

PSYCHOLOGY

<p>Paper 9773/01 Key Studies and Theories</p>

Key messages

The standard of work for this paper was not as strong as in previous years where candidates have used an impressive range of well-selected evaluation issues. Centres are reminded that suggestions for studies (**part c**) can be in relation to any part of the topic area and do not simply have to involve minor changes to the key studies. Candidates should be encouraged to develop their responses to the **Section B part (c)** questions and to fully explain how the proposed new study *would extend our understanding of the topic*.

General comments

The quality of scripts received this year ranged from excellent to those which did not demonstrate a basic knowledge of the key studies. These candidates tended to leave answers blank rather than respond incorrectly. However, most candidates achieved marks in most of the **Section A** questions. It was in **Section B (parts b and c)** that candidates did not show the breadth and depth of psychological knowledge that we have seen in previous years. In **part (b)**, candidates often relied on a narrow range of evaluation issues, such as using 'sampling' and 'generalisation' as two out of a total of three issues identified. For **Section B, part c** questions candidates should be encouraged to include a clear explanation of how the research they design would extend our understanding of the topic area. This is clearly asked for in the questions but candidates continue to simply present their idea for a study.

No rubric errors were noted for this paper.

Readers of this report should note that the comments are based on a very small group of candidates.

Section A

1. Generally, answered well. Most candidates were able to identify that the independent variable was the verb in the question and that the dependent question was the estimate of speed.
2. Candidates demonstrated a good understanding of this study and most were able to outline one aim, most commonly saying that the task scores of the AS/HFA group would be lower than that of the control group.
3. Most candidates identified the link between cognitive style (either systemising or empathising) and a preference for a particular music style.
4. Although there were some good answers to this question, some candidates gave generic answers here without linking this specifically to studying obedience.
5. This was answered well with candidates identifying a range of differences including field experiment versus case study, use of children versus adults and asking participants for their reasons for helping/not helping versus not asking directly/observing behaviour.
6. There were some good answers to this question and most focused on the numbers of participants that could be included.
7. This was answered well. Candidates generally showed good knowledge and understanding of the Oedipus Complex although there were a small number of candidates who did not know this.
8. This was well answered with candidates showing good knowledge of this study.

9. Generally well answered with most candidates having knowledge of the details of the procedure of this study.
10. Most candidates were able to identify the evolutionary reason for the preference of symmetrical faces.
11. Good answers from most candidates here identifying the key elements of the GAS model.
12. Most candidates suggested that sleep was a 'cultural universal'. Answers could have developed this a little further to explain why this means that a small sample would be sufficient.

Section B

13. For **part a**, candidates were generally able to demonstrate good knowledge of the Key Study by Bandura and the further research by Holmes. Some candidates also included background theory such as classical conditioning and operant conditioning but rarely was this made relevant to aggression. In **part (b)**, even where the background material and the further research had been addressed in **part (a)**, it was noticeable that candidates often only evaluated the Key Study. Often this evaluation was generic, with candidates describing issues with no explicit link to the topic area. It was notable this year that the range of issues used by candidates was significantly reduced, and while this is not necessarily a problem, answers suggested that candidates were simply applying the same selection of issues to whichever studies they were asked about. These were commonly sampling, generalisation and qualitative and quantitative data. Issues that would seem to be very relevant to this topic area, such as ethics, the use of experimental research/ecological validity and the usefulness and implications of the research were rarely mentioned. There were few answers that showed evidence of organisation of issues and *an ability to evaluate the research described in part (a) within the context of the wider topic area*. For **part (c)**, candidates offered some interesting suggestions but often failed to make explicit how this would 'extend our understanding of this topic area'.
14. Candidates who chose this question (diagnosing abnormality) tended to cover the Key Study by Rosenhan, definitions of abnormality (from the background material) and the further research by Wilson. However, once again candidates tended to a range of material in **part (a)** and then focused their evaluation on the Key Study alone. **Part (b)** answers again showed evidence of generic evaluation as described above with the same three evaluation issues being used almost exclusively. A very small number of stronger answers discussed issues across the whole topic area rather than just in relation to the Key Study. For **part (c)**, there were some interesting suggestions but once again candidates were unable to explain how their suggested studies would 'extend our understanding of this topic area'.

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<p>Paper 9773/02 Methods, Issues and Applications</p>

General comments

The overall standard of performance this year was not as high as in previous years. Strong candidates provided competent responses that demonstrated very good knowledge of the syllabus. Less successful candidates often provided brief responses that did not always demonstrate understanding. There were often misunderstandings, especially in relation to **Question 2**.

There was no evidence that candidates had run out of time and there were no rubric errors, although as with previous examination sessions a very small number of candidates misinterpreted **Question 3(b)** and reiterated material provided in **3(a)**.

As with previous sessions some of the answers provided were not proportionate to the marks available: either candidates provided lengthy answers for questions that carried a few marks or did not provide enough detail for answers with higher marks.

The general standard of communication was again very good this year. However, the use of psychological terminology, was not always as effective and terms were often not used appropriately, such as for example the terms ecological validity and individual differences.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) This question was generally answered well. Most candidates were able to refer to the physiological responses of participants such as the experience of uncontrollable seizures. Many candidates also made reference to the comments made by participants during the study. Reference to how participants felt after the end of the study, such as for example reporting that they were happy that they had participated, was not creditworthy since this was not one of the findings.
- (b) (i) This question was a good discriminator. Many candidates referred to the sample shock received by participants and also the authentic appearance of the shock generator. Reference to the role of the teacher and learner being true to life was not, however, creditworthy as teachers do not usually administer electric shocks to learners when providing incorrect answers.
- (ii) This question was answered well. Most candidates were able to explain how the ecological validity of the study could have been improved and made appropriate and often creative suggestions. The most popular response made reference to the participants being able to see the learner while the shocks were administered. However, as with previous sessions, suggestions were sometimes brief and not fully elaborated to achieve full marks.
- (c) This question was answered well by the majority of candidates. Most candidates were able to provide appropriate reasons for and against the breach of ethical guidelines when investigating obedience to authority. However, as with previous years responses were not always fully developed. Additionally, candidates did not always link their answers to both parts of the question, that is, both ethical guidelines and obedience.

Question 2

- (a) This question was a good discriminator. More successful candidates were able to provide two assumptions of the individual differences approach in psychology and made use of evidence effectively to support their suggestions. A large number of candidates, however, confused the individual differences approach with the biological approach and in some instances, referred to research that was not physiological.
- (b) This question was a good discriminator. More successful candidates were able to effectively contrast the individual differences approach with the behaviourist perspective when explaining shopping addiction. The misunderstandings of the individual differences approach observed in **part (a)** were also evident in this question. Candidates offered very good responses in relation to the behaviourist perspective but the comparisons with the individual differences approach did not always demonstrate understanding.
- (c) This question was also a good discriminator. As with the previous parts of this question, those candidates that had a good understanding of the individual differences approach were able to answer this question well. However, far too many candidates were unable to provide appropriate limitations to the individual differences approach. For example, reference to reductionism was not creditworthy and the individual differences approach is not a confounding variable in psychological research.

Question 3

- (a) This question was answered well. Candidates were able to identify a number of theories and studies that were relevant to the scenario, such as the study by Piliavin on bystander behaviour, the theories of cost-benefit analysis, diffusion of responsibility and pluralistic ignorance and the study by Hazan and Shaver on romantic love as an attachment. However, as with previous years, the research cited was often brief and did not always make use of psychological terminology effectively. As with previous sessions, candidates are reminded that although the scenarios in this section will lend themselves to the 15 key studies, all relevant research and/or theory is creditworthy.
- (b) This question was answered well. Most candidates were able to apply the theories and studies described in **part (a)** to explain the events in the scenario and the quality of explanations provided was often very good. Less successful candidates made fewer effective links and just reiterated the research outlined in **(a)** without elaborating any further.

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<p>Paper 9773/03 Key Applications</p>

Key messages

Section B, part (b) questions that ask for a description/evaluation of a topic area require more than a description/evaluation of the Key Study. For **part (a)**, candidates could also include details from *background, further research* or *explore more*. Candidates should be encouraged to select *appropriate* evaluation issues for the **Section B, part (b)** questions and to apply these issues explicitly to the research being evaluated. It was evident this year that candidates had prepared a very small number of evaluation issues and used these regardless of the topic area/study in the question.

General comments

Overall performance was not as impressive as in previous years. There was a wide range of responses with evidence of under-preparation from some candidates.

Psychology and Abnormality

No candidates answered questions from this option.

Psychology and Crime

There was a range of responses to the **Section A** questions. Most candidates showed a good understanding of the Key Study by Farrington although some included 'criminal records' in their responses to 6 **(a)** despite the question asking for ways in which data was gathered directly from participants and **part (b)** of this question making it clear that criminal records were 'also' accessed. Candidates were generally able to suggest why criminal records were also searched and why there might be weaknesses in using 'criminal convictions' as a measure of crime, but these answers were not always clearly explained. Candidates also showed good understanding of the Key Study by Cann on cognitive skills programmes although these answers sometimes lacked clarity and could have been slightly more detailed.

In **Section B, Question 8** on the Key Study by Rubin was a little more popular than **Question 9** on offender profiling. **Part (a)** answers for **Question 8** were generally good although some lacked detail, especially of findings and conclusions. **Part (b)** (evaluation) produced a range of answers. There were a small number of very good answers which used well selected issues. However, many answers were too generic and used a very narrow selection of evaluation issues, often sampling, generalisations and qualitative and quantitative data, whether these were the most appropriate answers to use in relation to the study or not. **Question 9, part (a)** answers were sometimes disappointing, with candidates describing offender profiling in very broad terms and occasionally not mentioning the Key Study, or confusing real life cases with research studies. The same very narrow selection of evaluation issues was used here and occasionally this was confused, such as debating 'generalisations' by saying that since the US approach was developed in the US, it would not work in the UK.

Answers to **Section C, part (a)** could have included more detail about variables, for example how 'liars' and 'non-liars' might be operationalised. Most offered something similar to the study by Mann, Vrij and Bull, R (Suspects, lies, and videotape). **Part (b)** answers tended to give lists of reasons for choices which were not fully explained, such as saying they would use a particular sampling technique because one of the key studies used this, without elaborating on this at all or suggesting why this would be an appropriate sampling technique for this study.

Psychology and Environment

Answers to **Section A** were clear and detailed and candidates appeared better prepared for this section than for the Crime section. Candidates showed good knowledge of the detail of the Key Study by Drury, the events described in that study and could contrast the use of a face to face interview with another method of interviews, most commonly the telephone interview. It was surprising that some candidates mistakenly described the Haney, Banks and Zimbardo prison simulation study for 12 a, rather than the study on deindividuation although most described this well and were able to contrast this with the study by Diener et al. There were good discussions of ethics for **part (c)**.

Question 13 on personal space was more popular than **Question 14** on environmental cognition. In general terms, **part (a)** answers were good and a small number of **part (b)** answers were very good, showing a grasp of a range of evaluation issues applied effectively to the topics. As with the Psychology and Crime option, there were some answers to **part (b)** which did not do this effectively or which focused on an overly narrow range of issues, again most commonly sampling, generalisations and qualitative and quantitative data.

Responses to **Section C** tended to suggest a longitudinal study although details of sample etc. were not always included. As with the Psychology and Crime option, answers to **part (b)** were often generic links to other studies which did not fully explain 'evidence'.

Psychology and Health

No candidates answered questions from this option.

Psychology and Sport

No candidates answered questions from this option.

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<p>Paper 9773/04 Personal Investigation</p>

General comments

The quality of coursework produced in this examination series was very good with the majority of candidates achieving highly. A wide range of topics was selected from various parts of the specification.

All investigations adhered to the ethical guidelines and there was clear evidence that participants have been treated ethically throughout the investigations.

As with previous sessions, centres are encouraged to use annotations as this adds clarity to the decisions made when applying the marking criteria.

Comments on individual parts of the report

Abstract

These were clear and well written. Information on the aims, method, results and conclusions were presented concisely.

Introduction

Most introductions were excellent and included a range of relevant research. They were coherent and logically organised and, in most cases, the rationale followed clearly from the review.

Hypotheses

In most cases hypotheses were clear, concise and included most relevant aspects.

Centres are reminded that in order for candidates to receive full marks both variables must be clearly operationalised. When candidates have carried out a correlation, the hypothesis should make this clear, by stating a relationship rather than cause and effect.

The Method: Design

Some designs were truly impressive. In these designs, variables were not merely identified but fully described in detail and their choice justified. Equally the choice of controls was often justified through reference to background research.

Experimental designs were always identified but justifications could have been further developed. For example, justifications tended to focus on definitions of experimental designs instead of explaining why a repeated measures design was preferable to an independent measures design in the particular investigation.

In most cases there was clear evidence that appropriate methodological terms and concepts had been applied and fully understood.

The Method: Participants and Apparatus

This section was answered well. The characteristics of the target population were correctly identified to include geographical location. The sample was almost always selected using an appropriate method. Full participant details such as number of participants, age range and background were clearly stated.

The list of apparatus used was detailed and included evidence in the appendices. Centres are reminded that the absence of materials can deem the investigation non-replicable and compromise the marks awarded both in this section and the following section.

Method: Procedure

Procedures were generally detailed and allowed full replication. There was always clear and full evidence that participants have been treated ethically.

Centres are reminded that the procedure should include information on both the controls employed but also the way participants were allocated in the conditions of the experiment to be deemed fully replicable.

The Method: Data Analysis

This section was generally well answered. Appropriate descriptive statistics were almost always selected and justified. As with the previous examination session centres are reminded that in order to achieve the full marks available in this section they will need to appropriately select and justify this selection of all required elements, that is, choice of descriptive statistics, choice of visual displays and choice of inferential statistics. Just stating that the statistical test was chosen before the data was 'ordinal' is not a complete justification.

Results

This section was generally well attempted. Most candidates used inferential and descriptive statistics correctly and provided evidence of all their calculations in the appendices. Most visual displays were appropriate, fully labelled and clearly presented.

Discussion

As with previous years the quality of the discussions was very high, and candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding throughout. Evaluation of methodology was thorough and balanced; depth of argument reflected a high standard of analysis. Suggestions for improvements and further research were appropriate, well explained and often showed insight.

Conduct, Presentation, References and Appendices

All reports stayed within the recommended word limit. Communication skills were excellent and the standard referencing format was followed. Appropriate appendices were always included.