

Psychology

General Certificate of Education **GCSE J611**

Reports on the Units

January 2010

J611/R/10J

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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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Chief Examiners Report

This was the first series of examining the new GCSE in Psychology; a qualification which has only been available to teach from September 2009. This meant that, not surprisingly, the entry was negligible for this first round of examinations. Indeed, no candidates sat the B542 exam and hence there is no report on this unit. It is understandable that entries were low since few Centres would have been in a position to adequately prepare candidates for an exam only one term into a course. Nonetheless, those candidates that were entered tended to demonstrate impressive knowledge and understanding of a subject that they could only have been studying for a matter of months.

Small entries clearly impact on the usefulness of statistics, which is why the grade distribution for this series should not be seen as a predictor for future series. Having said this, the A*-C pass rate for B543 is at a level which would be considered acceptable for GCSE Psychology. Meanwhile, the pass rate for B541 is significantly lower than one would expect when the entry is higher.

B541 Studies and Applications in Psychology 1

General Comments

The entry for this series was small given the fact it was the first module available in the new unitised qualification. On this basis, it is difficult to draw clear conclusions about the pattern of results. However, it was pleasing to see a high level of performance amongst those candidates that did enter. What was notable, in comparison to the legacy specification, was how many candidates attempted all or most of the questions on the paper. This included the 10 mark essay question at the end of the paper which tends to not be attempted by less able candidates. Indeed, it was encouraging to see that the paper appeared accessible for nearly all candidates despite GCSE Psychology having a tradition of being tiered. One final observation worthy of note is that candidates performed well on those questions requiring understanding of applications of psychological research. Increased focus on applications is a key feature of the new specification and so it was pleasing to see this reflected in candidates' answers.

Comments on Individual Questions

Q1

A number of candidates scored full marks here, but otherwise they tended to score just 1 by placing 'output' in the right place in the information processing diagram and getting the other two wrong. A common mistake was to include 'rehearsal' in the diagram (by placing it in the third box) and then 'storage' was incorrectly displaced to the fourth box.

Q2

Most candidates earned full marks here by correctly matching the 'reason for forgetting' with its definition. A significant number of candidates used three lines in their answer despite the instructions. The mark scheme instructed examiners to deduct 1 mark for each unnecessary additional line.

Q3

Most candidates could correctly identify a feature of STM and then a corresponding feature of LTM to earn 2 marks. However, only a few made the distinction explicit (eg they have different capacities) which was necessary for the third mark. Some candidates' responses were too vague or too obvious (eg information stays longer in long term memory) and such responses were limited to 1 mark.

Q4

It was pleasing to see many candidates attempting this evaluative question. Only a minority of candidates scored full marks but many got 1 mark for each of the limitations that they offered. Candidates do need to get better at explaining why something is a limitation otherwise their responses are in danger of reading as descriptions instead of evaluations eg they needed to explain why Terry's use of a laboratory is problematic.

Q5

A number of candidates could describe levels of processing as far as distinguishing between deep and shallow processing but they needed to outline the impact of type of processing on memory to earn the full marks, otherwise they were not really describing a theory of memory. A

significant minority of candidates mistakenly described the stages of information processing in response to this question.

Q6

The majority of candidates could identify the examples of the Oedipus and Electra complex from the source. Only occasionally did candidates mix up the complexes by applying them to the wrong sex. A small number of candidates decided to define the complexes instead of extracting the necessary information from the source - this resulted in them scoring no marks.

Q7

These statements presented few problems for candidates with nearly all of them showing sound knowledge of the key terms associated with sex and gender.

Q8

Most candidates appeared to understand what was required when asked for findings with only a small minority describing other details of the Diamond and Sigmundson study. However, responses generally lacked detail given the 3 marks available. Too many candidates offered little more than a conclusion. The best responses detailed some the behaviours, thoughts and feelings of boy in the case.

Q9

The most common limitation identified was the uniqueness of the case and how this impacted on its generalisability. A number of candidates were able to explain this point well and earn all 3 marks. Some candidates tried to raise the ethics of the case but few could do this effectively, often wrongly assuming the study was experimental. For the purposes of this question, examiners accepted limitations that pertained to Money's interpretation of the case as well as Diamond & Sigmundson's, so issues such as bias were creditworthy.

Q10

Most candidates were able to name the hormones associated with gender development and therefore received marks for this. Only a minority confused chromosomes with hormones. The best answers related hormones to examples of masculine and feminine behaviour. If candidates focused instead on physical characteristics then some credit was given even though, strictly speaking, this pertains to sex rather than gender.

Q11

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates, with many scoring full marks. However, candidates should be encouraged to learn the correct spellings of different types of phobias where possible. There were some ambiguous spellings of 'agoraphobia' (eg 'agrophobia' was common) which candidates should be mindful of, especially when there are other phobias on the specification that these may be mistaken for eg acrophobia.

Q12

Many candidates found this particular question challenging with very few scoring all 4 marks. Most candidates at least recognised that the examples of classical conditioning needed to come from the source, but a number did not understand much more than this. Some candidates clearly had problems just distinguishing between a stimulus and a response, yet alone conditioned and unconditioned ones. Another common problem was that candidates gave too many possible answers to each question - for example, suggesting that the conditioned stimulus is 'fear of cats'

rather than just 'cats' by themselves, or listing the unconditioned response as 'pain/fear/heart beats faster'. The rule here is that examiners take the first answer so candidates should be encouraged to offer only one response to such questions.

Q13

As expected, this question elicited a variety of responses covering the range of marks available. Some candidates seemed not to understand the question - for example, further describing the behaviourist approach to phobias or stating the problems of having a phobia. The majority of candidates did attempt to criticise the behaviourist explanation, but many of the criticisms were implicit rather than clearly stated and explained. The best criticisms focused on the nature/nurture debate in relation to phobias and on the cognitive factors ignored by behaviourists. Candidates should note that giving examples that contradict an explanation are creditworthy, and are indeed an effective way of elaborating on a criticism.

Q14

This question was well answered by many candidates, with flooding being the most popular behaviour therapy to describe. A significant number of candidates scored 3 out of 4 marks, but missed out on the final mark by not adequately detailing the rationale behind their chosen therapy.

Q15

The vast majority of candidates earned full marks here by extracting the appropriate information from the source.

Q16

This was one of the lowest scoring questions, with the majority of candidates gaining no marks despite most attempting the question. Too many candidates focused on situational factors here rather than the contrasting dispositional factors. Those candidates that knew that dispositional factors referred to personality factors could earn 1 mark, but only very few could contrast this with situational factors to explain that some people obey more than others regardless of the situation that they find themselves in.

Q17

Most candidates followed the requirement of the question and described just one real-life situation where research into obedience may be applied. Those that covered more than one, generally, penalised themselves although credit was always given for the 'best one'. Schools and prisons were the most common focus, with some well detailed responses outlining the role of obedience and managing disobedience in such institutions. The best responses used psychological terminology and concepts throughout rather than 'common sense'. Only a minority of students mistakenly described a study, or described key concepts without applying them.

Q18

A large majority of candidates demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of the Bickman study, with only a few of them getting confused about the actual uniforms used. Even then, these candidates showed that they understood the main features of the research. Almost inevitably, the requirement to evaluate eluded some candidates but many did make a decent attempt to offer limitations of the study. There were a significant number of candidates who offered other studies into obedience, most notably Milgram's 'electric shock' experiment. Although there may be opportunities to such studies in future series when the question may be more open - in this particular case, it was only the core study (Bickman) that could receive credit.

Q19

Most candidates managed to score both marks here, whether it was by extracting the relevant information from the source or simply identifying Jesse's behaviour as 'separation protest' and 'stranger anxiety'.

Q20

Most candidates scored full marks on this multiple-choice question demonstrating good knowledge of the Hazen & Shaver study.

Q21

Nearly all candidates could offer a valid criticism of the study to earn 1 mark.

Q22

Whether candidates focused on one area of application or on more, this was generally a well answered question. Hospital care and nursery care were popular applications to describe. The best responses related the applications to psychological research. Some candidates' responses were too bland, outlining the value of secure attachments but not putting this in a real-life context.

Q23

There were a number of well written essays which described Bowlby's theory in detail and then went on to evaluate the theory in some depth. Many candidates could outline the key features of Bowlby's theory and nearly all attempted some level of evaluation but the quality of this was more variable. Candidates need to be encouraged to write essays with a balance of description and evaluation as AO1 marks and AO2 marks are divided equally on a 10 mark question on theories. The most common mistake was for candidates to describe the different types of attachment and/or Ainsworth's research into this. In such cases, it was unusual for candidates to make any creditworthy points.

B543 Research in Psychology 3

General Comments

The entry for this series was small given the fact that it was the first module available in the new unitised qualification. On this basis it is quite difficult to draw clear conclusions about the pattern of results. A high number of candidates used and applied a good level of psychological terminology and showed a good grasp of the skills involved in carrying out research.

It was pleasing to see how many candidates attempted all of the questions thus showing 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 was high and candidates are encouraged to focus on this in future series.

Comment on Individual Questions

Q1

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

Q2

A number of candidates scored full marks here; otherwise they tended to score just 1 by correctly stating the dependent variable in their hypotheses. The independent variable was often incorrectly stated or absent; this was necessary for full marks.

Q3(a)

All candidates achieved full marks on this question.

Q3(b)

Whilst the vast majority of candidates could correctly identify a problem with the sample, thus scoring 1 mark, only a few could correctly place the problem in context of the study in the source material.

Q4

Nearly all candidates could correctly identify the independent and dependent variables.

Q5

The majority of candidates scored 1 mark as they could identify what experimenter bias is, but few could explain the outcome of being biased.

Q6(b)

Most candidates scored 2 marks on this question. Whilst disadvantages were correctly identified, few candidates placed them in context of the study in the source material.

Q7

Most candidates scored 2-3 marks on this question. Only a minority placed a title on their graphs and so scored full marks.

Q8

Almost all candidates achieved full marks on this question.

Q9

Most candidates scored 1 mark for the question. Whilst the majority of candidates could identify a strength of the laboratory method, a minority could explain why it was a strength.

Q10(a)

Very few candidates achieved full marks on this question. While some could recognise an extraneous variable as an absence of control, very few could recognise the how it affected the outcome of a study.

Q10(b)

Whilst most some candidates could identify a possible extraneous variable and so scored 1 mark, only a few could explain it in context of the study in the source material.

Q11(a)

Most candidates scored full marks on this question, although a few failed to score as they stated aims rather than hypotheses.

Q11(b)

The majority of candidates scored 1-2 marks here. Only a few placed their chosen sampling method in context of the investigation and so scored full marks.

Q11 (c)

This was a well answered question with the vast majority of candidates achieving full marks.

Q11(d)

Whilst some candidates scored well on this question, few achieved full marks. Candidates should be careful not to give details of the procedure that has been assessed in previous questions (i.e. the sampling method).

Q11(e)

Many candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of weaknesses pertaining to the questionnaire method. Very few, however, placed the weakness in context of the investigation.

Q11(f)

Nearly all candidates could offer brief answers that involved looking for patterns, although very few gave detailed responses that made reference to the use of descriptive statistics or the use of graphs.

Grade Thresholds

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Psychology (J611)
January 2010 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Max Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
B541	Raw	80	72	64	56	48	40	32	24	16
	UMS	80	72	64	56	48	40	32	24	16
B543	Raw	40	36	32	28	24	20	16	12	8
	UMS	40	36	32	28	24	20	16	12	8

Statistics are correct at the time of publication.

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