
AS

PSYCHOLOGY

7181/1 Introductory Topics in Psychology
Report on the Examination

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7181/1**Introductory Topics in Psychology****General**

As with last year, many students appear to have been prepared well for this examination. There were relatively few scripts with unanswered questions and very little evidence that students had run out of time.

Assessment of extended writing as in Q6, Q11 and Q18 differentiated well. Weaker responses to these questions suggest that students need to focus on developing their higher order skills. There was more evidence of learned knowledge than of the ability to use such knowledge effectively to respond to the demands of the questions. For example, some questions required evaluation of theories and not of studies; others required the application of knowledge to explain a new situation.

Students should take time to read the specific demands of each question carefully, rather than simply writing everything they know about the topic. This was particularly the case for Question 6, where much time was wasted in lengthy descriptions of the procedures of Milgram's original study.

The majority of students wrote their responses to questions clearly and in the appropriate space provided. However, as mentioned in the examination report for the previous series, it is important to remind students that these papers are marked online and examiners do not see whole scripts. Examiners will only see that which is written on the lines provided for answering a particular question. They will not see writing in the margins or answers written in the space belonging to another question. Students who need to write more than the space given allows, should use additional pages which will be matched with the response and marked as a complete answer.

It is also important the students' handwriting is legible and they use black ink or ball-point pen as instructed. The quality of handwriting of a minority of students this year made some responses very challenging to read. Additionally, some students did not use the correct pen and their writing was very faint and thus difficult to read.

In responding to multiple choice questions students need to make sure they use the correct method, ie "*...fill in the circle alongside the appropriate answer*". Some seem to ignore the instructions and use a tick or cross to indicate their chosen answer.

Section A Social Influence**Questions 1 and 2**

Most students were able to correctly answer these questions, with 91% and 87% getting the marks respectively.

Question 3

Most students could give an outline of normative social influence that involved reference to conforming due to the need to be liked or approved by the group. This often included reference to compliance and to public acceptance but private rejection of the behaviour. While knowledge was usually good, many students simply did not provide creditworthy evaluation. For some this was due

to not providing any evaluation at all and for others it was their inability to use studies effectively to evaluate normative social influence as an explanation for conformity. To use a study such as Asch's effectively, there needed to be some reference to the fact that his participants themselves commented that they knew their answers were wrong, but they didn't want to be rejected by the group. A study being used as evaluation for an explanation can only receive credit if it is clear how the findings support or challenge the explanation.

Question 4

This question was usually answered well, with most students getting 3 or 4 marks. Most students were able to correctly identify Daniel as the boy most likely to resist, due to his internal locus of control (LOC). Students were able to explain that those with an internal LOC have characteristics that make them better able to resist and that they do not seek social approval from others. The problem for some students was spending too long writing about Matthew, or by referring to "high LOC" or "low LOC" but with no reference to internal or external LOC.

Question 5

This was answered well, with the majority of students referring to Tom being an ally or providing social support. Tom acted as a role model and helped the other two boys resist.

Question 6

Just like the Asch question in 2016, this was a question where students needed to select the relevant aspects of research. Students often wrote detailed and unnecessarily lengthy descriptions of Milgram's original study, before getting round to outlining the relevant variations thereby answering the question. Students' knowledge of research into proximity, location and uniform was often good, however relatively few students addressed the second part of the question, ie "what this tells us about why people obey". Students need to read each question carefully and make sure they deal with all aspects of it to access Level 3 or Level 4.

Better answers made use of other studies to support or challenge Milgram's findings. Good use was made of Hofling's study to challenge Milgram's findings relating to proximity. Bickman's findings regarding the power of uniform were also used effectively.

While elements of Zimbardo's prison simulation could have been made relevant to this question, such material was often used ineffectively.

Students should also be aware that the terms "obedience" and "conformity" are not interchangeable, and that they mean very different things.

Section B Memory

Question 7

The majority of answers were correct. 83% of students were able to identify the main type of coding used in each component (short-term and long-term memory) of the multi-store model of memory.

Question 8

Many students simply described how memory studies are unrealistic, gaining no marks. The question required students to suggest ways in which this criticism could be addressed. The majority of students were unable to do this with the modal mark being zero. However, some students were able to suggest appropriate ways and received credit. These included changing from a laboratory to a real world situation, such as a field study in a school, or to change the task of meaningless numbers/trigrams to recalling meaningful material, such as phone numbers or shopping lists.

Question 9

This is an example of a question where students could benefit from developing their ability to “use knowledge of research”. It appears to be an area in which they struggle. Using their knowledge requires them to select appropriate studies and/or theories to explain what is going on in the scenario. Some students simply described, in great detail, relevant studies or theories, but without any reference to either Zina or Amanda. Other students described what was going on in the scenario, almost re-writing it, but without any reference to relevant research. For example, Zina was near to the attacker and so was very anxious, more so than Amanda who was further away and so was less anxious. Neither of these strategies gained credit. Better responses referred to relevant research and then applied it to the scenario, such as Zina may have experienced the weapons effect and so would be less likely to recall the attacker. Or Yuille and Cutshall showed that those who were closer to the event were more accurate in their recall, so Zina may remember more than Amanda.

Question 10

Nearly all students did well on this question (over 80% scored full marks), covering a range of ethical issues that should be considered. Most referred to the fact that by interviewing the girls, it may bring up painful memories, so protection from harm is an issue.

Question 11

Most students could describe retroactive and proactive interference, even if the name and the actual description were muddled. They understood that sometimes old material interferes with new, and sometimes it is the other way round. Answers were often illustrated with good examples. Students were also able to comment on the fact that similarity of material is also important in interference. However, students appeared to find the evaluation more difficult. Once again students wasted time by giving lengthy and detailed descriptions of studies, without using them effectively. For evaluation of an explanation, it is the findings of a study that are relevant and whether or not they support or challenge the explanation. The study by Baddeley and Hitch using rugby players was often cited, but few students understood exactly how it supports interference.

One way of evaluating an explanation is to consider alternative explanations. This is not the same as merely describing alternative explanations in detail. Yet again, it is how such material is used that determines its effectiveness. Some students confused interference with retrieval failure. They appeared to understand retrieval failure as being an aspect of interference and wrote at length about context-dependent or state-dependent forgetting, which was not creditworthy.

Section C Attachment**Question 12**

Credit was only given to the first two infant behaviours and many students wasted time by describing more. To gain credit there had to be some kind of qualifier, eg “high separation anxiety” or “extreme stranger anxiety”. Without such qualifiers, the behaviour could apply to other types of attachment.

Question 13

A straightforward question with many students getting both marks (more than 60%). Those that didn't tended to not appreciate that their two numbers must total 100, while others got the boys and girls the wrong way round.

Question 14

The majority of students (more than 90%) gained both marks.

Question 15

Most students understood what is meant by quantitative data and what is meant by qualitative data. The difficulty they appeared to have was being able to describe a difference between them. A strategy for answering such questions could be to select an attribute and then describe how it differs. For example, ease of analysis; quantitative data is easily analysed and can be put into graphs, whereas qualitative data is much more difficult to analyse and has to be converted into quantitative data before it can be easily analysed. Reference to methods used to collect the data was not relevant.

Question 16

There was a wide range of answers to this question. Some students gave extremely accurate and detailed answers. For example, referring to the critical period, consequences for future relationships and effects on further development. Unfortunately, other students confused Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation with his theory of attachment and wrote about the latter. Such answers gained no credit.

Question 17

This question again showed that students need to understand that criticising a study is not the same as criticising a theory. They need to know how to use a study to critique a theory. Lengthy criticisms of Bowlby's 44 Thieves were not creditworthy, unless they were used to challenge his theory. Evaluation of a study is not the same as evaluation of a theory.

More successful answers used studies to refute Bowlby's findings, or to challenge his idea of a critical period. As with the previous question, some students criticised Bowlby's theory of attachment.

Question 18

There were some extremely good answers demonstrating accurate and detailed knowledge of both classical and operant conditioning, clearly linked to attachment. For some students, while their

understanding of conditioning was good, they did not make any links with attachment and therefore did not receive credit. Students struggled with evaluation of a theory, but successful answers cited studies that contradict the learning theory. Harlow's studies demonstrated that comfort was more important than food, and Schaffer and Emerson showed that over half of the infants they studied were not attached to the person who fed them. Alternative explanations were also used as effective evaluation.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

[UMS conversion calculator](#)