

Psychology

Advanced GCE A2 H568

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H168

OCR Report to Centres

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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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CONTENTS

Advanced GCE Psychology (H568)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Psychology (H168)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	Page
G541 Psychological Investigations	1
G542 Core Studies	4
G543 Options in Applied Psychology	7
G544 Approaches and Research Methods in Psychology	10

G541 Psychological Investigations

General Comments

Candidates seemed to be much better prepared than in previous sessions and there were few 'no responses' (NR), suggesting that candidates found the paper accessible and overall responses tended to be good. More candidates than in previous sessions also used context (where appropriate) in their responses, which secured higher marks. However, there was, at times evidence of 'rote learning' and citing stock phrases without evidence of understanding behind what was being stated.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1** This question was mostly well answered. Some marks were lost for not fully explaining (elaboration) concepts such as 'order effects', or 'carry-over effects', or for not responding in context.
- 2(a)** Unfortunately, some candidates did not seem to know what the term 'operationalise' refers to. Beyond this, those candidates that did sometimes struggled to differentiate between the actual IV (smiling) and its operational detail (holding the pencil by the teeth or lips). Some candidates, perhaps fortuitously, got marks for reference to the pencil. Some candidates clearly still confuse IVs and DVs, citing the rating scale in their response.
- 2(b)** Fewer candidates struggled with this question about the DV than the previous one about the IV, perhaps because it was more straightforward to determine which of the variables was measured.
- 3** Firstly, if candidates did not answer Q2(b) well (what was the DV and how was it operationalised), they tended to struggle with this question. However it was generally better answered than some other previous 10 mark questions relating to reliability and validity. Some candidates still refer to reliability (or validity) incorrectly, or interchangeably (blurring the distinction between the two). It would have been much better/clearer to have written (as many of the higher scoring candidates did) two separate paragraphs, one for reliability and the other referring to validity. Lower scoring candidates demonstrated only superficial understanding and passing reference to the concepts of reliability and validity by occasional token use of the terms (eg saying ... *it was high in reliability because it was done in a consistent way* etc). Higher scoring candidates used many examples to elaborate on their points and responded in context (eg saying ... *it was low in reliability because one person's understanding of what 3 or 4 meant in terms of how happy they were might be different to another person's understanding of what the same numbers mean – one person may think this means 'very depressed' whereas another may only think it means being a little sad. This makes the scale and how it is interpreted by people inconsistent and lack reliability. Having more verbal descriptions along the scale for more of the numbers would have helped here* etc.). Higher scoring candidates also had more of a balanced discussion, considering both strengths and weaknesses in their discussion of reliability and validity. Some candidates focused on more general aspects of the procedure (rather than the actual measure of the DV).

- 4** Generally well answered. Candidates gave answers ranging from discussing selected raw data to descriptive statistics (mean, median and range). Many achieved maximum marks and for those who did not, the main reason was a lack of context. Surprisingly, a few candidates did not seem able to extract data from tables, or did so incorrectly. This is something that could be worked on in centres.
- 5** This question seemed to throw some candidates and it was clear who knew what descriptive statistics referred to and who did not. For those that did, the response was usually concise, referring to how the mean, median or range would be calculated. Sometimes a mark was dropped for not responding in context. For those candidates that did not know what descriptive statistics referred to there were many varied responses, ranging from elaborate discussions about conversations that could be held with participants to those who sometimes suggested the use of an inferential statistical test. Many candidates seemed to think that this question was asking them to give descriptive detail about bears such as qualitative data.
- 6** Generally well answered. Candidates seemed well prepared. Any marks lost were mostly due to lack of context again. But this was better than previous years and even when this occurred it was usually during the second point. So for example, the strength would be contextualised but the weakness not.

7(a), (b) and (c) Mostly well answered but often no context and the closed question 7(b) often had no response option. The rating scales in question 7(c) were usually well labelled and related back to the question. Candidates produced some interesting and novel responses here. For example:

Do you often think of things that you shouldn't?

Have you got any t-shirts with bears on?

Do you watch Arctic animals?

What colour was the bear's jumper?

Did you think of Yogi bear?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much would you like to be a bear?

1 (not at all) _____ 10 (very much)

- 8** Most candidates knew what a null hypothesis was, but some cited it as in response to experimental (rather than correlational) research referring to no 'difference' or no effect'. This shows the need to be careful with the choice of words here.
- 9** There was a variety of ways of responding to this question. Some candidates simply suggested the use of a basic (1-to-10) scale, whereas others tried to describe elaborate techniques based on behavioural observations. Those that did not opt for the use of some kind of scale often found it difficult to convey how their suggested measurement technique would produce quantifiable data for use in a correlation study. There was confusion at times about what a Likert scale refers to, with some candidates naming any rating scale in this way. Sometimes candidates

lost marks here if it wasn't clear who was doing the rating. The most creative response was from a candidate who suggested ... *"make the participant live in a house with snake design wallpaper and see how scared they are of it"*.

- 10** Candidates who performed poorly in response to question 9 struggled to do well here, although most marks that were lost were mainly due to a lack of context. The higher scoring candidates wrote two clear separate paragraphs (one about a strength, one about a weakness) in context. The highest scoring candidates elaborated on the points they were making with the use of contextualised examples rather than a token reference to a key word related to the study 'snake'.
- 11** Most could describe a positive correlation although some answers were not clear and surprisingly, a few candidates did not know what this was. Some candidates made reference to 'effect', implying causation and shows the need to be careful how this concept is described.
- 12** There were generally better answers for the weakness (can't establish cause-and-effect) of correlation than the strengths here. Some candidates answered in context here, although not required, which seemed to facilitate their response by affording access to a specific piece of research with which to elaborate on their answer to increase clarity.

G542 Core Studies

General Comments

Overall the paper was accessible to all students and showed a good range of marks. The majority of candidates attempted all necessary questions and seemed to understand the requirements, content, time and mark allocation of the paper. There were few instances of rubric errors where both Q17 and Q18 were attempted though, as always, examiners marked any parts of both questions that were attempted as the Scoris marking system is able to identify and credit the best complete answer.

Please encourage candidates to make some annotation to indicate when an answer is continued elsewhere on the script. Candidates should also be encouraged to use additional pages to complete answers if there is not sufficient answer space for them.

Candidates should ensure that they read the question carefully and take due account of the wording of a question eg findings/conclusions were often confused. Additionally, the phrase 'in this study', which ought to lead the candidate to produce a contextualised answer, was often ignored (in both Section A and Section B), meaning that maximum marks could not be achieved on such questions. Furthermore, as in previous sessions, many candidates used psychological terms without showing any real understanding eg ecological validity, reliability, demand characteristics, quasi/natural experiment being merely identified but not explained in the context of the question.

Comments on Individual Questions

SECTION A

- 1 Very few candidates managed to gain the full 4 marks. Many gave general rather than specific responses or conclusions rather than findings.
- 2 This was not a well answered question with candidates often discussing the use of the lexigram and where appropriate criteria were stated they were often merely identified rather than described.
- 3a A generally well answered question.
- 3b Generally well answered.
- 4 Very few candidates managed to gain the full 4 marks. Many gave results rather than conclusions.
- 5 This was generally well answered in terms of links between horse and father, but little understanding was evident of how this then links to the Oedipus complex.
- 6a Many candidates stated the independent variables rather than the experimental conditions.
- 6b A generally well answered question.
- 7a A generally well answered question.
- 7b A generally well answered question.

- 8** This proved a difficult question in which to gain high marks. Few candidates were able to provide the fine details required.
- 9a** Most candidates performed well on this question though some got confused between features of Dement and Kleitman's sample and features of Sperry's sample.
- 9b** Again most candidates performed well though some misread the word 'sample' and gave a weakness of the 'procedure'.
- 10** Although the question asked candidates to refer to suggestions made by Milgram, many included their own suggestions which could not be credited.
- 11** This proved a difficult question in which to gain high marks. Few candidates were able to provide the details required.
- 12** Overall many candidates gave a good description of the drunk and ill characters but little or no description of what happened on the train.
- 13** Generally well answered though some candidates focussed on staff behaviour rather than that of the pseudopatient.
- 14** Generally well answered.
- 15** Generally well answered.

SECTION B

Milgram and Bandura proved more popular than Griffiths.

- 16a** Many candidates only achieved 1 mark as they did not go beyond a basic statement and did not elaborate or contextualise their answer adequately.
- 16b** Descriptions of the sample were generally good and most candidates were able to identify an appropriate advantage of their sample. Some, however, showed confusion between 'sample' and 'sampling method' and few were able to develop their given advantage by elaborating and fully contextualising their answer.
- 16c** Many candidates were able to give reasonable descriptions in relation to the Bandura study. Few realised that there were additional observers to the experimenter in the Milgram study and many referred to the thinking aloud condition in Griffiths (which used self-reports, not observation) and failed to mention the quantitative data gathered by Griffiths himself through observation.
- 16d** Good responses tended to include a general strength/weakness of using observation and then went on to support the strength/weakness with appropriate evidence from their chosen study. Some candidates incorrectly assumed that the observations were overt in Milgram and Bandura rather than covert. Some, when considering Bandura's study, even referred to the 'blind' observers.
- 16e** Many candidates were able to give good answers to this question. However some responses were very basic, vague and inaccurate.
- 16f** This question was generally answered well with some good changes suggested and evaluation points made. The best responses contained a balance between description and evaluation.

SECTION C

There was a fairly equal distribution between Question 17 and Question 18.

- 17/18a** Many candidates gave an accurate and detailed description of an appropriate assumption of their chosen approach.
- 17/18b** There was a noticeable improvement on previous sessions in the quality of answers given for this question. However many candidates who chose to consider the cognitive approach merely gave a summary of Baron-Cohen's study without actually answering the question and some who chose the physiological approach still incorrectly referred to 'eye' rather than 'visual field'.
- 17/18c** This question was generally answered well. There was however confusion with methodology as many candidates thought Savage-Rumbaugh's study was either a laboratory experiment or a quasi experiment and some candidates who chose the 'sample' as a difference were unable to describe the samples correctly.
- 17/18d** This question part was generally answered better than in previous sessions and the number of study-specific answers continues to decrease. The best responses explained why their strength/weakness was a strength/weakness eg a weakness of the cognitive approach is that it tends to rely on laboratory-based research so it may not be possible to apply the research to real life etc.... As in previous sessions, many of the supporting examples did not actually support/illustrate the identified strength/weakness.

G543 Options in Applied Psychology

General Comments

The paper was fair and reliable, with no obvious flaws or inconsistencies between questions. A good range of marks was accessed. Candidates with a good knowledge of the material and well-practised skills performed best whereas those with gaps in knowledge and skills found it harder to access the higher marks available. A majority of candidates did seem able to make a good attempt at four questions and there were few rubric errors. Most candidates produced a consistent level of response across the 4 questions.

The general quality of candidate responses was very varied, ranging from impressive insight and developed lines of argument to quite poor construction and poor response to the specific question posed. However, knowledge was generally good; it was the skill in using this knowledge which produced most of the variation, as well as level of detail. Many candidates were thoroughly prepared, more so than in previous sessions. Marking is mindful of the expectations of standard of a typical 17/18 year old with the wide specification coverage and demand of the exam; hence the level of detail required for a high mark is not as exacting as may be feared by some. More significant in differentiating award of marks is the extent to which candidates responded to the precise demand of the question. This has been referred to previously.

Purely formulaic responses are less in evidence. There is a clear improvement in engagement with the material, and there are more expedient approaches than the aforementioned formulaic answer. As stated, better candidates answered the question asked, whereas others did not (eg Q1a saw weaker candidates describe Brunner's study with varying amount of detail and accuracy, whereas better candidates *used this study* to address the question of a genetic explanation). Some candidates merely outlined research, where better responses used the research as support or evidence and made it relevant.

Part (b) responses showed great variation. The skill required is "application of knowledge and understanding" which has a different emphasis to simply "evaluate". The very best candidates would develop the answer a stage further, such as with a challenge, an extension or a legitimate comparison. Effectively addressing the injunction was a key differentiating aspect and was broadly interpreted by examiners. As ever, an extended demonstration within an answer would be sufficient to award a higher band mark even where the whole answer may not have maintained this level. It was further agreed that a consistently strong band 2 response would access the top band.

Weaker responses included general points without the necessary application/contextualisation which was needed to take answers to higher bands. This was typified in pre-learned evaluative comment that lacked anything beyond a superficial understanding of the material. Part (b) responses improved when candidates went beyond being overly descriptive and points were well expressed in the context of the question. Some evaluation issues still remain elusive for many candidates, most notably when asked to discuss reliability or validity. These terms may be being over-complicated and a simpler understanding may be acceptable for this level. Candidates from some centres have clearly been taught to add a 'however' (on the other hand) between paragraphs even though the information does not follow on or connect to the paragraph above it. Legitimate links are readily credited.

Comments on Individual Questions

- 1a** Many responses referred to a relevant study, usually Brunner, and linked the study and its findings to a genetic explanation. Some of these responses, however, merely reported the study without a link, got confused over chromosomes or failed to mention 'genes' at all.
- 1b** Few candidates addressed 'to what extent' but many did explore reductionism.
- 2a** Some good responses to this. Some lacked detail, producing little more than a list-like answer.
- 2b** Many good attempts. A range of interpretations of the term 'useful', which were explicitly addressed and perfectly acceptable. Some candidates used the cognitive interview which is not about suspects.
- 3a** Most candidates chose an appropriate study but some did not answer the question effectively.
- 3b** Better candidates responded directly to the question. Weaker responses appeared to be pre-learned evaluative points which were not really appreciated by the candidate so were not well applied to the context of the question. Many candidates gave general evaluative answers rather than focussing on difficulties.
- 4a** Weaker responses did not address HOW ear acupuncture is used. Most candidates reported an appropriate study but many did not answer the question effectively. Often re-offending was confused with drug rehabilitation.
- 4b** Many candidates did not discuss treatment programmes, eg mentioned restorative justice or probation etc. Also general evaluation was common rather than a focus on strengths. 'Compare' which can involve similarities or contrasts or both, continues to elude many candidates. Better answers identified an issue and then compared it in two pieces of research.
- 5a** A very popular question and generally well answered in a number of different ways. In some cases however, candidates reported research without offering an explanation, or drifted into adherence.
- 5b** Answers which directly addressed the question got into the top band; some answers were bland and offered only general evaluations.
- 6a** Another popular question. Sometimes well done, with candidates demonstrating knowledge/understanding of the social approach to managing stress. Some responses were too broad, tending to be anecdotal rather than draw explicitly on the social approach.
- 6b** Many answers were "side by side" descriptions of stress management techniques and did not really compare, as reported above (qn. 4)
- 7a** Mostly well done using the Ford and Widiger study, although sometimes findings were unclear, incorrect and lacked a conclusion.
- 7b** Many candidates evaluated the reliability of research not diagnosis although some excellent answers were seen. As ever, some confusion between reliability and validity but possibly less than in previous sessions.

- 8a** Better answers described the features and stages of systematic desensitisation and then applied them to a study. Alternatively, candidates described the Lucy balloon study, for example, but only those who clearly identified and explained the behavioural stages of S.D. gained top marks.
- 8b** Candidates often seem more comfortable with the ethics question, and here was no exception. Again some candidates evaluated the ethics of the studies rather than the treatments themselves.

There were fewer sport and education candidates; similar issues were found.

G544 Approaches and Research Methods in Psychology

General Comments

The overall standard of performance of the candidates was good and candidates appear to have been taught appropriate material and to be well prepared for the style of questions. In section A candidates were required to describe a feasible investigation which was both practical and ethical. Many candidates gave concise, replicable descriptions of a practical project based on the research question. Popular option choices were the relationship between intelligence and academic achievement, between happiness and friendliness or between generosity and kindness. It was pleasing to see that more candidates are answering the short questions in the context of their practical investigation. In section B, most candidates showed understanding of the questions under discussion but sometimes their points were not fully elaborated or their examples described in much detail. There were few rubric errors and most candidates were able to complete the paper in the allocated time although a few appeared to be short of time as the parts d and e on section B could be very brief. Although there is not a requirement to include research from the A2 options unit many candidates were over-reliant on AS studies which limited the scope of their answers. However, the AS studies were used to good effect in the candidates' responses. Candidates should be reminded not to introduce their own "slang" or "text speak" into examination scripts.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

1 Most candidates framed an appropriate null hypothesis but some did not fully operationalise both variables. Some candidates described a null hypothesis for an experiment.

2 This question was marked out of 13 + 6. 13 marks were given for the description of the practical project and its replicability and appropriateness. 6 marks were given for the design and its feasibility. The full range of marks (13) and (6) was awarded.

The method was clearly described although it was not always fully replicable. Many candidates missed out details of materials used. It is not sufficient for candidates to say they will get a test off the internet with no details of the nature of the test. For any test used, if it is to be replicable, some examples of questions should be given and an explanation of how scores were calculated. Some candidates gave an unclear or incorrect description of a correlation. Strong answers were simple procedures, often using self-report measures with only one or two questions used to measure each variable. It is important that candidates describe research that falls within BPS ethical guidelines. Although some research was described using 10–15 year olds, most candidates are aware of the need to use participants over 16 years of age.

3 Candidates could gain full marks for describing the disadvantage of a correlation and not from generic disadvantages of a research method. Lack of ability to infer cause and effect was the most common response. As the injunction was "outline" there was no requirement for a lengthy explanation.

- 4 This question gave candidates the opportunity to raise a number of evaluative issues in relation to the measurement of one of the variables. Most candidates focused on one positive and one negative issue and were able to gain full credit if they explained them fully and in the context of their practical investigation.
- 5 Some candidates were able to identify a participant variable and discuss how it could bias the sample in their practical project.
- 6 Candidates have a good knowledge of appropriate ethical issues and can relate these to concerns such as embarrassment but do not always discuss them in the context of their own practical project.
- 7 This question gave candidates the opportunity to describe an alternative method that could be used in conducting this correlation. Many candidates gave interesting alternatives which were feasible but did not meet the requirements of a different method.

Section B

- 8a Most candidates could describe the social approach clearly and with some degree of accuracy. They linked social processes to the influence of other people on behaviour. There is no need for examples from the social approach to gain full credit.
- 8b Milgram and Piliavin were the most popular choices of social research in this answer and better candidates were able to explain why the study was 'social'. Marks were awarded from all bands.
- 8c There was some clear evidence of structure to these answers with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Better answers evaluated the approach and used evidence effectively to support the points made. Candidates should be advised to direct their evaluative points towards the social approach rather than the studies per se. Marks in all bands were awarded.
- 8d Most candidates were able to make some distinctions between the social approach and the individual differences approach and support this with appropriate evidence, commonly Thigpen and Cleckley or Griffiths for the individual differences approach. Strong responses focused on the difference between the assumptions of the two approaches although this was not the only way of achieving top band marks. Candidates could gain full marks with two well described comparisons if they were supported by appropriate evidence from both approaches. Many candidates were awarded marks in the top band for this question.
- 8e Candidates needed to show understanding of ethnocentrism and discuss it in the context of the social approach. Candidates should develop a coherent discussion as top marks can be achieved without the support of numerous examples of Western research.
- 9a Good responses outlined the use of controls to exclude extraneous variables, manipulating an IV to measure the effect on the DV, standardised procedures, cause and effect etc.
- 9b A wide range of research was cited but Milgram, Bandura, Baron-Cohen, Sperry and Loftus and Palmer were popular choices. Very little research from the A2 specification was cited. Candidates need to explicitly relate the description of research to the use of the laboratory experiment.

- 9c** Candidates need to discuss the strengths/limitations of research using the experimental method rather than simply evaluating research. It is important that candidates support their arguments with appropriate evidence. Answers should not be repetitive as there are many more points to be made than simply focusing on validity and low ecological validity.
- 9d** Good responses discussed several points of comparison arising from the different experimental methods eg types of data collected, reliability, demand characteristics, ethics and samples. The better candidates supported these points with accurate, appropriate evidence.
- 9e** Candidates should avoid anecdotal and/or list like answers stating the ways that psychology can or cannot be seen as a science. Stronger candidates wrote answers making points about cause and effect, falsifiability of hypotheses and cited appropriate research to support their arguments. There is no requirement to cite research to support the arguments but it may help a discussion to do so.

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