognitive psychology, than others such as social psychology. Awareness of the number of marks on offer for each question was demonstrated by most in their increasing attempts to structure their responses and expand appropriately. Command words need to be read more carefully by many candidates to avoid, for example offering descriptive comments where evaluative ones are required.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Q 1

Most candidates scored full marks on this question. Where candidates scored 2, it was normally where they believed that Hazan & Shaver had used open questions instead of closed.

Q 2

Candidates displayed a strong understanding of the limitations of Hazan & Shaver's study and most developed their answers to gain both marks. Candidates need to be careful not to offer more than one limitation but to adhere to the specific demands of each question.

Q 3

The majority of candidates identified the correct answer from the source in parts a), b), c), d) and e). Some candidates demonstrated an understanding of the concepts, such as privation in part d), but did not follow the requirements of the question in using the wording from the source. When using the source, candidates must also take care to use the appropriate sentence, or part of the sentence, only.

Q 4

Although most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of what this question was asking for, there was much variability in the quality of answers. Better responses focused on the role of learning in enhancing attachments both on the part of the infant and of the carer. Some attempted, however, to simply give criticisms of Bowlby's theory rather than offer the alternative viewpoint of the Behaviourist theory. This negative approach cannot gain marks since there are several alternative theories besides the Behaviourist theory which may not agree with Bowlby's beliefs.

Q5

Most candidates recognised the need to address both separation protest and stranger anxiety in their answers. Better candidates understood the need to not simply restate the terms used in the question (e.g. avoiding statements that said that 'stranger anxiety is the anxiety experienced around strangers').

Q 6

This question presented few problems for candidates with nearly all earning both marks.

Q 7

The majority of candidates targeted their responses on an evaluation of the procedure as the question demanded. Many mistakenly merely described the procedure. Better answers provided evaluations which were elaborated and placed in the context of Watson & Rayner's study, rather than giving general criticisms which could apply to any experimental study.

Q 8(a)

Most provided the correct answer of 'arachnophobia'.

Q 8(b)

Most candidates chose the correct phrase from the source. Some candidates made the error of attempting to define the phrase 'atypical behaviour' but without referring to the source at all. Some made the error of making too brief a description – 'not normal' – and therefore only partly defining what 'atypical behaviour' means.

Q 8(c)

The most frequent choice of therapy to describe was 'flooding'. Occasionally, the named therapy and outline did not match. On the whole though, candidates have learned this part of the topic well and most answers were successfully developed, making good use of appropriate psychological terminology. Candidates who chose systematic desensitisation or implosion therapy were inclined to offer less detailed explanations. Those who opted for cognitive-behavioural methods rarely gained marks as their responses tended not to refer to behaviour change.

Q 9

Most candidates were able to score at least one mark on this question. The majority expressed the biological/innate basis of the theory. Most had an understanding that phobias stemmed from our ancestral past, but relatively few were able to explain the hereditary involvement of this. The commonly expressed notion of fears being 'passed down' needed to be explained in terms of genetic inheritance to distinguish this from being merely a learned behaviour. Stronger answers referred to how we had evolved phobias to survive, reproduce and avoid dangers. It was also encouraging to see some answers which had not merely stated examples of common fears (e.g. spiders, snakes) but had used them to illustrate a feature of the theory.

Q10

Most candidates gained the mark for this and explained themselves succinctly.

Q11

In part a) the majority of candidates correctly identified this as a 'field' experiment. Candidates were less successful in identifying the IV and the DV in parts b) and c). Better candidates were aware that the IV required some form of comparison or manipulation to be identified (e.g. the *type* of uniform worn by the confederate). Similarly in part c) better responses explained that the measure was, for example, recording whether participants picked up litter or not, rather than merely referring to the order given to pick up litter. In part d) it was pleasing to see that many candidates were able to identify a control. Most opted for the use of 'the same confederate'. Other popular answers included 'the same streets'.

Q 12

The majority of candidates were able to identify at least one situational factor, and it was pleasing to see a wide range of factors being used. Better answers went further to explain how each identified factor increased obedience and/or explained how it could be applied. For full marks, it was necessary for responses to be placed in the context of keeping order in institutions. It was also important to outline three separate factors rather than attempting to use the same one in a slightly different way.

Q 13

Many candidates were able to identify one criticism, mostly opting for the theory ignoring dispositional factors/individual differences. Better candidates were able to expand on this for an additional mark. Candidates found it more difficult to provide a second criticism. It was very common for candidates to criticise studies, notably Milgram's research into obedience, but needed to link this to a criticism of the theory to gain credit.

Q 14

Most candidates gained full marks for parts a) and b) where they remembered to use the source as the question demanded. In part c), most correctly identified the gender type as 'androgynous', although some confused gender for sex and incorrectly gave 'male' or 'boy' as their response.

Q 15

The majority of candidates were clearly aware of the correct male and female chromosome and hormone patterns for parts a) and c). In part b) of the question, slightly fewer were aware that males are not the only sex to have gonads.

Q 16

The most common criticism correctly identified was that the biological theory ignores the influence of nurture/learning. Candidates found it more difficult to correctly identify further criticisms. Often responses suggested sound knowledge but were not sufficiently developed, e.g. saying that the theory 'does not explain androgyny', rather than saying it 'does not explain the rise in androgyny'.

Q17

Robust knowledge of the psychoanalytic theory of gender development was evident here and use of appropriate terminology was widely implemented. References to 'identification' were frequently used although not always fully understood. Stronger answers referred to 'sexual desire' as opposed to 'love' or 'wanting a relationship', and some also included the unconscious nature of the process. Most candidates achieved at least half of the marks on offer. Descriptions tended to be pleasingly coherent, demonstrating a sound grasp of the topic.

Q 18

Both parts a) and b) were answered correctly by most candidates. Weaker answers repeated the terms 'input' and 'storage' which were in the questions, rather than choosing alternative words to define them.

Q 19

Both parts were answered correctly by nearly every candidate.

Q 20

The majority of candidates were able to correctly identify a memory aid for part a) and a wide range of responses was evident. Fewer were able to gain more than 1 mark for part b), which required them to explain how the memory aid worked and to place it, in context (i.e. remembering the drinks) for full marks.

Q 21

Many candidates explained how displacement affects memory extremely well, demonstrating a strong understanding of this process of forgetting. A significant number of candidates muddled alternative explanations of forgetting in their answers, notably lack of rehearsal/decay.

Q 22

Candidates were well prepared to demonstrate their knowledge of Terry's study into the serial position effect. Most understood the procedure and the results of the study and described them clearly and fluently. It was impressive to see so many referring to details of the procedure including the research method, the sample chosen, the IV and DV, and the experimental design.

Description of results was mixed, with some candidates giving outstanding detail. Weaker candidates often referred only to the results of one condition, giving the mistaken impression that for all participants in the two conditions there had been both a primacy and a recency effect. Evaluation was more varied in quality. Better candidates were able to outline an issue (e.g. lack of ecological validity) and then go on to explain why it was a problem in the context of this study rather than explaining it in general terms which could apply to any experiment.

B542 Studies and Applications in Psychology 2

General Comments:

Performance was generally good on this particular unit, with evidence that candidates are increasingly well prepared for the questions that they are faced with. Candidates showed an impressive ability to interpret most questions accurately even if their responses were not always as detailed and accurate as they needed to be. This may also account for the fact that most candidates attempted all questions – they clearly had the confidence to do this at least. The best candidates demonstrated strong skills across the range of skills which are tested, including applying their knowledge and understanding to some very challenging sources and scenarios. Evaluation skills continued to improve, especially in terms of considering the limitations of research studies. Some candidates would benefit from taking more time to plan responses to higher tariff questions as this was often where differences in performance were seen.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Q 1

Nearly every candidate was able to use the source to offer two correct answers here.

Q.2

Most candidates showed good knowledge of social learning terms by correctly matching all four.

Q.3

Most candidates correctly identified both features of Yuki et al's study.

Q.4

The majority of candidates were able to select a limitation which they could expand on to earn full marks. Questioning the use of emoticons and relating this to the issue of ecological validity was both popular and successful. A common error was to suggest that the study was culturally biased.

Q.5

Most candidates understood how to answer this question with many identifying relevant techniques. Some candidates were able to explain techniques further although some did not do this in the context of social skills training. A minority of candidates misunderstood the question and offered areas in which social skills training would be used rather than how.

Q.6

This was a challenging question but this did not deter candidates. Some were able to identify the humanistic concepts sign-posted by the source, making links between these and Colin's case. Most candidates demonstrated a general knowledge of how humanistic theory explains low self-esteem and, if they related this to Colin, they were able to earn at least a mark. Weaker responses summarised Colin's situation without referencing humanistic ideas resulting in no marks being awarded.

Q.7

The majority of candidates had some knowledge and understanding of how counselling works but a number of responses were poorly structured around the question either listing a number of different features or essentially focusing on the same one in both parts. Better responses clearly identified key principles of counselling (e.g. being non-directive, being non-judgemental, showing empathy) and then either described these principles or explained their effect. The weakest responses were too generic and described features that could have applied to a number of psychological therapies (e.g. encouraging clients to open up) rather than to counselling specifically.

Q.8

Most candidates were able to enter the correct terms in the passage but 'instinct' was sometimes used instead of 'trait'. 'Extroversion' and 'neuroticism' were sometimes mixed up.

Q.9

Most candidates were able to outline aspects of the procedure used by Van Houtte & Jarvis, with many earning marks for the sample, or the methods used, or the measures taken. Candidates were less clear that participants were *matched* on certain factors (as opposed to being divided). Candidates were less likely to earn marks for the findings (for which there were two marks reserved) because they were either muddled or lacked clarity (especially in terms of being explicit that pet owners were measured against non-pet owners).

Q.10

Few candidates scored on this challenging question. Although many candidates demonstrated that they were able to distinguish between sensation and perception, few were able to illustrate by choosing the concepts listed. Some candidates stopped themselves from earning marks for careless use of the verb 'see' which could refer to both sensation and perception.

Q.11

There were some good responses to this question that explained how experience impacts on perceptual set and how this in turn leads the top down processes. Some responses merely included these key concepts but did not really describe them in a coherent way. A common error was for candidates to stay focused on the role of experience (which was given in the question) rather than developing its role in terms of perception.

Q.12

As with Q. 11, there were some good responses and this was often attributable to the same candidates. Here, credit was given for ideas such as perception as an instinctive, data driven and direct process with accuracy and coherency needed for full marks. A number of candidates made the mistake of describing constructivist theory, sometimes repeating the content of their answer to Q. 11. Another common error was to write about top down processing and bottom up processing in the same response which meant that the former negated the latter.

Q.13

The majority of candidates scored full marks demonstrating sound knowledge of the Haber & Levin study by responding correctly to the true/false statements. The most common error by far, was to identify the second statement as true showing that a number of candidates were less clear on the DV in this study and how it was measured.

Q.14

Most candidates were able to score on this question but were often limited to one mark for knowing a technique (and sometimes describing it in detail) but failing to apply it to the product in the question – a chocolate bar. The best responses not only explained how the technique would be used in this context but clearly outlined how this would affect an audience's perception of the product. A common error was to describe techniques which were related more to memory or attention.

Q.15

Most candidates earned both marks on this question but when they scored one, it tended to be the first headline that they correctly identified suggesting there is better understanding of the problems of measuring crime compared to the problems of defining it.

Q.16

Many candidates were credited with full marks overall. Nearly all candidates identified that it was a question about procedure and indeed many of them demonstrated some knowledge of the study but descriptions were not always clear or careful enough for two marks. There were many good responses to 16.b although some candidates need to go beyond description to make the limitation more explicit.

Q.17

The best responses clearly identified a method or technique, explained how it would work in context, and made it explicit how this would lead to a reduction in crime. It was this third element which was missing from most candidates' responses. Unfocused responses were common here – often with a number of different ways included and with some overlap – making it difficult to award full or higher marks.

Q.18

As expected, this question elicited a full range of responses. Biological theory was the most commonly offered theory by far, although there were some good descriptions that used social learning theory. If social learning theory is described in this topic, it is important that candidates explicitly apply it to the acquisition of criminal behaviour to secure higher marks. The best responses offered both breadth (e.g. referring to genes, brain dysfunction and facial features) but also depth (e.g. often through giving accurate and detailed accounts of specific examples of brain dysfunction). Middle band responses often had the content but not the accuracy and clarity. Bottom band responses tended to be brief (focusing on one or two features of a theory) or were muddled.

Q.19

Most candidates could apply Piaget's and Vygotsky's ideas using the source and earned both marks. If candidates missed a mark, it was quite evenly divided between 19.a and 19.b suggesting no real difference in candidates' understanding of the theories. A common error was to offer 'rewarding good behaviour' as a strategy and this appeared in both 19.a and 19.b.

Q.20

Most candidates did well on these multiple choice questions, with many earning the first three marks. The fourth part of this question was designed to be challenging and, indeed, it meant that the majority did not get it right – often going for the third option instead of the second.

Q.21

Many candidates earned marks on this question with scores spread reasonably evenly across the range. Most candidates seemed to understand what the limitations of Piaget's experiment were, and the differentiation came in terms of how well they expressed this. Those candidates that scored zero tended to evaluate Piaget's theory rather than his study. This is something that needs to be guarded against in this topic where the core study and core theory are attributed to the same psychologist.

Q.22

Many candidates were credited with marks in the top of the middle band, often due to accurate and detailed accounts of Piaget's theory coupled with some valid, if brief, evaluation. The best responses were more balanced between description and evaluation where key concepts and pertinent points were well explained. Responses in the bottom band tended to rely mainly on description and then this tended to give an incomplete or muddled outline of the theory. Some candidates were also limited by their poor use of the written language, which was quite marked with so much technical content. A number of candidates failed to score on this question – either by not attempting the question or by making the mistake of describing a Piagetian study rather than his theory.

B543 Research in Psychology

General Comments:

Once again, a very high proportion of candidates attempted all the questions on the paper demonstrating that the paper was accessible to almost all candidates.

It was particularly pleasing to see many questions that appeared to be inaccessible to candidates in previous sessions, being answered very well in this series. For example, candidates showed an excellent understanding of observer effects and null hypotheses where fewer errors were seen than in previous sessions.

Candidates remain to be encouraged to utilise the source material in section A more effectively and to use the nature of all of the questions to guide them with the more challenging questions. For example, many candidates identified the correct hypothesis as predicting a difference in Q2 but described relationships and correlations as part of what the psychologist found in Q6.

In section B, candidates are encouraged to focus on continuity between questions to avoid muddled or contradictory designs. Candidates are also encouraged to avoid repetition in their responses across questions. Credit for one aspect of a design can only be achieved once. Candidates are finally encouraged to pay particular attention to the method required by this section; candidates transferring the use of interviews or questionnaires from section A to section B were commonly seen, despite the required instruction to design an observation.

Candidates remain to be encouraged to pay particular attention to and use the command words in questions to guide their response. Whilst candidates are evidencing an understanding of concepts, they appear to be focussing on generic definitions and failing to show how procedures are carried out. For example, describing generic definitions of sampling methods, as opposed to describing how the psychologist in the source could have obtained her sample.

When candidates are using the additional pages, clearly labelling the questions in the margin is essential. On many occasions there was no indication that additional space has been used or the incorrect question numbers were used.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Section A

Q1. Few incorrect responses were observed for this question with the majority of candidates demonstrating knowledge of what an aim is.

Q2. Generally, a well answered question with many candidates correctly identifying the hypothesis. Where errors were made, it was invariably because of confusion between 'difference' and 'relationship' leading to candidates ticking the incorrect box. There were a few instances where more than one box was ticked. Candidates are encouraged to ensure they clearly cross out any response they do not want marked.

Q3(a). The majority of candidates could identify a sampling method to achieve partial marks here. Opportunity, volunteer and random sampling were the most common choices. Some responses were confused and combined sampling methods, identifying one method and describing a different one. The most frequent reason for not achieving more than partial marks was due to candidates giving a definition of the sampling method, not capturing **how** the psychologist could have obtained her sample. Other candidates evaluated their choice of

sampling method which was not required in this part of the question. Others justified their choice of sampling method. This question required some contextualisation using the source material; fewer candidates were able to do this to achieve full marks.

Q3(b). Responses to this question varied. Whilst some candidates were able to state a weakness of their suggested sampling method, fewer candidates demonstrated the ability to evaluate in context of their specified sampling method. Responses referring to generic weaknesses were frequently seen where candidates relied on 'reduced representativeness' or 'bias' with no elaboration.

Q4. A well answered question with the majority of candidates recognising the type of data in the source as quantitative. Few candidates gave qualitative data as their response.

Q5. A generally well answered question with the majority of candidates demonstrating an understanding of how open and closed questions differ. There was a good range of responses, with examples and reference to types of data. Candidates are encouraged to avoid 'opposites' in their responses where questions ask for a distinction between two things. For example, giving responses such as 'closed question give yes or no answers and open do not'. Some candidates described features of the question types without naming which type of question they were describing.

Q6. Whilst many candidates were able to give a clear statement relating to what the psychologist found, fewer candidates were able to go beyond this. Some candidates confused the information given in the source and referred to correlations and / or relationships being identified. Those candidates who were able to give an elaborated response did so by referring to the acceptance of the null hypothesis / rejection of alternate hypothesis or made a more general statement drawing a conclusion from the findings.

Q7. Many candidates relied on lying as a weakness of questionnaires and thus failed to achieve a mark. Those candidates who gave a specific weakness of using questionnaires often failed to elaborate showing how or why it is a weakness in part (b) of this question. Many candidates were able to state an effect the weakness would have on the findings and achieved credit in part (c) of this question.

Q8. The majority of candidates demonstrated an understanding of structured and unstructured interviews by correctly matching up the examples. A few candidates were seen to have drawn three lines in total, often confusing structured interviews. Candidates are encouraged to clearly cross out any annotation they do not want marked. Occasionally it was found to be difficult to establish whether a line was intended to be erased.

Q9(a). Whilst some candidates could state an advantage of the interview method, many could not elaborate on their responses to explain how or why it was a strength in context of interviews specifically. Those responses achieving full marks often referred to the benefits of being face to face with an interviewer.

Q9(b). The same pattern in responses was mirrored in part (a) and (b) of this question. Many candidates recognised social desirability, increased possibility of the interviewee lying, the increased time required or the complexity of comparing responses from interviews, but fewer candidates could elaborate saying how or why this problem is specific to interviewing. Candidates are encouraged to avoid giving contradictory responses in questions requiring evaluation. For example, candidates were seen stating less chance of lying as an advantage in part (a) followed by more chance of lying in part (b).

Q10. This question produced a range of responses. Many errors were made with candidates confusing the concepts of reliability and validity. Candidates discussed changing the question type from closed questions to open to increase reliability, when in fact this would increase validity. Furthermore, such responses discussed the use of rating scales, the sample size or making cross cultural comparisons and as such failed to achieve credit here. The candidates, who demonstrated an understanding of how reliability could be increased, often gave detailed responses that extended beyond the requirements of the question.

Q11. Overall a very well answered question with the majority of candidates recognising the correlation as negative.

Section B

Q12(a). Overall, this was a well answered question with many candidates demonstrating a good understanding of null hypotheses. Candidates who kept their hypotheses simple were often more successful than those who over complicated them. Inaccurate responses included referring to relationships / correlations or writing alternate hypotheses. Candidates are encouraged not to hedge their bets when writing hypotheses as often responses referring to differences and relationships were seen. Some hypotheses changing the design from the instruction given were also seen. A minority of candidates gave aims instead of a hypothesis.

Q12(b). Many candidates were able to state an identifiable sample to achieve the mark here. Candidates are encouraged to consider the context of their investigations in section B as on occasion, unsuitable samples were suggested such as using people who would not be studying. Responses stating the use of males and females or just students were not credit worthy here. This was the most common reason for failing to achieve the mark.

Q12(ci). The majority of candidates could identify a type of observation. Covert was the most frequently seen response.

12(cii). Many candidates could justify their choice of observation in part (i). Where responses stated using participant / non-participant in part (i), more confusion was often seen in this part of the question.

12(d). Responses to this question varied. Section A and B on this paper are independent, as such candidates are encouraged not to implement methods in section A into their designs in section B. Candidates who failed to achieve marks were often seen confusing methods of investigation. A high number of responses describing the distribution of questionnaires or conducting interviews was seen when an observational method was required. Some candidates described complex experimental designs. Whilst the level of detail was very high the lack of evidence of any observation technique meant these responses could not receive credit. Few candidates achieved full marks by including at least three separate features of how the observation could be carried out. Many candidates continue to state features with no elaboration. For example, saying that they would use an opportunity sample with no description of how this would be achieved. Responses such as 'this appear list like and do not demonstrate an understanding'. Candidates need to be careful not to give details of the procedure that have been assessed in previous parts of the question. For example, candidates often referred to consideration of the same ethical guideline in question 12(f). Such responses could not be double credited. Finally, candidates were often seen giving detailed justifications for their procedure which could not be credited as the focus of the question was **how** not **why**.

12(e). Generally, this was a very well answered question with many candidates achieving full marks. A minority of candidates, confused observer effect with observer bias and described observers looking for information to support their hypothesis.

12(f). Whilst many candidates could identify an ethical issue appropriate to their investigation, fewer could elaborate on their responses to show its relevance. Often candidates gave responses that contradicted the nature of their investigation, for example stating that they would gain informed consent at the start of the observation when using a covert observational method or giving participants the right to withdraw at any time during the research in covert observations. Confusion with ethics and ethnicity continues to be seen where candidates discuss cross cultural comparisons where ethical issues are required.

12(g). This question was also one of the lowest scoring questions with candidates showing very little knowledge of the strengths of using the observational method. Many candidates relied on responses referring to being able to collect the data for themselves or being able to see behaviour first hand. Where correct strengths were seen, they often merely stated the strength without going beyond to show how or why it is a strength in context of the investigation. For example, candidates would often say it had higher ecological validity or captured more natural behaviour without showing evidence of understanding how or why. Some candidates transferred their responses from Q12(cii) here and used their justification of observation type as their strength.

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