# GCSE

# Psychology

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J611**

# OCR Report to Centres June 2017

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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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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# B541 Studies and Applications in Psychology 1

**General Comments:**

It was pleasing to see that the vast majority of candidates attempted every question on the paper, particularly the more challenging extended response questions at the end of Sections D and E. This was reflected in a high standard of performance with large numbers of candidates earning many of the marks available. Knowledge and understanding of key concepts, theories and studies remained strong, with more variability in evaluation skills. Having said this, most candidates were able to make some attempt to evaluate even if it was at a very simplistic level. A lot of the differentiation in the marks could be attributed to the extent to which candidates were able to apply their knowledge and understanding to novel information or to the studies they were asked to criticise. There was also a clear distinction between higher performing candidates and lower performing candidates in terms of their ability to explain an idea or process, or to develop an evaluative comment. In short, it was skills that separated candidates more so than what they did or did not know.

**Comments on Individual Questions:**

**Q.1**
The vast majority of candidates earned all three marks here showing sound knowledge of the stages of information processing. Where errors occurred, it was often when 'output' was chosen instead of 'retrieval'.

**Q.2**
Most candidates correctly offered 'short term memory' and 'long term memory' (or similar) for parts (a) and (b) of the table. Labelling was less clear for parts (c) and (d) although terms that implied 'duration' and 'capacity' were credited. Common errors were to use the term 'storage' for capacity which was too general, or to label the columns using names of stores again. A significant minority of candidates left parts (c) and (d) blank.

**Q.3**
The majority of candidates earned both marks by correctly matching the types of forgetting with their definitions. If candidates got one wrong, it tended to be displacement rather than decay.

**Q.4**
These multiple choice questions were generally answered with accuracy demonstrating appropriate knowledge of the core study in Memory. It was part (b) that candidates tended to get wrong if they did not score full marks.

**Q.5**
Most candidates were able to name, or outline, an appropriate technique although a number suggested chunking – a technique that did not fit with the source. Use of cues and rehearsal were popular techniques. Better responses could explain how the chosen technique impacted on recall but clear application to the source was rare. However, the best responses made explicit links between the description of the technique and how this would apply to the learning of lines. Just stating that Mohammed had lines to learn was not enough to earn a mark for applying knowledge and understanding. Candidates needed to recognise that some techniques are easier to describe in this context than others and this should have informed their choice.

**Q.6**
Nearly every candidate correctly identified the two situational factors.

**Q.7a**
Most candidates achieved up to two marks by demonstrating a broad knowledge of the findings of Bickman's study. The best responses gave clear and accurate details of the results, often securing all three marks. Weaker responses were less clear that it was a study that investigated the effect of appearance or dress on obedience rather than the role itself. In these cases, the conclusions did not necessarily pertain to the findings.

**Q.7b**
Nearly all candidates could identify a valid limitation, however this was not always outlined in the context of the study itself. For example, many candidates identified the lack of control of extraneous variables as a limitation and although they could name relevant variables, they were not explicit about how they would have influenced obedience levels. Better responses tended to focus on issues such as gender bias and then went on to explain how the sex of a person giving orders is a factor in authority and status.

**Q.8a**
This question presented few problems for candidates who extracted the right information from the source.

**Q.8b**
Most candidates knew that dispositional factors referred to personality although a significant number took the opportunity to mistakenly refer to situational factors instead. Many candidates recognised that Stella displayed an authoritarian personality with most being able to use information – from both the source and previous knowledge – to explain this. Full marks required them to explain where Stella's (or Luke's) personality had originated from i.e. a strict or harsh upbringing.

**Q.9**
This question was generally well answered by the majority of candidates, with 'prisons being the most commonly chosen institution to exemplify their responses. Many candidates could list various techniques used to promote obedience, full marks were achieved through coherent responses.

**Q.10**
Candidates appeared well prepared to offer accurate definitions of both sex and gender. However, care should have been taken to ensure selected definitions were 'opposites' in order to show a clear difference between the two concepts. Sometimes, answers focused on a particular aspect of sex (e.g. how it is labelled) but then a different aspect of gender (e.g. its origins). Such responses were limited to one mark.

**Q.11**
This was a well answered question. Most candidates opted for the problems of generalisation due to the use of a single participant. Weaker answers failed to contextualise the response and this was more likely to happen where other limitations were considered e.g. researcher bias, lack of control of variables, etc.

**Q.12**
As with previous series, candidates on the whole were aware of a criticism of the biological theory of gender but were unable to articulate it sufficiently for full marks. Candidates need to be prepared to develop a point and this can include being clear and explicit about the feature of a theory being criticised. Some candidates had a tendency to reiterate a point rather than develop it - for example, suggesting that environmental factors were not taken into account by the theory and then going on to merely repeat this point in different ways or through illustration. Some

candidates continue to make the mistake of thinking that the biological theory does not explain androgyny (as opposed to the rise of androgyny) or does not explain atypical gender behaviour.

**Q.13**
Both parts were well answered by the vast majority of candidates. The important thing to get right here was to stick to the information in the source.

**Q.14**
Most candidates tackled this extremely well, with good use of appropriate terminology such as 'penis envy', 'identification' and 'baby as a penis substitute'. A common error was for candidates to fail to make a clear reference to the relationship with the mother in terms of the actual complex e.g. blaming mother for castration, fear of losing mother's love. This meant many candidates ended up with two marks.

**Q.15**
It was pleasing to read many well considered responses, with most achieving at least two marks and a significant number achieving full marks. The most popular area of application was education although there were also answers that considered the marketing and manufacturing of toys, or supporting individuals through gender reassignment. However, those choosing these alternative areas tended to be less prepared in terms of explaining how research findings could be applied.

**Q.16a**
The majority identified acrophobia as the right answer with only a small number of candidates getting confused between this phobia and agoraphobia.

**Q.16**
This question was generally well answered with clearly structured responses which also considered the context of treating a fear of heights. Flooding was the most popular choice of therapy and tended to be accompanied by the best explanations. The most common errors involved candidates either not emphasising the severity of the situation that needed to be faced, or neglecting to apply the therapy to acrophobia. Perfectly acceptable, but less detailed answers, tended to be offered by those choosing implosion therapy. Those choosing systematic desensitisation often described the stages in great detail but at the expense of the inclusion of other creditworthy points.

**Q.17**
This question was generally well-answered with most candidates accurately defining 'atypical behaviour' although applying this more specifically to phobias presented more of a challenge.

**Q.18**
Most candidates were able to accurately identify an ethical issue, although some did this more precisely than others. However, not that many candidates seemed able to apply this to the Watson & Raynor study explicitly enough.

**Q.19**
The majority of candidates gained marks on this question, with only a small proportion attempting to explain behaviourism. Credit was frequently given for concepts such as threat and survival. As in previous years, the concept of 'passing down' phobias tended to be weakly explained, usually expressed in such a way as to be equally applicable to learning theory. Examples of phobias were numerous and liberally applied but weren't always used to effectively illustrate a point about evolutionary factors. Pleasingly, the notion of 'preparedness' was present in many responses, with better candidates expanding on this concept. Many pointed out the scarcity of phobias towards modern items, with stronger answers offering a relevant explanation of this phenomenon.

**Q.20**
This question elicited a range of answers. Better responses referred to features such as infants' responses to separation from carers, to reunion with carers, to strangers or even to parenting styles or future relationship patterns. Weaker responses commonly referred only to the behaviour of the infants in one situation, typically when the mother was present. When referring to some features, such as separation anxiety, many failed to highlight the more pertinent features of insecure-ambivalent infants therefore not clearly distinguishing them from secure infants. Again, for a question asking candidates to explain a difference, the necessity for candidates to offer opposing features was sometimes overlooked.

**Q.21a**
Most candidates secured one of the two marks here for identifying a relevant limitation of either the use of a questionnaire or of closed questions. Only some responses were developed to apply this limitation to the study itself. In addition, a small proportion of answers focused on limitations of the sample used rather than the method.

**Q.21b**
Compared to Q.21a, candidates were better at applying their chosen limitation to the study so both marks were awarded more often.

**Q.22a**
Many candidates were able to give a creditworthy response with a food or similar being a common answer. A common error was to provide examples that would not be directly relevant to attachment behaviours in infancy e.g. use of stickers, sweets or toys.

**Q.22b**
As with Q.22a, many candidates were able to give a creditworthy response with smiling being a common answer. Some candidates failed to recognise that they needed to provide a reinforcer which would impact on the carer (rather than something the carer does to reinforce attachment).

**Q23**
The quality of extended responses continues to be strong in general, with candidates fully prepared to offer the requisite number of descriptive and evaluative points. Candidates were more likely to earn full marks on description rather than evaluation especially where the key features of the Bowlby's theory - such as monotropy and the critical period - were clearly and accurately explained. Evaluation tended to be weaker as a number of candidates offered simple statements that merely negated the features of the theory (e.g. infants don't just have one primary caregiver, children can form attachments outside of the critical period). Better responses included more developed points which explored the process of multiple attachments, the concept of the sensitive period or the role of the environment in attachment as opposed to instinct. The use of case studies such as Genie and the Czech twins, was usually far too superficial to be effectively employed as supporting evaluation points. Coherency is still an issue for many with answers appearing too list-like. However, at the top end, there were many lucid, fluent and detailed responses.

# B542 Studies and Applications in Psychology 2

**General Comments:**

Performance was generally very good on this particular unit and was a clear improvement on previous years, with candidates demonstrating that they are well prepared for the different types of questions that appear on the paper. Candidates showed they were able to understand the requirements of most questions which allowed them to demonstrate their knowledge of psychology in an appropriate way. Moreover, most candidates attempted all questions. The best candidates demonstrated strong skills across the range that are tested, including impressive performance on the extended writing questions, they also showed a reasonably good ability to apply knowledge in order to explain theories and behaviour in novel sources. Evaluation skills continued to improve, with candidates showing awareness and understanding of psychological terminology needed to evaluate both research studies and theories.

**Comments on Individual Questions:**

**Question No.**

Q1. Candidates were almost always able to tick the correct answer.

Q2 This was generally answered well with candidates being able to identify the correct terms from the source. However, there were some errors, in particular for 2a when personality was often given as an answer.

Q3 There was a full range of marks here. Good candidates managed to correctly match all three features. Most were able to identify the sample, however the IV and DV were sometimes confused and a common error was selecting 'rating scale' as the dependent variable.

Q4 Most candidates managed to score at least 1 mark here. Some candidates failed to recognise that the children were aged 8-13 years and were therefore not all 'teenagers', while others wrongly stated that there was a small sample. The best answers were well developed, included psychological terminology and identified that the sample was only from a particular location, or only a particular group.

Q5 Although candidates had good knowledge of research into the self, few applied it effectively to the case of Anita and as a result many were awarded 3 marks. Some candidates merely referred to Maslow's hierarchy of needs or 'why' Anita needed help and possible causes of her feelings of worthlessness and as a result were not answering the requirements of the question which was explaining 'how' she could be helped.. In order to do well on such questions candidates are encouraged to refer to details from the source.

Q6

Some candidates were able to identify that the theory was unscientific and is difficult to measure objectively. There were examples of underdeveloped answers or generic evaluation points such as 'ignores individual differences' or 'ignores environmental factors'.

Q7 Both 7a and 7b were answered very well, demonstrating that candidates have good knowledge of Yuki et al.'s study.

Q8 Candidates showed good application of knowledge of Social Learning Theory (SLT) from the source. The majority of candidates correctly identified imitation, punishment and reward (8a, 8c and 8d) from source. However, only a minority of candidates gained the mark for 8b as they failed to complete their answer with 'using positive non-verbal communication (NVC)', which was a requirement of application of knowledge for this question.

Q9a Very few candidates referred to 'different countries', but many were still able to achieve 2 marks through an effective example whereby they identified different forms of NVC in two named countries. In some cases, candidates simply reworded the question and didn't gain any marks.

Q9b Marks were achieved here by a reference to a SLT feature in the context of culture and/or link the feature of SLT to cultural variations.

Q10 This question showed a real spread of marks. TThere were many examples of answers which provided some excellent evaluation points in relation to SLT; these were usually related to NVCs continuing after being punished and differences in NVC despite being brought up in the same environment. Some answers did not present a criticism, they merely provided either a descriptive statement or raised a question such as 'Why do children brought up in the same environment behave differently?' without either linking their answer to SLT and or NVC.

Q11 Most candidates achieved 1 mark by correctly ticking the box which related to invariant stages.

Q12 Overall candidates did reasonably well at identifying stages and phrases from the source, with all parts showing a similar overall performance. There were a number of reasons for where errors were made though: In 12a and b this was usually naming the incorrect stage, while there were also instances where candidates provided either ages or a description of what Bobby/Matilda could do, rather than state their cognitive development stage. In 12c some candidates confused object permanence with conservation and in 12d some confused conservation with egocentrism, others named the stage instead, while a significant minority identified more than one phrase and included a whole sentence.

Q13. Performance on this question was very mixed, with a high number of candidates scoring no marks. The main reason for this was that no evaluation was given, instead either descriptive phrases alone or a description of Piaget's theory was provided. However, there were some good answers given, although some candidates muddled invariant and universal and gave answers where it was unclear which concept they were referring to. Another common error was children 'skipping' stages or 'completing the stages in the wrong/different order'. Unsurprisingly the focus of most answers was on limitations of the theory.

Q14 Although the majority of candidates were familiar with Piaget's research, not all demonstrated this with clarity and marks were lost for a variety of reasons; relating the results to conservation rather than in relation to rows or counters, not providing a conclusion, vaguely referring to either getting the task right or wrong, or discussing the wrong cognitive stages/ages. That said, many candidates did answer the question well with two clear results and a conclusion.

Q15 Candidates performed reasonably well on this question, with most applying the research to schools and teaching, many were able to go further by identifying practices used in education, however full marks were not achieved in answers which were not fully developed. While most were able to at least identify a relevant context, a minority of candidates failed to refer to any relevant context at all.

Q16 Application of knowledge of criminal behaviour was impressive, with a majority achieving a mark on all three parts of this question. Although performance on the criminal personality part was slightly below that on defining and measuring crime.

Q17. The majority of candidates chose to outline brain dysfunction in this answer, as opposed to heredity. On the whole areas of the brain, the role of the area and links to crime were discussed well. Candidates failed to achieve three marks for either not describing what brain dysfunction is, linking the part of the brain to the wrong (dys) function, or a failing to link to criminal behaviour. Candidates showed knowledge of many different parts of the brain; in some cases this was detrimental to them as they listed a number of different areas without developing points relating to any of them. When a candidate did describe the criminal gene this was answered well, although on occasions the 'criminal' gene was omitted.

Q18. Candidates showed good evaluation of the Mednick et al. study; many answers focused on cultural or gender bias, with the best responses developing this point further with context from the study e.g. 'only males' or 'only from Denmark' and the implication that results cannot be generalised. When marks were not achieved this was generally because the point was sufficiently developed. Some candidates focused on criminal records or the 'contamination effect'.

Q19. There were many examples of very good top band answers to this question, with candidates showing detailed knowledge and understanding of concepts of SLT, terminology was used effectively and was successfully applied to explaining criminal behaviour. Unfortunately, there were a high proportion of candidates who despite having good knowledge of the theory were unable to achieve more than 2 marks as they failed to contextualise their answer beyond simply mentioning 'criminal behaviour'. On rare occasions no marks were achieved because another theory (e.g. biological theory) was discussed.

Q20. Overall, this was a well answered question with many candidates achieving full marks. In previous years the section on perception has been challenging for many candidates. However, this question seemed to be more accessible. Candidates showed good knowledge of a wide range of depth cues, with the best answers referring to distance and providing an appropriate example. The most common reason for full marks not being achieved was the lack of an example. Some candidates identified a depth cue but then gave an incorrect description e.g. identified 'height in plane' but then described 'relative size'.

Q21. Generally well answered, with most candidates achieving at least 2 marks.

Q22 Performance on this question was extremely impressive and was a big improvement on how the 10 mark question has been answered in previous years. With a large number of candidates achieving full marks on this question. Many candidates gave both excellent descriptions of Haber and Levin's study (a few described Gibson and Walk's study), thus scoring full AO1 marks and in numerous cases the description was outstanding with far more than 5 examples of knowledge and understanding (identified on the mark scheme). Although evaluation was not always as good generally, the best answers still provided ample evaluation. Such responses did not only identify several evaluation points, but also had detailed explanations/elaborations, thus scoring full AO3 marks.

There were some examples where candidate's answers showed results that were unclear or incorrect, other responses failed to identify the key point about the objects being of a fixed size. Some candidates also wrongly identified the study as a 'field' experiment. Other candidates were unable to access the top band as there were too few or underdeveloped evaluation points.

# 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 inter-rater reliability and null hypotheses where fewer errors were seen than in previous sessions.

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 experiments, correlations and observations from section A to section B was commonly seen, despite the required instruction to design an interview.

Candidates remain to be encouraged to pay 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 justifications, failing to show how procedures are carried out. For example, describing generic definitions and justifications of sampling methods, as opposed to explaining how a sample would be obtained in their investigation.

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 correctly giving the aim of the study in the source.

Q2. A well answered question with the majority of candidates correctly recognising that a null hypothesis predicts no difference or no correlation.

Q3. This question was also one of the lowest scoring questions with candidates showing very little knowledge of target populations. Many candidates gave vague or non-specific responses stating ‘males and females’ or ‘students’. Few candidates could identify the target population as anyone in the psychologist’s school at the time of the study.

Q4(a) This question produced a range of responses. Whilst many candidates correctly identified the types of observations used in the source, some hedged their bets and combined covert and non-participant in both boxes or offered the same type for both observations (for example, covert).

Q4(b) Generally, a well answered question with the majority of candidates identifying ethical issues as a possible disadvantage of covert observations or the potential for inaccurate data collection in non-participant observations. Fewer candidates were able to elaborate on their response explaining why the disadvantage would be likely in context of the type of observation. Candidates are encouraged to read questions carefully as a minority misread the question offering an advantage of either observation described in the source.

Q5. Many candidates were able to show an understanding that the box was kept in the same location as a control / to achieve standardisation to achieve partial marks. Fewer candidates were able to explain why this was necessary for the cited study.

Q6. A very well answered question with the majority of candidates referring to 'numerical' or 'numbers'.

Q7(a) The majority of candidates correctly identified the total number of males who looked inside the box as 41. Where errors were seen, candidates stated '52' (all males) or '11' (males who obeyed).

Q7(b) A well answered question with the majority of candidates identifying one type of graph that could be used to present the data. Using a bar graph was the most common response. A minority of candidates stated using scatter graphs or line graphs being unable to achieve credit for this question.

Q7(c) Generally, a well answered question with many candidates using the data from the source to support their findings or drawing conclusions referring to the hypothesis.

Q8. Responses to this question varied. Whilst some candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the concept of ecological validity, many struggled to explain what it is and failing to capture the lack of reality in the way obedience was investigated in the source. There were a number of ways in which errors were seen, including some candidates confusing ecological validity with ethical issues, offering responses outlining changes to the sample / features of the sample (population validity), or focussing on the location of the observation (a school) rather than the instruction itself.

Q9. Candidates achieving full marks on this question followed the logical approach to the question by firstly describing what the observer effect is and then explaining why this was not likely to have occurred in the cited study. Some candidates confused observer effect with observer bias or linked their explanation to non-participant observations rather than covert observations.

Q10. A very well answered question with the majority of candidates identifying 'more than one person agrees on what they are observing' as the correct definition of inter-rater reliability.

Q11. This question was one of the lowest scoring questions with candidates showing very little knowledge of how correlations and experiments are different. Whilst some candidates could identify that correlations look for relationships, many gave muddled explanations about experiments. Few candidates could explain a key feature of both an experiment and a correlation, and even fewer made comparative statements. Those achieving full marks often referred to experiments testing for a difference and correlations investigating a relationship.

Q12(a) Many candidates referred to an example of gender bias for this question rather than a definition.

Q12(b) Whilst many candidates could explain the effect gender bias may have on findings; lowering the generalisability to both genders, fewer candidates were able to say why. Some candidates outlined studies with samples of only one gender, but failed to elaborate.

Q12(c) A very well answered question with the vast majority of candidates giving 'culture bias' or 'age bias' as one other type of bias that may occur in psychological research.

**Section B**

Q13(a) The majority of candidates achieved partial marks for this question for either recognising that an alternate hypothesis predicts a difference, or for accurately identifying both variables. Some candidates changed the focus of the investigation; flipping the variables to investigate the effect of mood on television choice as opposed to the effect of television choice on mood as outlined in the brief. Some candidates continue to give aims and statements of results in place of hypotheses. Null hypotheses were also seen.

Q13(bi) Many candidates referred to sampling technique rather than identifying a sample in this question. Many candidates also failed to state an identifiable sample by referring to generalised groups such as 'males and females' or 'students'.

Q13(bii) Many candidates were able to achieve some marks for this question by either stating a sampling technique or giving descriptions of. Fewer candidates could explain how the sampling technique would be employed in context of their investigation. Many responses were seen where candidates named *or* described their sampling technique elaborated with justifications, for example stating that everyone would have a chance to participate after naming or describing random sampling. This was not required in this question.

Q13(ci) This was a very well answered question with the vast majority of candidates giving one example of a question they would ask in their interviews.

Q13(cii) The focus of this question was why the *type* of question asked in Q13 (ci) would be used in the interviews, however, many candidates justified the question content instead. Some candidates incorrectly identified the type of question and there was occasionally some ambiguity in that questions could be regarded as open or closed.

Q13(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. Many candidates described complex experimental designs and whilst the level of detail was very high, the lack of reference to interviews meant these responses could not receive credit. Few candidates achieved full marks by including at least three separate features of how the interview could be carried out. Many candidates continue to state features with no elaboration. For example, saying that they would use a structured interview 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 their sample or sampling method when this had been assessed in Q13 (bi/ii). Finally, candidates were often seen giving detailed justifications for their procedure which could not be credited as the focus of the question is ***how*** not ***why***.

Q13(e) Responses to this question varied. Many candidates could identify a weakness of using the interview method to achieve partial marks, very few could place this in context of

their investigation. Some candidates described weaknesses of their question type rather than the interview method.

13(f) The focus of this question was how data would be analysed. Whilst many candidates could suggest the use of an appropriate graph / chart, many failed to go beyond its mere identification. Candidates were seen to describe methods of recording data at the time of interviewing or providing justifications or descriptions of the data being analysed. Those responses using qualitative data were often the most muddled with candidates demonstrating little understanding how what analysis would involve for this type of data.

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