

**Psychology**

Advanced GCE **A2 H568**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H168**

**Examiners' Reports**

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**June 2011**

**H568/H168/R/11**

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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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**Advanced Subsidiary GCE Psychology (H168)**

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# G541 Psychological Investigations

## General Comments

In general, candidates seemed well prepared for the paper and were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of research methods. However, many candidates could not be awarded top band marks because they did not outline, where appropriate, their responses in context of the theme of the research outlined in the stimulus material presented. Many candidates gave very strong answers showing high level understanding but were capped due to lack of context (sometimes weaker answers, but with context however scored more highly). The importance of context can not be emphasized too much, but it seems some candidates are still not applying this and need more practice and preparation.

There were a variety of key psychological terms in this paper (e.g. participant observation and event sampling) which did throw some candidates, but were very good for differentiating.

The majority of candidates finished this paper in the time allowed.

## Comments on Individual Questions

- 1(a) In this question candidates simply had to explain what a participant observation was, yet this proved to be quite difficult for quite a few students. A lot simply described what a standard naturalistic observation was, and some were very confused, thinking that it was an observation of one specific person.
- 1(b) Candidates who did not know what a participant observation was struggled on this question, but did manage to pick up some marks by referring to some strengths and weaknesses of the observation method in general that were in common with the participant observation method.
- 2(a) Most candidates did understand what event sampling was, but sometimes did not articulate themselves clearly enough to secure full marks by failing to convey that specific behavioural categories were looked out for and recorded on every occasion they were displayed during a continuous observation period. A minority confused the concept with the sampling of participants, rather than behaviour.
- 2(b) Candidates who understood what event sampling involved were able to provide good examples of strengths and weaknesses, although not always in context.
- 3(a) This proved to be quite difficult for some candidates and achieving the maximum 4 marks was not easy. Many candidates mistakenly assumed that the recorded entries for the behavioural categories referred to individual people, rather than being a summation of the total overall occurrences of such events. Some candidates did not provide full, clear labelling and a minority produced scattergraphs.
- 3(b) The problem here was again interpreting the data in terms of number of people, rather than total behaviours displayed. Some also failed to provide sufficient and clear enough labelling for full marks.
- 4(a) Most candidates could successfully identify appropriate ethical issues, but hardly ever in context. There was some evidence of rote learning of standard ethical issues and simply listing them.

- 4(b) Suggestions to address the chosen ethical issue were good, but again hardly ever in context, which meant very few candidates achieved full marks here.
- 5 It was pleasing that many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the concepts of reliability and validity and were able to apply this knowledge to the information presented in the source. Occasionally there was some confusion with examples cited in support of reliability more suited to validity and vice versa.
- 6 Virtually all candidates were able to identify an alternative sampling method (a minority referred to an alternative research method – e.g. interview), but often lacked detail when attempting to describe how it could be implemented, and hardly any provided a description in context so few achieved full marks.
- 7 The majority of candidates successfully demonstrated an understanding of what a null hypothesis involved and were able to refer to both variables in their statement. However, some candidates cited experimental null hypotheses referring to a 'difference', rather than relationship or correlation. Some wrote a directional hypothesis and received no credit.
- 8 Many candidates over-answered this question, trying to refer to all aspects of how the research would be conducted (with a 'who, what, where, when and how' strategy). However, the question only required details of how the variable 'driving skills' could be measured (operational detail) and an evaluation of it. A greater focus on this, with more detail would have helped many candidates secure higher marks. Most candidates attempted to evaluate their suggestion, although few responded in context when doing this.
- 9 A good understanding of the correlation method was demonstrated here, with most candidates being able to suggest appropriate strengths and weaknesses, but once again not always in context of the source material.

## G542 Core Studies

### General Comments

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 both questions and the best response was credited.

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.

Many candidates knew the core studies well with the best candidates contextualising their responses. Candidates should be reminded that, particularly in Section A, as question parts are not interdependent, each question part should be contextualised. Additionally, all parts of question 16 should be fully contextualised to the chosen study.

It is important for candidates to read the question carefully. Responses suggested that some candidates did not fully understand the requirements of a question e.g. 'Describe two examples of qualitative data recorded in your chosen study' does not mean 'Describe two ways in which qualitative data was gathered in your chosen study'.

The best candidates used appropriate psychological terminology and explained the terms in the context of the question. Some candidates need to show understanding of terms used, e.g. ecological validity, reliability, demand characteristics quasi/natural experiment, rather than merely identifying them. Quality of language was not always consistent.

Examiners felt the paper was both appropriate for the targeted level and accessible to the majority of candidates.

### Comments On Individual Questions

#### Section A

- 1 This was a challenging question. Good candidates scored full marks for identification and description of the formal tests. However most could only identify the formal tests conducted.
- 2(a) Generally well answered. To gain full marks candidates needed to outline a difference in performance between the three groups.
- 2(b) There was some confusion between conclusion and findings with some candidates repeating their answers from Q 2(a).
- 3(a) Generally well answered though some candidates cited 'the Asperger's group' as a control group and some cited the control tasks of emotion/gender recognition.
- 3(b) Many candidates were able to score partial marks on this question by saying the control group was used as a comparison group and many candidates scored the full 2 marks by elaborating and developing their answer.
- 4(a) Generally well answered with candidates successfully describing one of Hans' phobias.

- 4(b) Many candidates scored only partial marks on this question because they gave descriptions of how the features of a horse were seen to represent Hans' father but did not link this to a subconscious fear of his father (which Hans projected onto/showed through a phobia of horses).
- 5(a) Generally well answered.
- 5(b) There was a full range of answers for this question. Many candidates gave a good generic strength fully referenced to the study, many gave a good but uncontextualised strength, and many gave strengths of the study not related to the sample.
- 6(a) Generally well answered though many candidates cited the aggressive/non-aggressive conditions as one of the IVs even though it had already been identified in the question. There were also some instances where either the age or the sex of the participants was offered as an IV.
- 6(b) There were many really good answers here though some candidates merely identified the two conditions / only described one of the conditions (usually the aggressive condition).
- 7(a) Many candidates identified features of the taxi driver group but because of the way their answers were worded and with positive marking managed to gain marks.
- 7(b) The best responses referred to how a control can reduce the influence of extraneous variables / make it a fair test/ control for possible bias and then linked this appropriately to the study.
- 8(a) Many candidates scored partial marks here because they did not fully explain their answer e.g. they referred to brain activity / brain waves but did not include electrical / frequency. This should have been an easy question for candidates who knew what EEG stood for.
- 8(b) Many answers were not developed adequately to score full marks e.g. answers merely stated that an EEG does not show the content of a dream / only shows there is increased brain activity. Not many candidates thought of the ecological validity limitations but those that did generally described and contextualised this issue well.
- 9 There were many instances where the candidate did not go far enough in their description e.g. Material presented to the LVF cannot be identified in speech but can be pointed at – needed to add 'with the left hand'. Furthermore there were many answers that referred to information that was already known before Sperry conducted his study e.g. hemisphere specialities. Some candidates still demonstrate a lack of understanding of this research.
- 10(a) This was answered better than 10(b) with many candidates identifying a feature of an experiment e.g. controlled environment, manipulation of IVs measuring of DVs. Unfortunately these responses were frequently not contextualised through reference to the study. Many candidates did, however, score full marks on this question.
- 10(b) This was not a well answered question and proved a good discriminator. Many candidates showed little understanding of the case study method confusing this with a longitudinal study. Contextualisation was frequently missing.
- 11 Generally well answered though some candidates cited drunk victim, cane victim, black victim, white victim as the four IVs. Some candidates still fail to appreciate the difference between the victim, the model and the participants.

- 12 There were some excellent answers here although many candidates referred to demand characteristics / laboratory experiments / being paid / ethical issues. Weaker candidates either gave two versions of the same answer or referred to ethics rather than the ecological validity. This became a good discriminator.
- 13 This proved another excellent discriminator because many candidates drew on any ethical issue from the BPS guidelines without understanding that the question required them to outline ethical problems relating to the original study, not ethical issues per se. Many candidates therefore referred to problems that could be raised as a result of what happened after the study e.g. the publication of the book and film.
- 14(a) Candidates who knew an appropriate similarity scored well.
- 14(b) This question was generally answered better than 14(a) with many candidates scoring at least 1 mark and losing the second by not referring to both RGs and NRGs as required by the question.
- 15(a) Generally well answered.
- 15(b) This question gave candidates the opportunity to 'think outside the box' and produced some excellent answers.

## **Section B**

All three studies appeared to be equally popular.

General comment referring to 16(a), 16(b) and 16(c): Some candidates clearly did not know the difference between quantitative and qualitative data and particularly for Dement & Kleitman referred to the number of dreams recalled/the number of correct responses for 5 and 15 minutes of REM sleep.

- 16(a) Most candidates were able to get at least partial marks here. However many did not elaborate their answers adequately to gain full marks e.g. Dement & Kleitman: not saying that qualitative data about dream content was recorded using a tape recorder, Rosenhan: not saying what the pseudopatients were writing notes about, Reicher and Haslam: not stating that the observations/video recordings gathered qualitative data about the behaviour of the guards and prisoners i.e. not fully contextualising answers.
- 16(b) Candidates who understood the requirements of this question scored well by giving good descriptions of two pieces of qualitative data recorded in their chosen study. However many candidates did not understand what they were supposed to do and described two ways in which qualitative data was gathered e.g. Rosenhan: pseudopatients wrote down in their notebooks what was going on in the hospital, pseudopatients gathered qualitative data by asking the staff questions. This proved a good discriminator.
- 16(c) Many candidates were able to both identify and contextualise an appropriate generic strength and weakness of qualitative data but few were able to accurately link these to their chosen study by providing a specific example/evidence from their chosen study to show good understanding.
- 16(d) The majority of candidates were able to give a basic description of the procedure of their chosen study. However many candidates failed to refer to: more than the first study in Rosenhan, the IVs in Reicher & Haslam, the different measures (dream content, REM time, relationship of eye movement to dream content) in Dement & Kleitman.

- 16(e) There were some very good answers which showed sound understanding. Most candidates could make several appropriate suggestions for how their chosen study could be improved although few actually suggested how their improvements could be implemented. Many candidates made suggestions for improvements and then described the implications of their improvements – such information could not gain credit in this question part as it was the requirement of part (f). A good discriminator.
- 16(f) There were some excellent responses to this question. Most candidates were able to make several general statements referring to the implications of their improvements, although only some were able to show real understanding and/or make clear links to their chosen study throughout. Another good discriminator.

### Section C

The developmental approach (Q17) was more popular than the psychodynamic perspective (Q18).

- 17(a) Some candidates gave an assumption that was actually more appropriate to the behaviourist approach and many only gave a vague response e.g. we all go through systematic identifiable developmental stages which affect us – i.e. no link to behaviour.
- 18(a) Some candidates gave an assumption that was actually more appropriate to the individual differences approach and many only gave a vague response e.g. one assumption of the psychodynamic perspective is that the mind is like an iceberg: we have pre-conscious, conscious and sub-conscious thoughts – i.e. no link to behaviour.
- 17(b) Although many candidates were able to give reasonable descriptions of why one child can conserve whilst another cannot, few were able to really explain this in relation to the developmental approach and many either failed to link their answer to the Samuel and Bryant study or failed to use appropriate evidence from the named study e.g. merely described the procedure followed in the study. This proved a good discriminator.
- 18(b) Again, although many candidates were able to give reasonable descriptions of how the psychodynamic perspective could explain MPD, few were able to show real understanding and many failed to elaborate their response by giving a specific detail or example. These could easily have been provided by making reference to aspects of Thigpen and Cleckley's study. This also proved a good discriminator.
- 17/18(c) Although several candidates cited inappropriate studies in question 17 (the question asked them to refer to core studies that take the developmental approach), many scored well here. As in previous sessions, candidates lost marks by not doing the obvious i.e. identifying the similarity/weakness e.g. a similarity between ..... and ..... is that they both used the experimental method / conducted a case study; and then demonstrating with evidence from each of the named studies in turn. Many candidates still included evaluation points rather than supporting evidence, which is unnecessary in this question.
- 17/18(d) This question part was answered well by many candidates and the number of study-specific answers continues to decrease. The best candidates explained why their strength/weakness was a strength/weakness e.g. a weakness of the developmental approach is that it tends to focus on children which may be considered unethical. As in previous sessions, many of the supporting examples did not actually support/illustrate the identified strength/weakness. Additionally in Q17 supporting evidence was often offered from inappropriate studies e.g. Savage-Rumbaugh: inappropriate as the question said 'using examples from core studies that take this approach' – i.e. not any core studies that can/could take this approach.

## G543 Options in Applied Psychology

### General Comments

The paper appears to have performed fairly and reliably, with no obvious flaws or inconsistencies between questions. The full range of marks was accessed (many in the 90s up to 99%). 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.

Most candidates produced consistent responses, and the sizeable minority who previously performed better on one option seems to have dwindled in response to the more appropriate two hours to complete the exam. There was noticeably more consistency and quality throughout.

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. Candidates seemed to be more thoroughly prepared, significantly 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 good mark is not as exacting as may have been feared by some teachers. 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 student engagement with the material, and there are more expedient approaches than the aforementioned formulaic answer. A majority of candidates did seem able to make a good attempt at four questions and there were few rubric errors. I am not aware of any examples where candidates answered questions from the wrong sections.

As stated, better candidates answered the question asked, whereas others did not (eg Q1a saw weaker students describe Asch's study with varying amount of detail, whereas better candidates used this study to present the influence the majority may have in a jury situation). Some candidates merely outlined research (eg Q11a reported cockroaches in a chamber escaping the light), whereas better responses used the research as support or evidence and made it relevant (eg to a sporting audience).

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. Weaker candidates made 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 Specific Questions

### Forensic

Q1(a) was often well answered but quite commonly detailed accounts of Asch's research would have benefitted from improved application to the jury situation. Similarly Q2(a) was generally well answered with Loftus' 'weapon's effect' being the favourite, though not only, material used. Weaker candidates tended to focus on the study at the expense of application to the question.

Q1(b) differentiated well with stronger candidates addressing application of research to the courtroom. Similarly, Q2(b) clearly differentiated those who did not seem to have the skill required to deal with the term 'reliability' at one end and those who could not only present it but assess it in various contexts too.

Q3(a) was generally answered well with better responses being able to identify story/witness order in both defence and prosecution. Weaker responses to Q3b failed to set their response in the context of the courtroom.

Q4(a) was a good differentiator. Similarly with Q4(b) – those who understood this issue presented it effectively, those who didn't struggled and got confused. At its worst Eberhardt, a black woman championing equality and justice, was referred to as an ethnocentric man.

### Health and Clinical

Q5(a) again provided a range of quality with better responses explicitly relating their research to media campaigning and health promotion whereas weaker candidates merely reported a study. Q5(b) saw weaker candidates drift from ecological validity to general evaluation.

Q6(a) generally produced accounts of Kanner or Holmes & Rahe with better candidates explicitly linking hassles/life events to stress; again in Q6(b) many candidates seemed to lack the skill to manage the concept of reliability of methods of stress measures whereas others seemed to easily access the better marks and grades.

Q7(a) was broadly well answered. Q7(b) produced varying quality. Appropriateness provided easy access to better marks for some while others seemed to lack the skill to know what to do with this term. A few candidates did not consider different explanations, instead taking the phrase 'different explanations' as an entity in itself (as opposed to using a number of single explanations) and this was accepted but was rarely addressed effectively.

Responses for Q8(a) tended to focus on schizophrenia, depression and phobias. This question was generally well answered but often with limited information of *how* to treat the disorder. Question 8(b) saw too many general descriptions of approaches to treatments. Good marks were easily accessed when comparisons were forthcoming.

### Sport

Q9(a) was commonly soundly answered though many struggled to apply the concept of nature/nurture in Q9(b).

Q10(a) was less popular but generally well answered when it was attempted, though the concept of validity produced a varied level of response.

Q11(a) was dominated by Zajonc's cockroach studies, some candidates applying it more explicitly to the sporting context than others. A number of candidates limited their evaluation to just the one study.

Q12(a) again produced a good range in the quality of candidates' responses; candidates often struggled to evaluate the concepts of individual/situational.

### **Education**

Above principles apply. Note that Q15(b) typifies answers where the candidate gives a highly generalised response, such as methodological evaluations, which is not specific to the question or related research studies.

# 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 described a feasible investigation in detail which was both practical and ethical. In order to gain full credit, candidates need to describe a repeated measures design clearly and accurately. Many candidates gave imaginative and carefully thought out descriptions of a practical project based on the research question. Popular choices were the difference between music and silence on memory or the difference between learning material in the form of words or pictures. Some candidates did not answer the short research methods questions in the context of their own practical project.

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: in Section A candidates usually chose one of the research questions on which to base their practical project, in Section B they selected one out of the two questions. Most candidates were able to complete the paper in the allocated time but some 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.

## Section A

- 1 Most candidates framed an appropriate alternative hypothesis but need to fully operationalise both variables to gain full marks.
- 2 There were some excellent, detailed and comprehensive answers. Most candidates selected option (a) music (b) noise or (f) pictures or words. The majority of candidates described a repeated measures design, although a minority described an independent measures design. The method was clearly described although it was not always fully replicable and some responses were over complicated. Good responses included full details of the sampling procedure and sample and demonstrated a clear understanding of what data is collected and a description of how it has been measured. It is important that candidates describe research that falls within BPS ethical guidelines. Most candidates are aware of the need to use participants over 16 years of age.
- 3 Candidates could gain full marks for explaining the advantage of a repeated measures design but the answer needed to be given in the context of the practical already described.
- 4(a) Good responses demonstrated an understanding of sampling methodology in the context of the candidate's project. Others needed to provide a more detailed explanation of the strength of the sampling method in the context of the sample they have described.
- 4(b) Many good responses showed a knowledge of the weaknesses of a sampling method but candidates must ensure they make it clear they are referring to the sample they have described in question 2.

- 5 To get the marks, candidates needed to identify the correct test and give at least two reasons why this test was appropriate.
- 6 Most candidates gave effective answers by identifying at least one ethical issue and then explaining how that arose. In order to get full marks candidates should relate the issue to their own practical project.
- 7 Stronger answers demonstrated knowledge of what was being measured and suggested a different way to operationalise the DV. A common error was to change the IV rather than the DV.

**Section B**

- 8(a) Good responses gave a clear, accurate description of the physiological approach. Although examples and evaluation may have enhanced the response, it was not required for full marks.
- 8(b) There were some excellent descriptions of studies with few misunderstandings. In order to gain full marks candidates should make explicit links to the approach. Maguire and Dement and Kleitman were popular choices of physiological research.
- 8(c) This question differentiated well. Good responses evaluated the approach and used evidence effectively to support the points made. Some responses drifted into an evaluation of the studies cited rather than directing the points towards the physiological approach. In order to get into the top mark bands responses need to discuss more than one strength and weakness.
- 8(d) Most candidates were able to make some distinctions between the physiological and cognitive approach and support this with appropriate evidence. Answers needed to make more than one appropriate comparison in order to gain full marks. Marks were awarded in all bands.
- 8(e) Most candidates understood the nature of reductionist research and good responses gave informed, coherent discussions and related these to the application of reductionist research. Candidates must ensure that they read the question carefully and respond to the the concepts of usefulness as well as reductionism.
- 9(a) Good responses outlined a wide range of self report methods and gave appropriate suggestions as to how these methods are used. Candidates need to give a description of the self report method rather than simply identifying aspects of it to gain full credit.
- 9(b) A wide range of research was cited. Many candidates described Freud (little Hans) and Thigpen & Cleckley. Loftus and Palmer, Baron Cohen and Rosenhan also made frequent appearances. Research from the A2 specification, notably Holmes and Rahe and other research into stress also appeared. Candidates need to explicitly relate the description of research to the use of self report methods.
- 9(c) Candidates need to discuss the strengths/limitations of research using self report 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 the fact that participants may not tell the truth, are affected by demand characteristics or social desirability.

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- 9(d) Good responses discussed several points of comparison arising from the different experimental methods e.g. types of data collected, reliability, demand characteristics, ethics, samples. The better candidates supported these points with accurate, appropriate evidence.
- 9(e) Candidates should avoid anecdotal and/or list like answers stating the ways that self report would not breach the ethical guidelines. Stronger candidates wrote answers making points about dealing with ethical issues from a 'practical' viewpoint. There is no requirement to cite research to support the arguments but it may help a discussion to do so.

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