

Psychology

Advanced GCE A2 H568

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H168

Report on the Units

January 2009

H168/H568/MS/R/09J

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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 syllabus 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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G541

General Comments

It seems generally that candidates have had the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge they have acquired on the course, with those having been prepared more fully and having conducted their own practical work in advance doing the best.

The biggest problem preventing candidates achieving higher marks was a failure to respond in the context of the research outlined in the question where required. Of the total of 14 questions (including sub-part questions), 12 required the answer to be contextualized in some way. Only questions 2(a) and 5 were completely 'context-free'.

More generally, some candidates were less well prepared and could not answer questions related to defining some general aspects of research methodology that were directly stated in the specification. For example, question 5, asking about the difference between 'time sampling' and 'event sampling' in observational research.

A lack of detail, rather than knowledge per se, also prevented some candidates from achieving higher marks where there was a failure to elaborate where necessary.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

Most candidates had an idea of what was involved with self-selecting sampling and were able to describe a suitable technique using this method to obtain participants. However, this sometimes lacked clarity and detail, and described techniques involved with other sampling methodologies (such as opportunity and random).

Question 2(a)

Most candidates could clearly distinguish between open and closed questions, but some responses were vague and lacked detail. For example, simply stating 'an open question is where you can answer how you like'.

Question 2(b)

Although candidates were usually able to outline a strength and weakness of open questions, this was not always discussed in the context of the presented research theme (an investigation of paranormal beliefs) and restricted the marks awarded as a consequence.

Question 2(c)

The same problem as occurred in question 2(b) happened here, with some candidates failing to contextualize their answer to refer to an investigation about the paranormal.

Question 3(a)

Most candidates were able to successfully suggest a question involving a rating scale that could be used in a study investigating beliefs in the paranormal. Only occasionally did candidates fail to include details about the meaning assigned to each end of the continuum of the scale (1 = and 10 = ...).

Question 3(b)

The suggested advantages of using a question involving a rating scale were often general, and not related specifically to the study of paranormal beliefs. However, most candidates did seem to understand the value of the quantifiable data that would be generated from such questions and the ability to present findings more visually.

Question 4

There were few very good responses to this question because answers were often too brief, and where more detailed not related specifically to observational research involving the study of students' use of mobile phones. Occasionally candidates only described a procedure and provided no evaluation at all. Other candidates provided a detailed evaluation where they had not presented a procedure in sufficient detail to enable the evaluation comments to make sense.

Question 5

There was some confusion at times about the difference between time and event sampling and candidates did not always make it clear what the distinction was; for example, simply stating that '... time sampling was noting down behaviours that occurred during a certain period'. Other candidates clearly did not know the difference and made comments like '... event sampling is watching how people behave at a concert' etc.

Question 6

Once again, the difference between good and very good responses was whether candidates contextualized their response and made reference to strengths/weaknesses related to using the observational study to investigate mobile phone use.

Question 7

Candidates seemed to have been generally well prepared for this question, with many obtaining full marks by presenting a clear and fully operationalized alternate hypothesis. Those who dropped marks did not provide enough information about the operational decisions relating to either the IV, DV or both. Occasionally, candidates presented a null hypothesis instead.

Question 8(a)

Most candidates were able to successfully identify the IV and DV, with only a few confusing the two.

Question 8(b)

In general, this was answered quite poorly, with few candidates providing enough detail to allow replication as required for full marks. It was also not clear sometimes how the suggested response would measure concentration. Some candidates made suggestions relating to the IV rather than DV (for example, it was suggested that '...some participants could chew bubble gum and others chewing gum'!)

Question 9

Strengths and weaknesses of the use of the independent measures design tended to be discussed too briefly and in general by weaker, less well prepared candidates. For example, simply stating that '... there would be no order effects' etc. Sometimes candidates also confused independent measures design with repeated measures design, for example claiming a strength would be that '...participant variables would not influence the results'. It was also interesting to note that one candidate thought that a weakness would be that '... those chewing gum would distract those not chewing gum if they made too much noise whilst chewing with their mouths open'!

Question 10

Most candidates were able to successfully outline two findings from the data presented in the results table. These included comments relating to number of differences spotted across the two conditions, range of scores and anomalous data. Some candidates even worked out the mean, median and mode (although this was not necessary for full marks). However, some candidates were too brief and vague, simply stating '...those chewing gum did better'. We also discovered from this interesting 'facts', like '... chewing gum makes the brain grow bigger', and '... chewing gum faster helps people concentrate even better'.

G542

General Comments

With a total of only 73 candidates drawn from 6 centres, it is impossible to write a meaningful report that will offer significant feedback and guidance for future sessions.

Overall, performance by this cohort was poor. Many candidates failed to attempt all 15 questions in Section A, and many failed to attempt either section B and/or Section C. This may have been because candidates had either not been fully prepared for the exam and/or 'ran out of time'.

The following suggestions may help candidates in the future:

- 1 The 'rule of thumb' time allocation remains 1 mark = 1 minute. Therefore, Section A should take 60 minutes, Section B 36 minutes and Section C 24 minutes.
- 2 Candidates should make certain they are aware of how many marks are available for each question/part question as this is an indicator as to the depth and detail required in the answer.

Section A:

15 short answers (as in old Core Studies 1 paper) – 1 on each study. Each question will be marked out of 4 (either 4 or 2+2). All questions should be attempted. Total for Section = 60.

Section B:

This will focus on methodology and/or issues. There will be a choice of 3 studies from which the candidate chooses ONE. There will always be 6 parts to the question which will always be progressive in complexity/demands with each part being compulsory. Total for Section = 36 though allocation of marks within the section may vary.

Section C:

This will focus on approaches and/or perspectives. There will be a choice of 2 questions from which the candidate chooses ONE. All parts of the selected question are compulsory. There will always be 4 parts to each question, awarded 2, 4, 6, 12 marks respectively. Total for Section = 24.

3 What Will Section A Require?

- The wording of the question will imply the content/detail required in the answer. E.g. 'Describe two features of ...' requires the identification of 2 features + elaboration so will be worth 4 marks (2+2), whereas 'Identify two features of ...' Requires the mere identification of 2 appropriate features with no elaboration so will be worth 2 marks (1+1).
- The answer should always be linked to the study named in the question. Failure to do so will be considered a partial answer so cannot score full marks.
- Section A questions are to be considered as equivalent to the questions asked in the legacy Core Studies 1 paper and so should be treated in the same way.

4 What Will Section B Require?

- All parts (a-f) should be answered in relation to the study selected from the 3 offered. Therefore if a candidate is asked to give advantages and disadvantages of a named methodology/issue (e.g. observation), any advantage and disadvantage can be identified but should be supported by evidence from the selected study. This is similar to part (b) of questions in the legacy Core Studies 2 paper.

5 What Will Section C Require?

- Candidates will be expected to have a 'working knowledge' of the 5 approaches and 2 perspectives identified in the Specification. They will need to know general assumptions, strengths/advantages, weaknesses/disadvantages, contributions to psychology and common methods of investigation relevant to each approach/perspective; and be able to support these with appropriate evidence.
- Candidates will need to know which studies can be considered under each approach/perspective and why.
- Additional (known and identifiable!) psychological studies can be cited in this Section e.g. Asch + Social Approach, Gardner and Gardner + Cognitive Approach, though this will not be expected. However knowledge of other research on which a particular study is based will be expected e.g. Piaget's research as it links with the Samuel and Bryant study + Developmental Approach. (If teachers have the time to do additional/optional studies at AS Level, it's a good way to introduce the Stretch and Challenge concept. Most candidates will however be new to Psychology and the 15 basic Core Studies + the 4 investigational methods will be more than enough for them to cope with!)

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION A

- 1 (a) Poorly answered with few candidates being able to fully identify the IV.
(b) Few candidates were able to describe fully how the IV was manipulated. Even candidates who were able to describe how the verb in the critical question was manipulated rarely reported that the critical question related to a film clip of 'automobile destruction'.
- 2 Few candidates described any two of the three groups adequately to gain full marks.
- 3 Poorly answered. There was little real understanding shown of the specific results of the study.
- 4 (a) In the main candidates gave results and not a conclusion and therefore only gained 1 mark. It is imperative that candidates learn the difference between the two. A conclusion should be supported by results or, results should lead to a conclusion.
(b) Overall this question was answered reasonably well.
- 5 (a+b) Poorly answered with many candidates answering in terms of the models and the bobo doll.
- 6 (a+b) Generally well answered.
- 7 (a+b) Generally well answered.
- 8 (a+b) Generally well answered.
- 9 (a) Overall this was poorly answered. Many candidates continue to find this study extremely difficult to grasp.
(b) Generally well answered.
- 10 (a+b) Generally well answered.

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- 11 Generally poorly answered. Many candidates showed confusion between the Reicher and Haslam study and Zimbardo's study giving a muddled description of how the sample was recruited.
- 12 Candidates failed to actually identify ethical issues correctly. Responses were therefore muddled and poorly linked to the actual study.
- 13 (a) Many candidates confused the Type 2 error made in Experiment 1 with the Type 1 error made in Experiment 2.
(b) Poorly answered. Few candidates could link the Type 2 error with the issue of the 'stickiness of psychiatric labels'.
- 14 Generally well answered.
- 15 (a) Generally well answered.
(b) Poorly answered with many candidates just giving either examples of quantitative data gathered in the study, or results.

SECTION B

- 16 (a) Generally poorly answered. Candidates showed little real understanding of the background/stimulus for the study, including Milgram.
(b) Many candidates only answered half of this question part, forgetting to suggest an advantage of the sample. Furthermore, many merely described the sample and not HOW the sample was selected.
(c) Here many candidates failed to take account of the fact that 6 marks could be gained in this question part, with many just explaining ONE way in which their chosen study could be considered a laboratory experiment, rather than providing a deep, detailed explanation.
(d) Too often candidates merely identified one advantage and one disadvantage of laboratory experiments, making no reference to their chosen study.
(e) Again candidates failed to appreciate that 8 marks could be gained from this question part. Therefore at least two appropriate changes should have been suggested. With reference to the mark scheme, for 7-8 marks: 'Description of at least two appropriate changes is accurate. Detail is appropriate to level and time allowed. Understanding is very good. Expression and use of psychological terminology is good. The answer is competently structured and organised and is grammatically correct with only occasional spelling errors'.
(f) Poorly answered with many candidates showing little real understanding of the implications of their suggestions. Many forgot that their suggestions in 16 (e) were supposed to improve the study and described how their suggestions would actually weaken it!

SECTION C

Question 17: This Question was more popular than Question 18, though overall performance was poor.

- 17 (a) Few candidates were able to give an actual assumption of the developmental approach.
(b) Poorly answered. Candidates tended to give anecdotal answers as to how children can learn to be aggressive and failed to appreciate that the question required them to link their answer to Bandura's SLT and/or his 'Bashing Bobo' study. They need to bear in mind it is a Core Studies paper.
(c) Overall similarities and differences were identified but were rarely described adequately to gain full marks.

- (d) Many candidates were study-focused and discussed strengths and weaknesses of one or more developmental approach studies and so gained 0 marks. Some candidates tried to follow the formula laid down in the legacy specification by answering in the point/evidence/comment format and, although that was acceptable and if used effectively allowed maximum marks to be gained, this is not a prescribed formula for this specification. Providing general strengths and weaknesses of this approach, supported by appropriate examples s could still gain the full 12 marks.

Question 18: Generally performance on this question was poor.

- 18 (a) Few candidates were able to give an actual assumption of the physiological approach.
- (b) Some candidates made a reasonable attempt at describing how the physiological approach could explain structural changes in the brain in relation to Maguire's study but few were able to do this in relation to Sperry's study.
- (c) Overall, similarities and differences were identified but were rarely described adequately to gain full marks
- (d) As in Question 17 (d), many candidates were study-focused and discussed strengths and weaknesses of one or more developmental approach studies and so gained 0 marks. Some candidates tried to follow the formula laid down in the legacy specification by answering in the point/evidence/comment format and, although that was acceptable and if used effectively allowed maximum marks to be gained, this is not a prescribed formula for this specification. Providing general strengths and weaknesses of this approach, supported by appropriate examples s could still gain the full 12 marks.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE (Psychology) (H168 H568)
January 2009 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
G541	Raw	60	44	39	34	29	25	0
	UMS	60	48	42	36	30	24	0
G542	Raw	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
	UMS	140	112	98	84	70	56	0

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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