

Examiners' report

AS LEVEL

PSYCHOLOGY

**OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE
in Psychology**

H167

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Contents

Introduction	3
Paper 2 series overview	4
Section A overview	5
Question 1 (a) (i)	5
Question 1 (a) (ii)	5
Question 1 (b)	6
Question 2 (a)	6
Question 2 (b)	7
Question 3 (a)	7
Question 3 (b)	8
Question 4 (a)	9
Question 4 (b)	9
Question 5	10
Section B overview	11
Question 6 (a)	11
Question 6 (b)	12
Question 6 (c)	12
Question 6 (d)	13
Question 6 (e)*	14
Section C overview	15
Question 7 (a)	15
Question 7 (b)	15
Question 7 (c)	16
Question 7 (d)	17
Question 7 (e)*	18

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 responses 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 [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper 2 series overview

As this is an AS paper, it now attracts a relatively small cohort. On this basis, it can be hard to identify many reliable patterns in results. As always, there were some fairly predictable questions in terms of structure on this paper especially in Section A and Section B. It was clear when students had practised these as they constructed responses which expertly met the demands of the assessment. Section C will always be challenging to prepare for as there are a series of questions based on an unseen source. However, students who practice applying their psychological knowledge and understanding to a range of novel sources should hopefully develop the confidence to tackle questions like those in Section C.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• demonstrated clear and accurate knowledge of the core studies • used appropriate studies, when required, to support theories and concepts • had sound knowledge and understanding of the cognitive area • demonstrated the ability to construct an extended response with well-developed points and effective use of evidence • showed good insight when given a novel scenario.	• had limited knowledge of core studies • struggled to frame responses to certain questions which meant they could not access further marks for their answer • did not evaluate their own suggestions when given the opportunity to • demonstrated basic rather than well-developed evaluation skills.

Section A overview

Candidates were generally good on the details of how studies were conducted and showed reasonable awareness of their limitations. Candidates found it more challenging to consider studies in a different context, e.g. in relation to other studies, or in relation to a theme.

Question 1 (a) (i)

1

(a) From Bandura et al.'s (1961) study into the transmission of aggression:

(i) Identify **two** features of the sample used.

1

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2

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[2]

The majority of candidates successfully identified two accurate features of the sample used with some giving more than two. A common error was to name the sampling method used as one of the features.

Question 1 (a) (ii)

(ii) Suggest **one** way the sample used in this study may be considered biased.

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..... [2]

Most candidates focused on cultural bias either by explicitly using the term or by outlining how the sample did not represent other countries, areas or cultures. Some candidates implied bias by referring to the sample only representing children or only being generalisable to middle class families. The best answers identified the type of bias in general and then made a clear link to the participants used in the study.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Identify the experimental method **and** design used in Chaney et al.'s (2004) Funhaler study.

Experimental method:

Design:

[2]

Most candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of the study and correctly identified the experimental method and design. Where answers were wrong there was no obvious pattern. For example, independent measures was an obvious wrong answer for the design and was seen on a number of occasions. However other wrong answers were not designs and were often other research methods.

Question 2 (a)

2

(a) Explain why Casey et al.'s (2011) study into neural correlates of delay of gratification is considered a quasi experiment.

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..... [2]

This question was well answered by the many candidates who gave a clear outline of what constitutes a quasi-experiment and then highlighted Casey et al.'s independent variable to illustrate the method. Most students demonstrated knowledge of the method even if they did not apply it. The answers that did not get credit tended to try to explain why the study was an example of an experiment rather than a quasi-experiment specifically.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Suggest why the method used in Casey et al.'s (2011) study can be considered reliable.

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..... [3]

The majority of candidates demonstrated some knowledge of the concept of reliability and this was often by referring to the ability to replicate studies or findings. A number of students were able to link this to having high levels of control or standardisation specifically. The best answers were able to accurately describe a key feature of Casey et al.'s study which illustrated high levels of control in addition to this.

Misconception



A common error on this question was for candidates to assume that Casey et al. repeated their tests on adults to measure reliability of the tests themselves. They did not seem to understand that this was a longitudinal study and this was the reason for re-testing participants.

Question 3 (a)

3

(a) Outline **one** of the control tasks used in Baron-Cohen et al.'s (1997) study into autism in adults.

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..... [2]

Only a minority of candidates were able to name or outline one of the control tasks used by Baron-Cohen et al. A very small number could describe the task in enough detail to earn a second mark. This question was one of the more likely to be omitted than others.

Misconception



Most candidates wrote about one of the Theory of Mind tasks here, with the Eyes Task being most common. It was clear that many candidates were not able to distinguish between which tasks were used to test Theory of Mind and which were controls. Students might need to better understand the purpose of the control tasks so that they can make the distinction.

Assessment for learning



Another common error was for candidates to describe general controls that were used in the Baron-Cohen et al. study, e.g. picture size, choice of answers, etc. This suggested that they did not recognise the term control tasks specifically. It is important that students learn the terminology used by researchers in their own reports for the core studies. This is because questions relating to the studies can use this terminology as well.

Question 3 (b)

- (b) Explain how Freud's (1909) study of Little Hans relates to the key theme of 'understanding disorders'.

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..... [3]

Most candidates did earn at least 1 mark on this question. This tended to be for describing an aspect of Freud's study that could be related to understanding mental health. However, this knowledge was often implicit and within other irrelevant content. The best answers set the scene by what is meant by 'understanding disorders' and then explained how psychodynamic theory aims to understand disorders. These answers then used Freud's study to illustrate the second point.

OCR support



'Understanding disorders' is a broad theme which can be challenging to teach. [Learner Resource 6.2](#) which is part of a wider learning resource offers some support with this.

Question 4 (a)

4

(a) Outline how the term 'ethnocentrism' could relate to Milgram's (1963) study into obedience.

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..... [2]

Many candidates were good at illustrating how Milgram's study illustrates ethnocentrism nearly always using the culturally biased sample to do this. However, candidates generally did not show explicit knowledge of ethnocentrism. Those that did try to include a definition of the term often wrote about cultural bias in general rather than the tendency to view other cultures using the norms and values of a dominant culture. A common error was for candidates to suggest the participants were all white. There is no data on the ethnicity of Milgram's original participants.

Question 4 (b)

(b) Describe **one** similarity between Milgram's (1963) study into obedience and Bocchiaro et al.'s (2012) study into disobedience and whistle-blowing.

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..... [3]

The majority of candidates correctly identified a similarity between the two studies and these covered a range of common features. The best answers then demonstrated how this similarity was illustrated by each study which showed their knowledge of the distinction between them at the same time. Some candidates were only able to make the link to one study and not the other. Sometimes they did not even refer to the other study in their answer. A large proportion of candidates did not make the link to the studies despite this being a predictable type of question.

Question 5

5 Describe the procedure used in Grant et al.'s (1998) study into context-dependent memory.

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..... [4]

There were some good answers to this question which demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of this particular study. Many candidates earned 3 or 4 marks and were generally good at focusing on the procedure only. It was very rare for candidates to write about findings (which would not have got credit if they had). A number of candidates were limited to 3 marks because they did not explain the four different conditions with enough clarity. This was considered to be the key feature of this study's procedure and one that they were expected to show understanding of.

Section B overview

This section mainly focused on the cognitive area this series and this seemed to be a challenge for many candidates. Answers suggested it is not as well understood as other areas. The extended response focused on the situational/individual debate which most candidates had some understanding of. However, many struggled to select appropriate evidence for this debate.

Question 6 (a)

6

- (a) Describe **one** strength of using the cognitive area to explain behaviour.
Support your answer with evidence from any of the core studies placed in the cognitive area.

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..... [3]

Many candidates found this question challenging. Candidates had to start by identifying a relevant strength of the cognitive area which many struggled to do. It was unclear whether identifying a strength alone was challenging or whether it was because the cognitive approach was the focus. Common errors were to identify strengths that did not apply to this area, or to describe a feature of the area (e.g. the computer analogy) without explaining why this might be seen as a strength. Candidates who were given 2 marks often tended to get this for identifying a strength and then illustrating it with a relevant study. Grant et al. and Loftus and Palmer were equally popular here. Some candidates described their chosen strength before applying it.

Question 6 (b)

- (b) Describe **one** weakness of using the cognitive area to explain behaviour.
Support your answer with evidence from any of the core studies placed in the cognitive area.

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..... [3]

Compared to Question 6 (a), candidates were slightly better at identifying a relevant weakness with reductionism being a common answer. However, patterns of response were similar after that. A small number of candidates were able to describe their chosen weakness, e.g. explaining why reductionism can be seen as a weakness of this or any area. Candidates were better at linking their weakness to a relevant study although attempts to do this did not always earn a second mark.

Question 6 (c)

- (c) Explain how Loftus and Palmer's (1974) study on eyewitness testimony links to the cognitive area of psychology.
Support your answer with evidence from Loftus and Palmer's (1974) **second** experiment into eyewitness testimony.

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..... [3]

The majority of candidates were not awarded marks for their answers and this question was more likely to be omitted compared to most others. If candidates were unable to identify a valid principle or concept then they could not earn further marks. Principles or concepts identified were often vague or incorrect. A common error was to assume that the cognitive area was only interested in memory as a process. Candidates who selected the concept of information processing as their starting point tended to be more successful on this question especially when it came to relating it to Loftus and Palmer's second experiment.

Exemplar 1

The cognitive area of psychology suggests that behaviour is a result of information processing (input, process and output). In Loftus and Palmer's study, they used split 150 participants into 2 groups of 50. Either smashed, hit or control and were asked if there was broken glass two weeks later. They found that (16) - smashed were much higher amount of yeses (broken glass) than control (6). This shows how memory can be distorted by leading questions. This links to the cognitive area since the leading questions has influenced the brains memory changing out. [3]

This answer earns 3 marks. The principle is clearly stated at the start. This is followed by a description of the relevant part of Loftus and Palmer's study. The candidate links the study back to the principle in their final comment.

Question 6 (d)

- (d) Describe **one** way the cognitive area is similar to the behaviourist perspective. Support your answer with evidence from core studies or other appropriate research.

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..... [4]

This was a challenging question for most students and was partly reflected in the fact that a high number of candidates did not attempt this question. Candidates had to be able to identify a similarity between the cognitive area and the behaviourist perspective to earn any further marks. A common error was to suggest or imply that they were both deterministic. Another common error was to suggest a similarity which would apply to any pairing of areas/perspectives, e.g. they both lead to applications. The most commonly identified and creditworthy similarity was that both believe that behaviours can change. Candidates who suggested this tended to be able to go on to apply this to the behaviourist perspective. However, they were less successful at applying it to the cognitive area as they did not explain behaviour change would follow a change in mental processes.

Assessment for learning

In preparation for this type of question, which is commonly used, students should construct a grid by themselves. If they write all of the areas/perspectives across the top of the grid and do the same down the side then they can write a point of comparison in each cell. They could do one grid for similarities and another for differences.

Question 6 (e)*

- (e)*** Evaluate the situational position in the individual/situational debate in psychology.
Support your answer with evidence from core studies that can be viewed from the behaviourist perspective. **[12]**

Many candidates did not attempt this question. Those that did were likely to be awarded some marks. Most students were given marks in the bottom band and this was often for being able to outline the individual/situational debate. Those that went on to apply the debate to relevant studies such as Bandura et al.'s and Chaney et al.'s often scored further marks as they were able to use these studies to illustrate the role of situational factors in behaviour. A very common error was for candidates to include studies which cannot be viewed from the behaviourist perspective, e.g. Milgram and Grant et al. were often included. Such studies were not creditworthy. It was not clear whether candidates believed these were studies into behaviourism or whether they had not read the question carefully enough. There were candidates who were awarded marks in the top band. Their answers showed good understanding of the debate, used relevant studies in an appropriate way and, importantly, questioned the value and validity of the situational position in relation to the individual position.

Section C overview

Most candidates showed the ability to answer at least some questions on the novel scenario. The best candidates made a good effort to address every question in the section whereas other were more selective in terms which questions they answered.

Question 7 (a)

7

- (a) Identify **one** ethical concern in the above article and outline how the researchers addressed this concern.

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..... [2]

This question was well answered by many candidates with 2 marks being the modal score. A common error was for candidates to identify ethical concerns not explicitly in the source. However, this still meant most candidates do know what ethical concerns refer to.

Question 7 (b)

- (b) Explain **two** reasons why the results of the study described in the article might lack validity.

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2

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..... [4]

The modal score was two here. Many candidates were able to give two reasons why the study might lack validity often using the correct terminology, e.g. ecological validity, population validity, demand characteristics. However, these were not illustrated clearly enough when applied to the study. There are some students who earned their 2 marks for the first reason explained but not earn further marks. This was often because they used the issue twice – normally population validity.

Question 7 (c)

- (c) Outline why the results of the study described in the article support the determinism side of the freewill/determinism debate.

Support your answer with evidence from the article.

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..... [3]

Most students earned at least 1 mark on this question but many also scored zero. This was often because they were unable to adequately define determinism which meant they could not access further marks. Those candidates who did outline the concept often earned 2 marks because they were able to apply it to the source with some ease.

Exemplar 2

The ~~determinism~~ determinism stance of the debate states that ~~people's~~ behaviour is pre-determined by external factors. This article supports the determinism side as the 'fMRI data analysis suggested a neural basis for social influence' meaning that our brains ~~are~~ mean we are more likely to be influenced by our peers and we do not choose ourselves to follow our peers. [3]

This response earns full marks. The answer starts with a clear definition of the concept of determinism. Then there is a description of the relevant part of the scenario. Finally, the candidate explains how this illustrates determinism.

Question 7 (d)

- (d) Using your knowledge of psychology, suggest **and** explain **two** ways young people could be encouraged to avoid the effect of negative peer pressure.

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..... [8]

Most candidates scored some marks for their answer to this question. The modal score was three. Suggestions based on social learning and on operant conditioning were by far the most common and these processes were applied to the scenario with varying degrees of success. The best answers not only focused on how and why concepts would be applied to the scenario but also made suggestions which were feasible given the context.

Question 7 (e)*

(e)* Evaluate the suggestions you have made in **7(d)** using your knowledge of psychology.

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..... **[8]**

This was the question most likely to be omitted which might be linked to time management for some candidates. However, outcomes suggested this was a challenging question. Candidates should remember that they are evaluating their own suggestions so there are no particular evaluation points that examiners are looking for. However, it is a good idea to consider suggestions in relation the key debates in psychology. Although rare, the best responses did this.

Assessment for learning



It may be helpful to get students used to evaluating suggestions by given them some mock suggestions. These can be the kinds of suggestions that candidates make in the exam

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