

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

PSYCHOLOGY

H567

For first teaching in 2015

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 3 series overview

Candidates seemed well prepared for this exam session, with much better responses on historical views of mental illness and ethnocentrism which shows how centres appear to have taken on board advice from recent examiner reports.

There seemed to be fewer incidences of the wrong study being used in Section B part (a) questions, and generally in 5(a), 7(a) and 8(a), a good level of knowledge and understanding of the key features were demonstrated.

There were no questions which were consistently unanswered, most candidates could attempt every question and gain some credit.

Prepared candidates who have a working knowledge of the specification content will always be able to answer the question. Where there is more than one way to interpret the question we will always credit anything that could be deemed to be appropriate, working for the benefit of the candidate.

One big issue remains illegible handwriting; this can sometimes be impossible to decipher accurately. It is important that candidates are given full credit for what they have written, and centres need to make sure that everything the candidate writes can be considered by examiners. Typed scripts can have their own issues if candidates are unable to type with clarity, although usually the context can help with working out the actual word that was meant to be included.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempted every question answered the question with appropriate content contextualised application to scenarios considered the marking tariff with appropriately detailed responses such as Question 3(a) and (b). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> didn't apply their knowledge of the key research to real world situations – the 'what does this tell us about?' AO2 marks in Section B part (a) did not develop evaluative points made in Section B part (b) responses, by using analysis, counter argument or comparisons effectively didn't relate the practical suggestions to the specific scenarios in Section B part (c) responses in particular.

Section A overview

This section was answered really well, with the majority of candidates achieving high marks on Questions 1-3. Question 4 was done less well on the whole; centres need to make sure their candidates are prepared to write longer essay type responses on all of the methodological issues and debates in the specification.

Question 1

1 Outline **two** historical views of mental illness.

[6]

This question saw a large majority of candidates gaining full marks by considering two historical views. Previous reports have highlighted how we interpret the term 'historical' and there were rarely late 20th or 21st century views. We interpreted 'views' to mean explanations or treatments or a mix of both, a view, elaboration and then the treatment was worth 3 marks.

Question 2 (a)

2 The key research by Gottesman et al. (2010) involved analysis of data from the Danish Psychiatric Central Register.

(a) What were Gottesman et al. (2010) trying to find out?

[3]

Many candidates understood the aim of this study, including the key concepts of genetic transference, probability, both contextualised to the correct Gottesman study. Some candidates confused it with the twin study, but could still gain credit for the key concepts as they overlapped.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Outline **one** strength of Gottesman et al. (2010) conducting their research through analysis of data in this register.

[3]

There were many strengths here; they needed to be strengths of using data to analyse mental health research - not the research itself. This was answered well by most candidates, and attempted by almost all candidates. Identifying a strength, elaborating why it is a strength and contextualising was a good structure used by many. It was nice to see reliability of large sample related to ability to deal with anomalous data, this is an improvement on how a previously similar question was answered on this paper.

Question 2 (c)

- (c) Outline **one** weakness of Gottesman et al. (2010) conducting their research through analysis of data in this register. [3]

This question on weakness again was generally well done. The issue of consent was not credited, as no one has to or has the ability to consent to become part of national data statistics and as the data was anonymised it wasn't a necessity for Gottesman et al. to get this.

More frequent responses referred to lack of generalisability as it was only based on a Danish population or a lack of qualitative data. Responses which referred to what was missing i.e. it only looked at Schizophrenia and Bipolar, were not credited because this wasn't a weakness of using the register. Gottesman et al. wanted to study bipolar and schizophrenia so this register met his requirements. A criticism of his research for only looking at two disorders would be accurate but not as an answer to this question.

Question 3 (a) and (b)

- 3 Orla is a researcher working in the Psychology department of a university. She works with a range of different therapists. Orla thinks that non-biological treatments of mental illness are effective and she wants to conduct some research into their effectiveness to find out whether she is correct.
- (a) Identify **and** describe **one** non-biological treatment of a disorder that Orla could consider for her research. [4]
- (b) Explain how Orla could investigate the effectiveness of this non-biological treatment of mental illness. [6]

Generally candidates did well with their responses to this question. Question 3(a) and 3(b) were linked; the answer in Question 3(a) had to relate to the answer in 3(b). A non-biological treatment was more often than not identified, and, particularly with the classical conditioning based therapies, was detailed. CBT, RET, REBT tended to be less well described. If the therapy was not clearly identified then there could be no credit. If it was not identified but described in detail therefore clearly identifiable, this was credited. Exercise related to biochemical explanations was treated as a biological treatments and therefore not credited. The therapy had to be the one that was carried through to 3(b) with an outline of how the effectiveness of this treatment could be tested. Candidates had to consider how people with a specific disorder could be recruited; how they would be treated/what they would experience; and appropriate and specific details of how the effectiveness could be assessed with the best responses having exemplar questions or behaviour categories for observation to contextualise it to the scenario.

Question 4*

4* To what extent can explanations of mental illness be considered socially sensitive?

[10]

This appeared to be the most difficult question on the paper. Most candidates attempted it, but often didn't link social sensitivity to explanations of mental illness. Rosehan's study, Szasz' view that it was a myth, definitions of abnormality and diagnosis manuals were all considered not creditworthy. It had to be related to explanations. Research evidence, such as Little Albert and Gottesman, was often described in unnecessary and irrelevant detail. The pertinent content was the explanation. The candidate also needed to show an understanding of social sensitivity. Some candidates thought this was related to ethics, but there needed to be a clear link to the impact on groups of people who were affected by a particular explanation (see point below). Stigma, prejudice, blame, and discrimination were the consequences which most often gained credit. Just a focus on explanations or social sensitivity was considered basic at best. If both explanations and socially sensitive were outlined but not linked this was considered limited. Once candidates could link the two coherently the response was more likely to be credited at the reasonable or good level. The question demanded a plurality of explanations and candidates needed to consider two or more explanations to access the top level.

Some candidates did not take the psychological viewpoint of socially sensitive explanations, but more a philosophical morality stance, which was not relevant in a psychology exam.

Socially sensitive and ethical research

Socially sensitive research: How the results/conclusions of research can affect wider society (which obviously *could* include the participants in the research). However, if discussing the effect on participants, this is not at the time the research is done (e.g. harm in the lab) as this is an ethical consideration. For 'harm' to be an acceptable point in relation to socially sensitive research, the harm must happen later, as a result of the conclusions drawn by the research, e.g. societal stigma/discrimination.

Generally, points related to ethical considerations (consent, deception, debriefing, etc.) are not acceptable in relation to socially sensitive research. The only exception as mentioned above is harm, if the harm comes indirectly to the participants as a result of them being a member of the particular group researched – e.g. mentally ill, racial group, etc.

If a question is about ethical considerations, this only relates to those named in the specification. Comments about socially sensitive research are not creditworthy.

Section B overview

Answers in this section were generally well done in terms of the correct key research being identified. The mark scheme has made clearer the features of key research which should be considered in an outline of the key research. The application in part (a) questions is still not being done as well as it could be, with repetition of results often being the application. With 5 AO2 marks these need to be much clearer about how we can apply the knowledge found in the key research.

Part (b) responses are generally showing more knowledge and understanding, and evidence is now applied appropriately. The analysis again is weaker, often not going beyond a repetition of the point made or with general, vague throw away sentences, such as reference to increased or decreased reliability with no explanation as to why or how this would be impacted.

For Part (c), often responses didn't consider the scenario. It is important that candidates clearly understand the situation that is being described and what is being asked for. This is shown in 5(c) where the scenario is often not considered, and in 6(c) where the actual task (of design) was not dealt with. Candidates need to practise both design and techniques for their application, and also show clear detailed links to the scenario.

Option 1 overview

The correct study for part (a) was frequently seen, although there was occasional confusion with Casey et al. In part (b), some research evidence cited was not about brain development, i.e. Wood et al. or Ainsworth and Bell. While extending the research examples beyond the key research is a good idea, it has to be appropriate research. This may be something that centres should consider when preparing candidates. In part (c) the research was often not related to the scenario.

Question 5 (a)*

OPTION 1

Child psychology

5

(a)* Outline the key research by Barkley-Levenson and Galván (2014) **and** explain what it tells us about brain development.

[10]

The level of detail of the study in many responses was impressive, and many candidates gained the full 5 marks for the features in their outline of the Barkley-Levenson and Galván's research. The outline can include factual details from the aim to the findings. Once the assumptions about brain development are considered, this becomes the application of the knowledge we gained from the study and this is where the AO2 marks are awarded. There needs to be 5 marks' worth of content for this and so candidates need to be prepared for what they could include in an answer to the second part of the question. It is better if candidates know some conclusions and can then elaborate to explain what the findings mean for psychologists. See Exemplar 1 below.

Exemplar 1.

		The research by Barkley-Levenson et al
		shows us that adolescents rely on a
		different part of the brain to adults
		when making risky decisions. This may
		be due to a lack of development of the
		prefrontal cortex, which is normally
		responsible for decision-making and
		logical thinking and reasoning. A lack
		of development in this area can result
		in adolescents relying on other parts of
		the brain that develop earlier, such as
		the ventral striatum. This is the rewards
		centre of the brain, meaning adolescents
		may only focus on what they can
		gain from a risky decision rather than
		the potential consequences they face.
		They also found adolescents had reduced activity
		in the amygdala which is responsible for
		fear. Again this suggests adolescents do
		not consider the potentially harmful
		consequences of engaging in risk behaviour.

Exemplar 1 shows the application part of the response to 5(a). There are clear indications here of how our knowledge of brain development has been developed as a result of Barkley-Levenson and Galván's research.

Question 5 (b)*

(b)* Discuss whether research into pre-adult brain development is scientific.

[15]

There are some key features of scientific enquiry and the most common used in responses were: establishing cause and effect; standardisation; replicability; controls; objectivity; quantifiable measurements and falsification. We didn't credit 'use of scientific equipment' on its own but this was often linked to quantifiable, objective data, or standardised procedures, which then made it creditworthy. Responses would often include comments such as objective data is objective, increases validity or is scientific. These were often without any explanation, for example about why objective data would increase validity (or some candidates stated it would reduce validity, which it could, but again with no reason why) and therefore the valid conclusions required on the mark scheme weren't there to take the response very far into the reasonable level.

The research examples in this question were more likely to be from other areas and therefore not creditworthy. Casey et al.'s research wasn't relevant as it had no brain development data for the children in the marshmallow test and the follow up core study did not look at pre-adult brain development.

Question 5 (c)*

(c)* Emma is Head of Sixth Form in a secondary school. She is worried about risk-taking behaviour among sixth form students at the school.

Outline at least one suggestion a psychologist, using their knowledge of brain development, might make to Emma about how to reduce risk-taking behaviours among students in the sixth form at her school.

[10]

As a teacher in a sixth form, Emma would not have the ability to introduce the Graduated Driving Licence scheme. Therefore this would only have peripheral relevance. Better responses took the features of the GDL and suggested Emma could introduce these ideas as rules for students driving to college. There were also good suggestions of encouraging parents to participate in this. Many responses considered operant conditioning, social learning theory, authority figures and educating students, with varying degrees of success and detail. It is important that the suggestions are detailed, and are focused on stopping risk taking behaviour not simply on rewarding good behaviour. An example of this would be encouraging students to attend lessons without any link to risk taking behaviour. Better examples referred to the risky behaviours of dangerous driving, drinking, drug taking and unprotected sex

Option 2 overview

Many candidates used the cognitive review exclusively in all three parts to this question. While it was relevant to all, it needed to be used appropriately in each part - in part (a), as a feature of the key research; in part (b), as an exemplar of ethical considerations; and in part (c), related specifically to Tom as a witness.

Question 6 (a)*

OPTION 2

Criminal psychology

6

(a)* Outline the key research by Memon and Higham (1999) **and** explain what it tells us about training police interviewers. **[10]**

The key research is a review article by Memon and Higham which has five sections. If this was about an experimental research study, it wouldn't be enough to write about just the sample or just the results, and therefore we can't expect just writing about the cognitive interview would be enough for full 5 marks of AO1 for knowledge and understanding of the research. Therefore better candidates gave responses which included the method, the cognitive interview, the comparison interviews and/or measure of memory. There was more detail about the cognitive interview, so this could gain more credit than the other three. The fifth component of the research was training and this is where candidates should have extrapolated from the study what recommendations for training were, or what we understood from the article about how the training was effective or not.

Question 6 (b)*

(b)* Discuss ethical considerations in relation to collection of evidence.

[15]

The focus of this discussion was the BPS ethical considerations and how these could be applied to gathering evidence. This question was answered in a variety of ways, often within one answer, and all of them equally creditworthy. Any type of research gathering was acceptable; this could have been forensic or cognitive. The response could focus on techniques based on research such as cognitive interview or Reid's interrogation, but they could also have focused on empirical research such as Fisher's research into cognitive interview. Either the interviewee, interviewer or the research participant could have been impacted by the ethical guideline being adhered to or not, all were just as creditworthy.

This did make for some unusual responses such as right of withdrawal being applied to suspects, but many candidates did this well; the better responses considering how suspects couldn't have that right, but some candidates suggesting 'no comment' was one way of withdrawing from an interview even if not physically leaving. All of these responses were considered in light of how they addressed the question, the accuracy of their knowledge and their psychological basis. The discussion was often better in responses to this question; candidates considered such points as the impact of interrogations on suspects feeling they have to make a false confession as they were so distressed they could see no other option. They linked this back to the ethical consideration of psychological harm.

Candidates who know the specification will always be able to answer the questions set, and we will always accept any interpretation of the question which could be creditworthy.

Question 6 (c)*

(c)* Tom was in his local supermarket doing some shopping when he witnessed another customer stealing some goods from the shelves.

Outline at least one suggestion a psychologist might make to the police regarding how to interview Tom about what he saw.

[10]

Many candidates wrote out a lengthy description of the cognitive interview (CI) (some for the third time having done so for section (a) and (b) without any link to the scenario). This would gain basic marks as it is knowledge and understanding, but this question is 10 marks for application - so something relevant would be the rationale not the suggestion. Better candidates took more than one component of the CI and linked it specifically to the supermarket robber Tom had witnessed. Some candidates confused the scenario and referred to Tom as the suspect. It is important that for these applied questions the candidates keep the scenario firmly at the core of their response - every suggestion must be set clearly in the context of scenario and using a name is not enough to contextualise a suggestion. See Exemplar 2.

Exemplar 2

6	C	<p>one suggestion a psychologist might make to the police regarding how to interview Tom about what he saw is to avoid leading questions since this may lead to a false confession. This would involve avoiding questions such as 'was the thief a customer who was stealing?' 'what was he stealing?' since it may subconsciously change / alter the Tom's memory of the event and lead him to later testify the customer was a man ('he') even if they were actually a woman. Instead questions that don't suggest anything are best, for example 'what did the customer look like?' or 'what were they stealing?'. This is supported by evidence from Loftus & Palmer on eyewitness testimony since the results showed that the critical verb in the critical question ('how fast were the cars travelling when they [critical verb]') influenced the estimated speed, and in the 2nd experiment, when asked whether there was any broken glass a week later (there wasn't), majority stated yes meaning their memory was altered by a leading question. Therefore, when interviewing Tom about what he saw, leading questions must be avoided in order to produce the highest in validity testimony possible. Another suggestion on how to interview Tom is to use the cognitive interview, putting emphasis on the uninterrupted free recall, and removing the recall in different temporal orders & perspectives stage. This would involve having</p>
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6	C	Tom invited invited into a private space and encouraged to freely recall what he saw. This means that he is not interrupted. Additionally, when before conducting this cognitive interview the police must have conducted a 2 day training course on this interview technique. This is supported by evidence from Memor Memon and Higham who, when conducting a review on 65 studies on on the cognitive interview, found that the free recall stage was the most effective, different orders and perspectives, the least effective/reduces validity of testimony, and that a 2 day training course was most effective. Therefore, when interviewing Tom, the police must follow these tips in order to produce a testimony with high validity.
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Exemplar 2 is an example of a response which contains all of the elements needed for full marks. There is detailed suggestion, context and psychological evidence as rationale.

Option 3 overview

Fewer candidates had answered this option but those who did were well prepared. Ethnocentrism was more often focused on ethnicity, culture and countries, all of which we will accept as creditworthy. But some still strayed into age, occupation, gender which are not creditworthy. It is difficult to answer the part (b) with only one piece of research, although technically possible, as the analysis can become repetitive, even if the appropriate part of the study is used to illustrate a point. Part (c), again often deviated from the scenario in the question.

Question 7 (a)*

OPTION 3

Environmental psychology

7

(a)* Outline the key research by Wells (2000) **and** explain what it tells us about territory in the workplace.

[10]

The majority of candidates knew the study well enough to gain 5 marks for the outline. When it came to the application marks in part (a), this was generally less well done, either repeating the results, or moving away from the key research. To gain 5 marks, candidates do need to consider how they can apply the study to how this improves our understanding of human behaviour.

Question 7 (b)*

(b)* Discuss whether research into territory and personal space is ethnocentric.

[15]

Ethnocentrism still causes candidates problems often not going beyond population validity in their answers. Candidates need to consider countries (with implied differences of ethnicity, particularly in eastern/western comparisons). Some responses did this very well, developing an argument as to why countries/cultures may be different in their expectations and experiences of the workplace. The concept of territory is also ethnocentric in itself, and better candidates pointed this out with reference to research from the likes of Smith et al. There was engagement with the discussion of the issue of ethnocentric bias and biological responses for example.

Question 7 (c)*

(c)* Sundip is creating an office where people can hire workspaces. She wants the office to appeal to as wide a range of potential clients as possible.

Outline at least one suggestion, based on research into territory or personal space, that a psychologist might make to Sundip about how to design her office.

[10]

This question tended to evoke responses which consider the management of office space by Sundip as opposed to the planning. Similar to 6(c) last year with the design of a bike park, candidates often made suggestions which were not part of design. Practices such as hot desking, allowing personalisation of workspaces, were peripherally relevant, and so received little credit. Better suggestions looked at desk layout, i.e. enough space around desks, which would be a consideration when designing an office space, but also included the use of colour, seating in the staffroom, and design features to facilitate territory marking and/or personalisation. For a question on design candidates need to consider what they would draw on paper for their suggestion, if you can't draw it, then it's probably not a design feature, more a management technique.

Option 4 overview

This question often initiated responses which were muddled, flawed and lacking detail in part (a). Part (b) appeared to challenge candidates, although there are many ways in which a study may have sample bias. More background research would give candidates more examples to use to illustrate different points. Part (c) was answered better than previous years in that there was more often a focus on the knowledge of personality - but enough candidates answered with motivation, team bonding, coaching styles without any reference to personality, to make it worthy of noting.

Question 8 (a)*

OPTION 4

Sport and exercise psychology

8

(a)* Outline the key research by Kroll and Crenshaw (1970) **and** explain what it tells us about measurement of personality in sport.

[10]

There was often confusion about parts of this study. The sports the athletes played, the personality test used, the findings i.e. reference to extrovert and introvert which aren't in Cattell. Also there were many variations of which features the athletes were similar to or different from each other depending on their sport.

Question 8 (b)*

(b)* Discuss sampling bias in research into personality and sport.

[15]

The range of features is extensive, and candidates on the whole did this well, and considered several of them. They included gender, age, level of sport, the sport played, as well as ethnicity, culture etc. The weakness of these responses was the research evidence to support these points made, so candidates gained fewer marks through lack of knowledge of research. Where there is some confusion as to the gender, for example in Kroll and Cranshaw, text books can differ on the gender of the participants so we would accept either all male or male and female as being creditworthy.

Question 8 (c)*

(c)* Kareem works as a sports psychologist. It is over halfway through the football season and a team has lost most of its matches. The manager of this team wants advice from Kareem about how knowledge of personality might be used to improve the performance of this team in the last part of the season.

Outline at least one suggestion that Kareem could make to this football manager about how knowledge of personality could be used to improve the team's performance.

[10]

Responses in this section often veered away from the topic of using knowledge of personality to generic strategies to improve performance. The scenario was that it was mid season, so responses that referred to start of the season strategies, were often only peripherally relevant. Again it needs to be clearly linked not just referenced to gain high level marks. Better responses considered what the personality features of football players might be, and how these could be assessed, and used by the manager. Also some reference to personality of leaders to be Captain of the team, or to positions in the team. Responses could also refer to techniques such as CBT as long as they were clearly linked to the personality of the players who would undergo this.

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