

## **Reports on the Units**

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**June 2010**

**J611/R/10**

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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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## **Chief Examiner's Report**

It was pleasing to see a healthy entry for this series of papers, with B541's entry increasing significantly. The majority of candidates on all three units were Y10 students on a two year course. This shows that many Centres are taking advantage of the unitised examination and entering their students for different modules at different points in their studies. The standard of attainment was good but did reflect the less experienced nature of the cohort. It is predicted that pass rates will increase further when candidates have completed the course and sat all examination papers (or possibly re-sat in some cases). What was notable – as with the last series of papers – was that very few responses were non-responses. In other words, candidates of all abilities were prepared to attempt all or most questions. This not only demonstrated the accessibility of the papers, but also the fact that candidates are being well prepared for exams and showing high levels of motivation. On average, candidates performed best on questions where they had to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of key concepts, of research methodology, and of studies. Knowledge and understanding of theories was generally sound, as were evaluative and analytical skills. Over all, candidates need to further improve their understanding of applications of psychological research, and their ability to apply their knowledge of research issues.

# B541 Studies and Applications in Psychology 1

## General Comments

This unit had by far the highest entry out of the three units offered in this qualification. Although the entry was healthy for this series, it was minimal in January, so comparisons across series were not possible. However, what was notable compared to the legacy specification was the percentage of candidates answering all questions on the paper. There was an expectation that a non-tiered paper would contain questions that were too challenging for less able candidates to even attempt but this was not the case. It is, of course, sensible for candidates to 'have a go' at all questions and this message is clearly being taken on board. It may be that less able candidates are better motivated by a paper on which they can potentially achieve any grade.

## Comments on Individual Questions

Q1. The vast majority of candidates scored well on this question by identifying the two reinforcers.

Q2(a). Most candidates attempted to address the question but some gave a definition of 'separation protest' rather than a way of measuring it. Nearly all candidates earned a mark for recognising that children and carers needed to be separated in some way, but only a minority of candidates explicitly stated what would be measured as a consequence and, more importantly, how it would be measured. Candidates who implied protest behaviours (eg crying) should be observed or recorded tended to earn that second mark.

Q2(b). As with 2(a), candidates were not explicit enough about how behaviour - in this case, anxiety - would be measured. Indeed many candidates did not score anything here because not only did they fail to give a measure but they simply referenced the need for a stranger to be involved rather than being specific about who that stranger may be or even what constitutes a stranger. Candidates should not expect to earn marks for simply recycling terms already in the question.

Q3. The three true/false statements caused few problems for candidates with the majority scoring full marks.

Q4. Responses elicited the full range of marks. Most candidates demonstrated some knowledge of Hazen & Shaver's study by offering an appropriate limitation. The best responses identified a limitation and clearly elaborated on it in relation to the study. There were some candidates who were simply quoting standard limitation of research (eg cannot generalise, lacks ecological validity) which did not work with this study. A common error was for candidates to describe a feature of the study (eg they used closed questions) rather than explaining why this feature was problematic.

Q5. There were some good answers to this question which contained accurate detail presented in a coherent way. Features such as monotropy and the role of instinct were well described. Candidates were less successful at explaining the concept of a critical period. A number of candidates also gave definitions of deprivation and privation (not creditworthy as part of a description of Bowlby's theory) rather than focusing on the proposed effects of these processes. A common error was to describe Ainsworth's work on attachment, which scored zero. However, where candidates did score they tended to score well.

## *Reports on the Units taken in June 2010*

Q6. Both parts of this question were answered well enough to see most candidates score both marks. Candidates who scored one or nothing tended to because their examples were not explicit enough to relate to everyday life.

Q7. This question was designed to be one of the most challenging on the paper and this was reflected in candidates' responses with only a minority scoring full marks. Some candidates did not have the skills to apply their knowledge to the source at all. Those candidates that could interpret the source tended to only score one mark – and that was for identifying a possible difference that would or could occur between conditions. Not many candidates could adequately explain why there would be a difference between conditions. Explanations either tended to describe the difference between conditions (as given in the source) or focused on a difference that did not exist (eg it was more formal in the first condition). The best responses referred to ideas such as conformity, the balance of power, and diffusion of responsibility.

Q8. Nearly all candidates scored full marks in this relatively straightforward question.

Q9. The range of marks was relatively evenly distributed across responses to this question showing it was a good differentiator. It was pleasing to see that most candidates had a sense of what is meant by an application, although some simply focused on research findings without considering how they would or could be used in real-life situations - in this case, keeping order in institutions. Weaker responses tended to be generic and did not really identify an area of application to illustrate ideas. Better responses focused on a clear area of application (with prisons and schools being popular) and outlined a number of ways of keeping order based on research evidence.

Q10. This question attracted the most non-responses although numbers were not high. However, of those that attempted the question, many scored zero. A common mistake was to outline situational factors in obedience which was obviously the complete opposite of what was being asked for. Having said this, candidates seemed better prepared for a question on the role of dispositional factors in obedience compared to the January series, with some giving full and detailed responses usually focusing on Adorno's explanation of the authoritarian personality.

Q11. This question caused few problems with most candidates demonstrating knowledge of the term 'atypical'.

Q12. The vast majority of candidates correctly named each of the characters suffering from different types of phobias, therefore scoring full marks. The one most likely to be incorrectly named was the character suffering from arachnophobia.

Q13. Most candidates scored on this question but not many earned full marks - either because they did not have enough to say about their chosen behaviour therapy or they did not adequately apply it to the case of Gavin (and his fear of heights). There was some muddling of different types of therapy. A number of responses made inappropriate references to cognitive factors eg 'Gavin realises his phobia is irrational'. Flooding was the most commonly offered therapy and tended to be the one most likely to enable candidates to score full marks.

Q14. It was really pleasing to see that a significant majority of candidates scored full marks on this question, especially as it required candidates to be evaluative. Although it was assessed at a lower level than other questions requiring limitations of studies, it was still impressive to have so many candidates demonstrate a good awareness of the Watson & Rayner study in terms of its drawbacks. A common mistake was to evaluate the theory that phobias are learned rather than evaluating the actual study. There was also occasional confusion over ethical issues surrounding the study in terms of Watson & Rayner's conduct.

## *Reports on the Units taken in June 2010*

Q15. This was a challenging question in the sense that very few candidates scored high marks. Most candidates demonstrated a basic understanding of the classical conditioning of phobias by relating school phobias to bad experiences but unfortunately few went beyond this. There was little psychological terminology used in responses. The concept of association was used more often than any others but, in many cases, it felt like the word was used by chance than by design. The best responses used a range of appropriate terminology (eg unconditioned stimulus, conditioned response, etc) and expertly applied this to the example of school phobia.

Q16. Virtually every candidate scored full marks on this question by correctly identifying children and their gender.

Q17. All but a few candidates correctly matched both pairs of boxes showing good knowledge of terms Oedipus and Electra complex.

Q18. Many candidates demonstrated excellent knowledge of the Diamond & Sigmundson case study and where they scored 3 rather than 4, it tended to be due to a lack of coherency rather than a lack of detail. The best candidates tended to draw a conclusion from the study as well as outlining findings. Weaker candidates tended to simplify the description of the case study but still understood the essence of it.

Q19. The modal score was zero here due to a combination of no responses, vague responses or responses that gave non-biological explanations of gender development. Beyond this, responses elicited a range of marks with a relatively even distribution. Lower scoring responses tended to focus on the role of chromosomes or hormones rather than both. Middle scoring responses tended to be purely descriptive with no evaluation offered, or were limited by a lack of coherency and only satisfactory quality of communication. High scoring responses were not only detailed and coherent in their description of the biology behind gender development but also offered clear evaluative commentary.

Q20. Most candidates were able to successfully complete the diagram and earn themselves two marks.

Q21. This question seemed to catch a lot of candidates out. Common errors were to not distinguish between the ideas at all (eg basically implying they are both about losing information), to describe what accessibility and availability meant rather than the problems of them, and to simply use the words 'accessibility' and 'availability' to answer the question. Some candidates mixed the terms up which did not stop them earning some marks but did stop them earning full marks. However, the main reason that so few candidates did not score full marks was because too many only gave a definition of each idea without then going on to draw a distinction between them.

Q22. Most candidates scored full marks here showing sound understanding of at least one limitation of Terry's study. However, it was not a significant majority that scored two. Many candidates scored one mark either because they failed to elaborate on their chosen limitation or because it was not related clearly enough to the study. Nearly all candidates seemed to know what constitutes a limitation (even if they did not always get it right for this study).

Q23. Most candidates scored well on this question earning two or three marks by explicitly describing Terry's findings, and in some cases explaining them, with good use of terminology. Candidates who did less well often did not say enough about the findings. Candidates should recognise that one statement about the findings of a study is not going to earn them more than one mark. A common error was for candidates to describe a feature of the study (eg he used students) rather than explaining why this feature was problematic.

Q24. It was impressive that so many candidates attempted this essay question and, in most cases, did well in relation to their performance on other parts of the paper. This was particularly true of less able candidates. There were some excellent descriptions of the multi-store model which were both accurate and coherent. Indeed, a number of candidates went into more detail than was necessary given the fact that there were only five marks available for description. Candidates should also be careful not to waste time outlining other stages of memory (eg encoding, retrieval) and instead focus on the storage part. The modal score was five on this question – mainly due to candidates earning all the AO1 marks and none of the AO2. It was the evaluation of the multi-store model which really allowed examiners to differentiate between candidate responses. Some candidates offered no evaluation comment at all while others made points that were vague (eg it is too simplistic), or obvious (eg it ignores other theories), or general (eg you cannot study memory), or irrelevant (eg it ignores brain damage). Top band responses not only described the multi-store model in a clear but succinct way but also offered a range of evaluation points which could be explained and expanded on. As required of top band essays, these responses also demonstrated high levels of spelling, punctuation and grammar.



## **B542 Studies and Applications in Psychology 2**

### **General Comments**

This unit had the smallest entry this series but there were still enough candidates to identify patterns in performance as detailed below. As with Unit 1, examiners were struck by the number of candidates that attempted all or most questions even though some were clearly challenging for less able candidates. However, this determination to attempt every question seemed to 'pay off' for some candidates who, although sometimes tentative, made points or identified features that were creditworthy.

### **Comments on Individual Questions**

Q1. Most candidates scored both marks here. Where candidates scored 1 this was more often because they could identify the extravert but not the neurotic character.

Q2. Nearly every candidate matched both terms correctly to their definitions.

Q3. Most candidates gave a decent definition of 'unconditional positive regard' which earned them two marks. A few candidates scored only one, mostly for partial definitions or definitions that borrowed too many words from the phrase.

Q4. Candidates demonstrated impressive knowledge of the Van Houtte & Jarvis study with many scoring full marks. Candidates who scored lower tended to do so through lack of detail rather than lack of accuracy.

Q5. Most candidates were able to score both marks on this question.

Q6. This question proved to be a good differentiator and elicited a range of marks. The weakest responses were too vague for credit, although most candidates could identify when or on whom counselling could be used. The best responses identified a number of characteristics of the counselling process and presented them in a coherent way.

Q7. Most candidates could identify two depth cues that were present in the picture, usually by name. Only a minority of candidates identified a depth cue not visible eg linear perspective. Better responses then went on to describe the feature of the picture which illustrated the depth cue identified. However, some descriptions were too brief to earn credit because they just referenced the feature (eg 'the men') rather than how it was being used to show depth. Some candidates simply defined the depth cue which meant they could not earn the AO2 marks on offer. A common error was for candidates to identify 'relative size' as depth cue but then illustrate it with height in plane or vice-versa.

Q8. Candidates could either do this question or could not which meant that one of two was not a common score. The vast majority of candidates could name two constancies.

Q9. Most candidates scored on this question by at least identifying an area of application with subliminal advertising being by far the most popular example. Beyond this, quality of description and explanation was variable. Candidates who scored zero did so usually because they did not relate advertising to perception (but to memory instead) or because they tried to unsuccessfully apply research into depth cues to advertising.

Q10. Most candidates knew whether each of the statements was true or false, and therefore earned both marks.

## *Reports on the Units taken in June 2010*

Q11. This question elicited a range of responses. Some candidates offered studies into perception rather than a theory and only scored if their conclusion happened to identify a feature of constructivist theory. The most basic responses simply related perception to experience and learning whereas better responses included key ideas such as top-down processing and perceptual set. However, only a minority of candidates understood these ideas well enough to explain them in detail and in a coherent way.

Q12. Few candidates had problems naming the two stages missing from the table although some did not give the stages their full names so did not earn the marks (eg just 'concrete' instead of 'concrete operational'). There was more variability in candidates' ability to outline a feature of the formal operational stage.

Q13. The modal mark on this question was four, showing good knowledge of terms and their associated definitions.

Q14. This question elicited a range of responses. Some limitations were too descriptive (eg he used Swiss children) rather than evaluative. There was also a tendency for some candidates to evaluate Piaget's theory rather than the experiment identified. The most common score was two since most candidates gave two valid limitations but then did not, or could not, adequately, expand on the limitation. A common example of this was candidates stating that children may have been affected by the fact that Piaget asked the same question twice but then not explaining the impact on findings.

Q15. This question also elicited a range of responses. The very best ones demonstrated an impressive understanding of both Piaget's and Kohlberg's research and how it could or has been applied in the education system and in classrooms. Middle scoring responses tended to use the right terminology but it was applied vaguely or weakly. The weakest responses outlined the use of psychology in education generally and not cognitive development specifically and therefore were likely to score zero.

Q16. Although many candidates scored full marks on this question, it was notable that zero was a common score too. This may suggest that candidates understood the different impacts of the factors in the table but had muddled the ideas of increasing and decreasing crime figures.

Q17. Virtually all candidates correctly identified Dave as the role model and almost as many could identify one of the reinforcers in the source.

Q18. The marks were very evenly distributed on this question. There were a number of acceptable ways of answering this question yet some candidates still failed to grasp the idea of criminal personality, often just defining a criminal or a criminal act.

Q19. This question presented few problems for candidates – possibly because of the large bank of facial features that counted as acceptable answers.

Q20. There were many impressive responses to this question where candidates not only described the procedure with clarity but quoted accurate percentages when outlining findings. Of course, the best responses also included relevant evaluation with the sample bias and the contamination effect being common. Such responses also demonstrated a high level of quality of communication. Most candidates demonstrated at least some knowledge of the Mednick et al. study but some did oversimplify it in their description.

Q21. Most candidates understood this question and found it easy to earn both marks. However, the second most common score was zero because candidates made the same mistake on both parts, ie to offer a behaviour not in the source.

Q22. This was the question that candidates were most likely to score zero on. Too many responses were common sense or vague and did not actually detail the processes involved in social skills training. Indeed, some candidates did not understand the concept at all - with a number suggesting sending people to parties. There were a small number of very good responses which made reference to the stages of social skills training such as modelling, feedback and practice.

Q23. Most candidates scored two marks here for clearly stating that American people essentially use mouths more than eyes when interpreting emotions in faces whereas Japanese people use eyes more. Better responses went beyond this to draw a conclusion about cultural variations in the interpretation of facial expressions. Responses that scored one tended to because of the quality of the response rather than a lack of detail ie findings were muddled or inaccurately stated.

Q24. This was another question where candidates often scored both marks or none at all. There were responses awarded one mark because the limitation was not adequately expanded on or not related to the Yuki et al. study explicitly enough. Candidates who scored zero tended to understand that a limitation was required but offered limitations which were generic and did not necessarily apply to the study. However, the most common mistake was to suggest that the two cultures did not represent all cultures. Although the statement was true, it was not valid in the case of this research which was only aiming to show cultural variations not universality in behaviour.

Q25. There were a range of responses to this question. Most candidates could describe social learning theory but were limited to four marks for AO1 because they could not go beyond the basic ideas of models, observation, imitation and reinforcement. Other candidates limited their marks by only briefly relating the theory to non-verbal communication or, in some cases, significantly limited their marks (to the bottom band) by not relating the theory to non-verbal communication at all. As anticipated, candidates scored better on AO1 than AO2. Some candidates did not attempt any evaluation, whereas others did not go beyond the point that SLT ignores instinct and evolution. Better responses evaluated SLT by outlining what it could not explain which was often enough to move essays in the top band. However, it was notable that few essays scored beyond seven. This was generally to do with lack of content (mainly AO2) rather than standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## **B543 Research in Psychology**

### **General Comments**

The entry for this series was fairly small, particularly in comparison to unit B541, but there were nevertheless sufficient candidates to identify patterns in performance. A significant number of candidates showed a good level of knowledge and understanding of conducting research in Psychology. It was pleasing to see a high number of candidates using a good level of psychological terminology in their responses.

A very high proportion of candidates attempted all the questions on the paper thus demonstrating that the paper was accessible to almost all candidates. A key feature of this new paper is application. The number of candidates successfully drawing information from the source material is high and candidates are encouraged to focus on this in future series.

### **Comments on Individual Questions**

Q1. Almost all candidates scored full marks here, successfully identifying the aim of the investigation from the source material.

Q2. Candidate responses ranged on this question. Whilst a number of candidates scored full marks, correctly identifying the variables and that alternate hypotheses predict a difference, some responses gave an aim or a finding as opposed to a hypothesis.

Q3a. The majority of candidates could correctly identify a weakness of using an opportunity sample. However, contextualising the weakness with the source material proved difficult for some candidates.

Q3b. A well answered question.

Q4. The majority of candidates answered this question well, with only the minority actually manipulating the figures to calculate a response, resulting in an incorrect answer.

Q5. A well answered question by most candidates. Those candidates not achieving full marks did so by failing to draw a comparison between males and females or between the use of physical and verbal aggression.

Q6. A well answered question with most candidates being able to identify numerical data. Only a few confused this with qualitative data.

Q7. It was pleasing to see a good level of psychological terminology in this question. A high number of candidates could accurately identify a weakness of the interview method so most candidates achieved at least 1 mark. Some responses were unexplored which was necessary for the second mark.

Q8. An extremely well answered question with the vast majority of candidates achieving full marks.

Q9. Most candidates achieved 2 marks here and were able to correctly identify overt and covert observations, with only a minority mixing them up. A smaller proportion of candidates achieved the third mark for making a separate distinction between the two types of observations.

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Q10. Very few candidates achieved full marks on this question. There was some confusion between types of observations and with some candidates providing weaknesses of a non-participant observation. Where candidates did correctly identify a strength, many failed to provide elaboration or description.

Q11a. This was one of the lowest scoring questions and, with 11b, received the highest number of no responses. Those candidates that did attempt it gave definitions of reliability unrelated to observations and so scored 1 mark. Very few candidates placed the definition in the context of observations.

Q11b. This was the lowest scoring question and, with 11a, was the question attempted by the least number of candidates. Those few candidates who did make an attempt tended to give definitions of reliability, with just a few demonstrating how inter-rater reliability could be achieved and then fewer still contextualising their responses.

Q12. Most candidates achieved 1 mark for this question with only the minority encompassing the entire concept of gender bias in research.

Q13a. A generally well answered question where most candidates were able to recognise a null hypothesis as stating no difference between the variables. A minority of candidates stated an aim.

Q13b. Some candidates provided very vague responses such as 'males and females' without making reference to a specific group of participants. However, those that did state a specific group gave excellent justification for their choice.

Q13c. Overall, this was a well answered question. Candidates should, however, be careful not to give details of the procedure that has been assessed in the previous question (ie the sample).

Q13d. This was a well answered question with candidates demonstrating a good level of knowledge and understanding regarding the use of controls in research and reasons why they are used. The majority of responses were also appropriately contextualised.

Q13e A well answered question with most candidates contextualising their answers by linking their ethical issue to noise.

Q13f. The majority of candidates could successfully describe a limitation of the experimental method and provide explanation as to why it was a limitation. Some candidates failed to contextualise their answer which was necessary for the third mark.

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