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# **GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**PSYCHOLOGY  
A LEVEL**

**SUMMER 2019**

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**PSYCHOLOGY**  
**GCE A LEVEL**  
**Summer 2019**  
**COMPONENT ONE**

**General Comments**

The vast majority of candidates attempted all questions, as they did with the 2018 examination. However, it was pleasing for examiners to see that timing has improved. Candidates are generally responding to questions in an appropriate manner with regards to the length of their answers and this is allowing them the time to complete each question on the examination in a more constructive manner.

However, it was frustrating that despite the advice given in the last two Principal Examiner Reports, a large number of centres continue to use textbooks to create model answers. This does not allow candidates to access top band marks. Independence is a key skill that is assessed at A Level and we are fortunate as psychologists that there is a wealth of research and information available from a variety of sources on the topics that are covered in the specification.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Q.1** The key point to note is that candidates must write a conclusion for any AO3 question that is worth 10 marks or more. Many candidates did not write a conclusion for this question. Thorough conclusions either bring in new information, for example, in the form of social implications of Loftus and Palmers' research or sum up the key points made. This can be done in the form of a full conclusion at the end or mini conclusions throughout the response.

Some candidates wrote generic points that had no links to Loftus and Palmer, for example, stating the strengths and weaknesses of laboratory experiments but with no link to the classic evidence. Examiners have to be able to recognise the research being evaluated. Better answers give clear examples from the research to support points.

Weaker responses confused evaluative terminology, for example, using population validity when ecological validity was being described, or using reliability when it was a validity issue. Some candidates focussed too much on eyewitness testimony when the actual study was about leading questions. Answers that gained top band marks discussed clear examples from Loftus and Palmer's research to support their points, along with ethical issues, alternative evidence, social implications and a strong conclusion.

A variety of responses were evident the mean of 5.3 and a standard deviation of 2.1.

**Q.2** The mean mark for this question was 3.9 which was due to a large number of answers that did not actually focus on the 'good life'. Many candidates used the information from textbooks and outlined the three desirable lives; pleasant life, good life and meaningful life, but did not go back to focus purely on the 'focus on the good life'. Such answers received no more than 2 marks.

The best answers for 'focus on the good life' described; positive connection to others, positive individual traits and life regulation qualities with an example for each of these. Some candidates were not able to identify 'one other' positive assumption by name and this meant they did not get the identification mark, for example stating that another assumption was 'free will'. Better answers were clearly linked to psychology and provided examples.

- Q.3** Overall this question was answered well with a facility factor 58.5. Most mistakes were minimal, for example; average ages, stating that patients were matched by IQ, timing of the FDG. On occasions candidates included findings/ conclusions/ evaluation which were not required for this question.
- Q.4** It was pleasing to see some candidates using knowledge of aversion therapy from Component 3 to evaluate the effectiveness of the therapy. It is perfectly acceptable, and encouraged, for appropriate information from elsewhere on the specification to be used in Component One answers. As with question one candidates needed to provide a conclusion, or mini conclusions, in their response. Unfortunately, some candidates judged therapy as being effective but did not back this up with evidence, for example, research findings or rates of effectiveness. At times, candidates did not give enough depth to their responses and there was some confusion over the issue of protection from harm with systematic desensitisation; it should not cause harm because it is based on the principle of reciprocal inhibition. These factors led to a wide spread of scores with a standard deviation of 2.1 from an overall mean of 5.6.
- Q.5** Some excellent strengths and weaknesses were evident in candidate responses, but such responses only received a maximum of 4 marks due to a lack of reference to the stimulus material. This was an AO2 skill question, yet most candidates answered it as an AO3 question, hence the mean mark of 5.6. Many candidates used therapy as the strength, indicating that this was an application to the real world, yet they did not back up their point with actual evidence of therapy being effective and/or beneficial. A number of candidates confused reductionism and determinism. Some candidates wrote a conclusion which was not necessary for this question. This did not affect the marks that candidates received but could have taken time away from answering another question.
- Q.6** Unfortunately, candidate responses were basic at best. Many were repetitive, for example, talking about the role of 'process' in the computer analogy and then making almost the same point for schemas and internal mental processes. Candidates often did not identify the behaviour they were applying the assumptions to, applications of behaviour to the assumptions was brief or the application was non-existent. Many candidates still simply described the assumptions of the cognitive approach hence the mean mark of 3.6 and a facility factor of 36.0. Some candidates used relationship formation as a behaviour. This is not compulsory for the A Level specification but it is acceptable if applied well. The best responses seen by examiners were those where candidates linked their answers to Component 3 behaviours.
- Q.7** Most candidates described mindfulness but generally did not do this in a thorough way due to using information that was only sourced from textbooks. This meant there was little depth **and** range so many candidates failed to gain more than 6 marks. The majority of candidates attempting Mindfulness, and giving basic answers, resulted in a mean of 4.4. There is an abundance of information on mindfulness in the public domain so there is potential for excellent answers for such a question. This has also been explored at CPD (materials from which can be downloaded from the Eduqas website).

Candidates who gained top band marks were able to name the different components of mindfulness, describe each stage in depth and give examples of mindfulness programmes. Candidates who wrote about Quality of life Therapy generally had a good grasp of the terminology, components of the therapy and research and/or examples to highlight the use of the therapy. Many candidates who wrote about this therapy did go beyond a textbook answer.

- Q.8** Some candidates wrote a conclusion for this question but it is under 10 marks so it was not a requirement. The most common issue, which may possibly explain the facility factor of 50.5, was that candidates ignored the terms in the question 'in relation to social implications and ethical issues' and wrote general evaluation points, for example methodological issues, validity etc. Some candidates only wrote about ethical issues, so centres need to ensure that not only are social implications taught, but they are also understood by candidates. On occasions, when social implications were addressed, points were quite weak, for example, candidates could identify that systematic desensitisation was born out of the findings of this research but did not take the point any further.

Better answers discussed links with education, which created more range and depth, but some candidates incorrectly made links to education in terms of operant conditioning. This was not creditworthy as Watson and Rayner's research is based on the principles of classical conditioning. Ethical issues were generally written well however, candidates must think about how they discuss ethical issues in general. Comments were made about the research being unethical because Watson and Rayner did not gain consent from Little Albert or give him the right to withdraw. This would not have been possible with him being a baby so these are not ethical issues of this research.

- Q.9** It was pleasing to note that 99.7% of candidates attempted this question, proving that time management has improved since last year. However, it was very disappointing to see that, despite advice in the last two Principal Examiner Reports, the overwhelming majority of candidates still did not go beyond textbook answers. This meant many candidates did not progress beyond the reasonable band, which is evidenced in the mean mark of 12.4. Textbook answers showed a lack of depth and range with very little or no independence. Textbook answers made it impossible for candidates to really engage with the question set. There was potential here to discuss a range of alternative care; and discuss articles and research from a wide variety of sources. When independent research was included candidates covered a wide range of topics such as; alternative childcare, evidence from other cultures, the role of the wider family e.g. grandparents and siblings, the changing role of fathers, deprivation and privation studies. At times, candidates referred to evidence but were not accurate in their outline of this evidence, for example, men from the AKA tribe breastfeeding their children.

Most AO3 content was basic as it was restricted to a sentence at the end of each paragraph such as; 'therefore the mother/father should be PCG'. Although not directed to discuss the statement, it gave a nice hook into social and economic implications of this debate which would have enriched many answers. Many conclusions were very basic, but the better ones included some social, ethical, economic and political implications of the debate such as; the impact of the mother being the primary caregiver on the economy with part of the workforce missing and rates of depression in mothers who feel isolated whilst on long term maternity leave.

### **Summary of key points**

- Centres should ensure that a range of sources are used to enable candidates to be independent learners. Answers should show variety, not a direct recall of textbook information.
- Candidates must learn how to write conclusions that provide a new perspective.

## PSYCHOLOGY

### GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2019

### COMPONENT 2

#### General Comments

Overall, the examining team were pleased with the standard achieved by candidates. There does however, seem to be a few more peaks and troughs in candidate performance over the paper than in previous exam sessions. A significant concern noted for many part questions was the lack of application of knowledge and understanding (AO2). It should be remembered that in this component AO2 is worth as much as AO1 and AO3 combined.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** Most candidates were able to recognise the measures of central tendency indicated in the question. The mean score for all parts of this question was 1, with a 99.5% of candidates attempting to answer this question.
- Q.2** This question had the lowest attempt rate of the examination at 93%. There were a pleasing number of candidates who were able to give a concise description of the format required when reporting investigations, although there were clearly some candidates who had not prepared for this topic, perhaps explaining the mean of 2.5 and a standard deviation of 1.9. A few candidates did try and answer the question based on how they had reported on their own investigations. This strategy received credit for content where there was appropriate crossover material.
- Q.3** (a) This was a question that a minority of candidates simply chose not to answer, with an attempt rate of 93.7%. Although, those that did know the steps to calculate standard deviation generally did very well. There were a few errors with some candidates' steps. Most notably candidates reported that *'the raw score should be taken away from the mean'* instead of the other way around.
- (b) Overall, candidates did not do well on this question, as for many candidates there was insufficient detail in their answer to gain the full two marks. This was one question where candidates really benefitted from adding depth to their answers by comparison i.e. instead of just *'an advantage is that the standard deviation is that it is a precise accurate measure of dispersion'* they would be better noting *'an advantage of the standard deviation is that it is a more precise and accurate measure of dispersion than the range'*. Some candidates' answers read like definitions i.e. *'An advantage of standard deviation is that assesses the spread of data around the mean'*, and as such did not receive any credit.
- Q.4** (a) Although these two mark questions may initially seem quite straightforward, the examining team did make the following observations. In part (a) most candidates were able to report that in non-participant observations, researchers did not interact with the participants they were observing, but they offered little more than this.

- (b) In part (b) there were quite a few jumbled definitions of what a case study was, with some candidates offering information that was considered too vague or that more readily applied to a medical case history.
- (c) In (c) again most were able to note that structured interviews required predetermined questions, but fewer were able to offer more detail than that. Part (c) had the highest mean score of 1.4 and also had the highest attempt rate of the three parts.
- Q.5** This question asked for the strengths of longitudinal studies and the weaknesses of cross-sectional studies. A few candidates did well and used issues such as participant variables and cohort effects as a side-by-side comparison, highlighting how they were a strength of longitudinal, but a weakness of cross-sectional. Sadly, a few candidates confused cross-sectional with cross-cultural. Again, the standard deviation (1.6) indicates quite a dispersed range of marks.
- Q.6** (a) Although this question was answered very well by most candidates (with a mean score of 3.7), some candidates opted to just describe ethical issues related to Milgram's research and failed to take a slightly broader view of social psychological research. Some candidates obviously knew a great deal about the ethics of Milgram and wrote a great deal for this question, on occasion writing much more than was needed. Common ethical issues explained were deception/valid consent; failure to protect from physical and psychological harm; right to withdraw.
- (b) Again, this question was answered well, perhaps a little less well than 6 (a) (as indicated by a mean score of 3.0) and again most candidates just reported on the ethical issues noted with Kohlberg's research. Again, a slightly broader perspective of ethical issues of developmental psychology in general highlighted by examples from Kohlberg or other developmental research may have benefitted candidates. Common ethical issues explained included use of vulnerable individuals and exposing children to potential harm from hypothetical moral dilemmas. Some candidates claimed that Kohlberg breached confidentiality as he referred to '*Richard*' and '*Tommy*' in his findings. However, it's not clear if this really is a breach of confidentiality; if these two participants gave consent for their names to be used, or indeed if they are pseudonyms. As it was unclear credit was given, but it would be good for candidates in the future to consider the ambiguity of this issue. Few candidates took advantage of applying these, or other ethical issues to other developmental psychological research.
- Q.7** (a) Most candidates were able to identify the location of their research. There was a range in candidate's ability to explain why this location was appropriate. Many were able to offer a strength of their selected location, but fewer contrasted with weaknesses of alternatives; a strategy that would have also received credit. A lack of application to the purpose of their investigation limited the marks achieved by most candidates and probably explains why a mean score of 2.4 was achieved.
- (b) (i) Candidates' offered a variety of possible independent variables. Some were limited by a lack of clear operationalisation and this might explain why the mean score for (b) (i) was slightly lower than for (b) (ii).

- (ii) Again, some candidates were limited because of a lack of operationalisation, but generally most candidates were able to gain credit on this question. There were a handful of candidates' who had written creditable content, but they had put their independent variable in (b) (ii) and their dependent variable in (b) (i). Sadly, this could not be credited.
- (c) Most candidates gained credit on this question. The marks on this question were purely for the improvements that candidates offered. Regrettably some candidates wrote in great detail about problems in their research, but then offered minimal or no content relating to how to improve it. This might explain why with a mean score of 2.9, there was a standard deviation of 1.2 marks.
- Q.8** (a) (i) Most candidates reported they had used opportunity sampling, but few related it to the purpose of their investigation i.e. questionnaire on relationships.
- (ii) For opportunity sampling, many candidates continue to offer the limited '*quick and easy*'. This kind of evaluation really needs to be discouraged. Quick and easy are subjective terms and are thus not eligible for credit unless it is compared to another sampling method, such as 'I used an opportunity sample as this was a quicker and easier way of selecting participants than stratified sampling...'. Candidates tended to do better in the disadvantage element of this question, but as previously stated, they were limited in both parts by a lack of application to the purpose of their investigation. As this question was marked out of 4, a mean score of 1.5 was surprising and slightly disappointed.
- (b) Unfortunately, this was not answered well on the whole by candidates, as indicated by both a low mean of 1.8 and a low standard deviation of 1.5. Although previous examinations have highlighted that candidates are capable of offering excellent justifications for their selection and use of inferential statistics, this question was focused on graphical representations and descriptive statistics; and for many candidates they just couldn't explain why they chose their particular graph or descriptive statistic. Comments such as 'I used a bar chart to compare the results from males and females who answered my questionnaire' are just too generic and could be applied to many forms of graphical representation. Candidates who received better marks were able to explain their choices by referring to the level of measurement they used, such as '*I chose a bar chart because the data was nominal as I had categories of mate attributes on the x axis*' and/or they also highlighted which other graphs/descriptive statistics would not be suitable '*As my data was nominal, I was only able to use the mode as a measure of central tendency as the mean and median require data to be at least ordinal*'. Candidates who included their justification for inferential statistics did not receive credit as this was not the focus of this question.
- (c) A sizeable portion of candidates ignored the instruction in the question and explained a weakness of their sampling technique, which might explain the facility factor of 48.0. This was disappointing as it obviously meant they were not eligible for credit.

Other candidates noted problems with using a questionnaire and explained how a different method would be an improvement using the advantages they knew of that method - this strategy was successful for many. Other common issues were only having closed questions on the questionnaire or the possibility of social desirability in answers; both of these were generally dealt with well by the candidates.

- Q.9**
- (a)** Most candidates were able to explain why a quasi-experiment was chosen and apply it well to the novel scenario, achieving a mean score of 1.2 marks.
  - (b)** Most candidates were able to construct a reasonable directional hypothesis, with only a few mistakenly constructing a non-directional hypothesis. Some candidates lost marks by not fully explaining the IV or DV, such as 'aggression' rather than 'number of incidents indicating aggression', which may explain a mean score of 1.1 marks.
  - (c)** Most candidates were able to offer at least one advantage of matched pairs design; but a sizeable minority were unable to offer a second advantage. Again, candidates were limited in their marks by a lack of application, resulting in a mean of 1.6.
  - (d)** Most candidates were able to explain one factor that could have been used to match the participants, and they applied this knowledge reasonably well, possibly explaining the mean of 1.3 marks. However, a minority of candidates chose to just identify the factor but not explain it. This only received credit if they had in some way applied it to the research.
  - (e)** Most candidates were able to identify an ethical issue and explained why it may have been an issue in this research, with most applying it well to the research, possibly explaining the mean of 2.3 marks.
  - (f)**
    - (i)** Few candidates were able to draw appropriate conclusions from the range scores; however, many made the error that the ranges indicated that those children who regularly played violent games were more aggressive than those who didn't play regularly. The facility factor indicates that that candidates found this to be the least accessible question on the paper. Performance on this question indicates that this is an area of the mathematical content that needs to be more thoroughly practiced.
    - (ii)** This part of the question was generally answered better than part (i), as indicated by the higher mean score of 0.8 marks. Although this question also attracted generic, inappropriate or vague evaluation. A weakness of the range is not '*it only tells us about the highest and lowest values*', that is its job and that is all it is supposed to do, so this sort of criticism didn't receive credit unless they had compared it to standard deviation '*the range only includes the highest and lowest values, which is basic in comparison to standard deviation which includes all the values*'. A popular and creditable weakness cited by many was about how the range is affected by anomalous results.

- (g) Although most candidates offered a good answer to this question (with a mean of 1.2) with most identifying appropriate issues relating to researcher bias and applying it to the scenario, there was a minority who got confused and discussed peer review as a process applied to this novel situation.
- Q.10 (a)**
- (i) Due to the nature of the investigation, candidates could get credit for selecting one from a variety of graphical representations. So nearly all candidates who answered this achieved credit as indicated by the highest facility factor of the paper at 98.5.
- (ii) In this part, the candidates had to draw the graph they identified in (i) to represent the data. Most were able to offer appropriate and labelled x and y axes; however, fewer added an appropriate title. Some candidates drew a graph that was not the type they identified in (i), drawing a bar chart instead of a histogram and vice versa, and so they did not receive credit for plotting of data. Another problem detected was when people claimed to be drawing a line graph, they drew a line of best fit instead of linking the various data points. This may explain why the mean score was 2.8 out of possible 4 marks.
- (b) This was disappointingly answered as many candidates ignored the instruction to “justify your choices of methodology and sampling technique”, and just described how they would sample participants and described which method they would use. This would explain the low facility factor. A few candidates offered weaknesses of the sampling and methodological choices they had made this doesn't really attract credit.

### Summary of key points

- Always show application of knowledge to questions in personal investigations and scenario questions; a significant proportion of marks will be lost if not properly applied.
- Do not rely on Level 2 Mathematics knowledge to get you through the ‘maths’ questions; you need to know more than how to identify, calculate and construct. Be able to justify the choice of measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion and graphical representation in as much detail as you would inferential statistical tests.
- Do not rely on vague, generic evaluations such ‘quick and easy’, ‘time consuming to complete’ or - these sorts of comments do not attract credit. Equally, credit will not be given for offering ‘descriptive’ evaluations, such as ‘a weakness of the range is that it is only the difference between the highest and lowest scores’.

# PSYCHOLOGY

## GCE A LEVEL

Summer 2019

### COMPONENT 3

#### General Comments

It is evident again this year that candidates continue to be prepared well for the demands and rigour of this component. Candidates have been able to illustrate broad understanding of their three varied applications and knowledge of controversies. Some candidates against previous years are clearly showing a well thought out approach to the paper in terms of order of answering questions, as well as isolating the skills needed to answer and respond to questions effectively. Centres clearly support their candidates well and to aid this process further centres may consider:

- **Time management:** Ensuring that candidates are aware of the timings for the paper and each question. In order to avoid incomplete papers or rushed responses centres and candidates might find it useful to adhere to the rule of: 10 mark question – 13 minutes; 15 mark question 20 minutes; 25 mark question – 33 minutes.
- **Exam strategy:** Ensure candidates have a clear plan of what order to answer questions. Centres and candidates might consider approaching the examination ensuring that the controversies question is responded to first, thus minimising the impact of poor timing on such a singularly large marked question.
- **Identifying and responding to subtleties in questions:** Ensuring that candidates can respond appropriately to the question asked. In this exam session more so than any previous, candidates did not identify or respond to the subtleties of questions. For example, only responding with one explanation when asked a question that asks, 'evaluate explanations of.....'. The expectation here is for the inclusion of more than one explanation, which some candidates failed to recognise and respond to.
- **Application to statement or scenario:** Ensure candidates look beyond simple rewording of the statements / scenarios and look at ways of integrating it into the flow of the response that strengthens the points be made rather than being an add on to it.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### Applications

#### Addictive Behaviours

- Q.1 (a)** As a behaviour, addiction continues to be popular choice for centres to select for their candidates with very nearly 800 responses. This is the first time a characteristics question has been asked for addictive behaviours. Assessing AO1, this question required candidates to illustrate understanding of the characteristics of addiction. By far the most commonly used reference was Griffiths (2005).

Candidates were able to show their understanding by reference to salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict and relapse. If there were any limiting factor in this response it simply was the lack of detail that candidates supplied with their description of each characteristic. Centres might remind candidates that AO1 is perfectly achieved through illustration of points by means of example. While many candidates did refer to all characteristics, it was perfectly possible to achieve full marks with detailed description of four/five of them. Those candidates that did not perform so well on this question, often provided a very short list-like responses that very briefly identified (but did not describe) the characteristics. Centres might refer to the detailed and very useful CPD material that examined characteristics of addictive behaviour.

- (b) This question was scenario based also assessing evaluative skill, so required candidates to use both AO2 and AO3 skills. The scenario given, ensured that there was enough for students to embed in their response. Nigel and Richard clearly having a difference of opinion. Thus, candidates could productively create evaluative commentary that could be argued by Richard or conversely Nigel. AO2 has been mentioned in previous reports as a weakness, therefore, it is nice to see this skill continuing to strengthen. Most candidates were able to apply their commentary to the scenario well. Simple reference to names alone has been made in clear in previous reports and exam board CPD as insufficient to illustrate application. Better candidates here were able to formulate responses that articulated evaluative commentary from the perspective of both Nigel and Richard. For example, “Nigel disagrees with his client as addictive behaviour is too complex a behaviour to be explained simply by one explanation alone...” or may be that recognition that both parties in this disagreement hold valid views: “Both Nigel and Richard have correct and very valid viewpoints. Individual differences explanations provide a means of explaining addiction, but they do have their limitations. If individual differences explanations cannot fully explain addictive behaviour, then Nigel must be correct to disagree with Richard.” The evaluative component of this question was a further limiting factor – not because of a lack of knowledge, but simply more in terms of candidates not recognising the subtleties of the question. Here there was the request for evaluation of individual differences explanations. A very large number of candidates were only able to access half marks on AO3 simply because they evaluated one (not more than one) as evidenced by the mean mark being 7.9. Centres would be encouraged to ensure suitable practicing of questions that allow candidates to recognise such subtleties and structure their responses accordingly. In addition, ensuring that for such evaluative questions candidates do not “describe” when they are requested to evaluate.

## **Autistic Spectrum Behaviours**

- Q.2 (a)** Autism continues to gain steady interest by centres with over 200 responses. However, in comparison to other behaviour choices on this paper Autism is still one of the lesser studied topics. This question required candidates to show their descriptive knowledge of one biological explanation of autistic spectrum behaviour. The mean mark for this question was 4.9. Of those candidates that answered this question, there was a broadly even split between those that opted for genetic explanations and those that used amygdala dysfunction explanations. It was pleasing to see candidate’s depth of understanding of this area.

For example, candidates who took a genetic line of description focusing on twin, family and adoption studies as well as simplex and multiplex factors in addition to syndromic and non-syndromic causes. Those that looked at Amygdala dysfunction often examined the research surrounding amygdala development and differences between ASB and non-ASB children or the more detailed analysis of behaviour change in individuals where the amygdala is dysfunctional and drawing inferences from such cases (e.g. case study of SM) to those with ASB. Candidates were able to competently illustrate knowledge here, although centres might note that there were a number of instances where candidates, in talking about genetic explanations of Autism, seemed to suddenly make reference to studies/research from Schizophrenia.

- (b)** The question holds a scenario within it, and a request to evaluate social psychological explanations of autistic spectrum behaviours. Candidates were thus being assessed on both AO2 and AO3. Where effective AO2 is illustrated, candidates use material fully from the scenario. Only too commonly though candidates simply referred to Patrick or his behaviour far too briefly. Those candidates that showed thorough application made evaluatory comments that brought Patrick very much into the argument. For example, “Patrick’s interactions with others are limited, he finds socio-emotional reciprocity challenging often making comments inappropriate to the situation. One of the benefits of the empathising systemising explanation is that it evidences and explains his behaviour such as ritualistic behaviour and love for structure as opposed his understanding of others point of view.” Here Patrick and his behaviours being brought into the argument. Interestingly another equally good example turns the argument. “Whilst the E-S theory explains Patrick’s behaviour, his devotion to ritualised behaviour etc., the E-S theory does not explain the situation and experience of female autistics”. The evaluative component to this question required candidates to notice the expectation of referring to more than one social psychological explanation. Too many times candidates did not recognise this and simply provided the examiner with very detailed (and often correct) evaluation of just one. In so doing, candidates limited themselves to maximum of half marks for AO3. This will explain the lower facility factor of 42.1. Weaker responses made the fatal mistake of describing explanations rather than providing evaluative contributions. That said, responses that entered the thorough banding for evaluation, were those that often embodied a clear and systemic procedure of evaluation, looking at research evidence for and against as well as issues of application (or not) in addition to evaluative commentary by reference to the other explanations and alternative aetiologies that were ignored by the social psychological explanations.

## **Bullying Behaviours**

- Q.3 (a)** The focus on one biological explanation of bullying behaviour, required the candidates to access AO1 skill. Whilst (like Autism) this is a very understudied area of the specification, with currently under 100 responses, the candidates that did attempt this question often illustrated good understanding. The mean mark for this question was 8.8. The most typical approaches taken by candidates was via genetic explanations or evolved gender differences. The least successful responses were often brief (illustrating no depth) and often included a small range of points.

For example, using Volk's Evolved Gender Differences explanation but only describing one aspect of it such as mating strategy, rather than making any comment about the importance it has in terms of establishing social dominance, 'risk' and subsequent types (overt / covert) utilised by different genders. More successful candidates achieved depth, and utilised the scenario given to help them to describe their biological explanation in full detail. As noted, the question also required reference to a scenario. The scenario using Mike and his sister Caroline gave many opportunities for the candidates to apply their descriptions to. As mentioned before very little credit is awarded simply for the reference to names alone. Candidates that thoroughly applied their descriptions to the scenario utilised Caroline to Michael well. For example, providing description of aspects of evolved gender difference through comparison of Mike and Caroline - "Caroline may not appear to be a bully as she may be bullying covertly in a discreet manner, Mike conversely maybe bullying physically and verbally in order to establish his dominance, such physical techniques often deemed riskier for females". Centres might wish to remind candidates that in such descriptive questions, candidates should avoid evaluation as such evaluation is out of the scope of the question and thus not credited.

- (b) The question required candidates to illustrate knowledge of evaluation of one social psychological explanation of bully behaviour. Typical explanations referred to here were cultural differences or Bandura's explanation of moral disengagement. The response just required AO3, and centres should remind candidates to ensure that they respond directly to the needs of the question. The mean mark for this question was 5.4. Unfortunately, candidates often provided detailed descriptions (often thorough and accurate) of the explanations as 'context' to the evaluation points that followed. Such contextual information limited more detailed evaluations from being written and credited. Better evaluations from candidates often sequentially used research both for and against such as the work of Chester *et. al.* (2015) or Li (2007) to support the argument of clear cultural difference or the need to recognise the important of diathesis stress explanations as a means of illustrating weakness. Thorough evaluations also saw candidates examining the potential for real world applications of the explanations they examined, drawing evaluation from the degree to which explanations could provide this. Where evaluation of an explanation is made with reference to/ or comparison with other explanations, candidates need to be reminded that in order to make the evaluation effective, they should make clear what is clearly ignored by the explanation under evaluation.

## Criminal Behaviours

- Q.4 (a)** The criminal behaviours topic remains a very popular choice for centres, and for this question, the responses largely were split between cognitive factors or Eysenck's criminal personality. The question was solely AO1 and was one that candidates generally answered well. Thorough and effective descriptions of these explanations followed a sequential structure. For example, with relation to cognitive factors, describing the attributional biases, such as hostile attribution bias, minimalisation, links to moral development and the placing of criminal behaviour within this. Thorough responses always included clear and detailed examples of the descriptive aspects engaged with.

In the case of Eysenck, an explanation of the personality dimensions, with clearly illustrative links to criminal behaviour, as well as clear and detailed recognition of the biological and environmental factors in combination with each other that Eysenck thought were so important to contributing to the criminal personality. Where fewer marks were awarded, this was often for limited detail or depth of understanding. For example, not fully explaining the range of attributional biases or distortions in thinking that might contribute towards criminal behaviour. With relation to Eysenck - limited depth / detail on the dimensions on personality and how this relates to criminal behaviour, this might explain the lower facility factor of 45.3.

- (b) This question required both the use of AO2 and AO3. The statement was deliberately provocative and ensured opportunity for candidates to apply their evaluatory contributions to argue the issue. Thorough application saw candidates integrate the statement into their own evaluations. For example, candidate's evaluative commentary included the argument that either social implications are more important than ethical implications with evidentially reinforced responses why, followed then by a clear counter view suggesting that ethical implications would be more important than social implications. The application to the statement was well structured and often referred to well selected research, or evaluative comments. Those candidates that scored weakly on this question were not, it would seem, aware of what social implications were with sometimes very generic and vague responses being provided. A further point for centres to note is that again here a common error made by candidates was in the misreading of the question. As noted in previous questions (above), this question refers to explanationss thus there was an explicit expectation that candidates would in their evaluations include reference to more than one method of modification. This was not always the case, with often very thorough evaluations being made of just one, thus limiting the range of marks available to a maximum of five. The methods of modification that were nearly always referred to were restorative justice and anger management. Centres might encourage their candidates to practice regularly responses such as this. A common error that often limited AO3 credit was candidates who described in detail first the method of modification before then entering into an evaluatory discussion. This was often frustrating, since it was evident that candidates had revised, and knew material but were not appropriately selecting it to answer the question set. Centres should be reminded of the wealth of material that the Eduqas Psychology website has relating to these and other important examination response skills.

## Schizophrenia

- Q.5 (a) Schizophrenia continues to be a popular choice for centres to teach, as evidenced by the over 1300 responses. This question assessed candidates understanding of two individual differences explanations of schizophrenia, and specifically their ability to evaluate them. The most common explanations evaluated here were schizophrenogenic mother and cognitive explanations. Candidates in this question commonly provided responses that were logical in structure and recognised the need to provided evidence for and against. It is important to note that some evaluations continue to be of a generic nature where comments are made about explanations being deterministic or reductionist but with limited further explanations for the evaluatory comments made. This would illustrate the 44.8 facility factor. Centres might consider here developing activities that further encourage depth of response.

An example might be to think of making the evaluatory point, explaining it and then drawing a conclusion / consequence from it. Interestingly for this response, as noted in other questions some candidates continue to provide lengthy descriptions of explanations before entering into evaluation. Centres might be encouraged to train candidates to recognise specifically the skill needed in questions and respond directly to this.

- (b) This question combines skills of AO2 and AO1. Candidates recognised this, and most candidates were able to reasonably apply their knowledge of a biological explanation of schizophrenia to the scenario of Edna. What was particularly interesting was how some candidates were clearly giving too much focus to Edna, limiting opportunities to add depth and detail to description of the biological explanation. This question had a mean mark of 8. Thorough application to scenario saw Edna and recognition of her symptoms as the outcomes of differing biological factors. Commonly candidates would refer to the Dopamine hypothesis. Candidates that provided though description of the dopamine hypothesis spoke clearly and about both the original and revised dopamine hypotheses. It was very pleasing to see competent use of physiological terminology, for example pathways, involved, as well as functioning of particular dopamine receptor sites. Whilst dopamine hypothesis was a popular choice of response, other explanations could have been referred to such as genetic factors or structural abnormalities. Where the enlarged ventricles explanation was used, this on the whole was answered less well than the dopamine-based responses. To develop this further centres might consider allowing candidates the opportunity to develop such as response that is structured in a way that firstly identifies what ventricles are, refer possibly to research such as McCarley *et. al.* that isolate enlargement of ventricles in schizophrenics to non-schizophrenics. Candidates can then further develop responses by looking at how the neuro-degenerative nature of these explanations can link to Edna's behaviours. Candidates might also then be able to further their description by looking at cortical atrophy and reversed cerebral asymmetry. A recognition of the difference between neuro-degenerative and neuro-developmental explanation is essential here, since reference to broader explanations such as season of birth can also be used to explain structural abnormality in schizophrenia.

## Stress

- Q.6 (a) As a topic of study, stress is a relatively popular choice for centres to teach as evidenced by the 636 responses. This question assessed purely AO1, and candidate's knowledge of two individual differences explanations of stress. The most commonly referred to explanations were hardiness and type A/B personality. It is pleasing here to see that fewer candidates are showing inaccuracy through the mixing up of individual difference and social psychological explanations. Centres should be congratulated on their work in clearly signposting explanations to their students. Where descriptions of type and type B personality were used, some candidates continue to muddle their definitions of type A and type B personalities. Candidate responses that were thorough in their descriptions provided detailed descriptions of for example Kobassa *et. al.* before sequentially examining in detail with examples what control, commitment and challenge involved, before then engaging in an equally detailed description of type A / B personalities, the suggestions of Friedman *et. al.* detailing what the personality types involve.

Centres would be encouraged to ensure that candidates read such questions carefully. Instances were noted here (and in other questions) where candidates only responded using one explanation. Such a response limited the candidate to a maximum of only five marks, this was often frustrating since the depth of knowledge candidates had of such explanations was impressive.

- (b) This question required a combined AO2/AO3 response. A statement about biological explanations is given with the expectation that candidates will supply evaluation of the biological explanations with reference to and using the statement as a hinge point. Candidate responses in this area typically focused on adrenaline and acute stress and cortisol and chronic stress. Centres should note though that a good number of candidates supplied lengthy descriptions before finally embarking on the request to evaluate. As noted before, such lengthy descriptions reduces the time (and hence the depth and range) of evaluation points that can be conveyed. It is such a pity when candidates clearly know the material – but cannot be credited for such knowledge simply because they do not answer what is requested by the question. This is clearly an issue of exam skill in the context of the 20 minutes that would notionally have been given for this combined AO2/3 question, if a candidate adds material not needed, as was seen in this year’s responses – the depth and range of the evaluations weakens and reduces. Candidate performance on AO2 varied in this question considerably. Some candidates made thorough application to the statement and aspects of it consistently throughout the response by clear linking statements such as “therefore biological explanations of stress are limited” or “clearly such evidence would suggest that such limitations of the biological explanation are unfounded and thus are not limited as the statements suggests...”. Weaker candidate responses saw no application or limited application to the statement, for example a quick reference to the statement at the start or end only, which clearly shows superficial application. This would explain the facility factor of 46.5.

## Controversies

In the controversy questions examiners this year noted candidates were improving their use of terminology, reference to statement as well as the structure of their response.

- Q.7** The sexism controversy was significantly more popular with 1029 responses. Building on comments from previous examiners reports it is very pleasing to see that candidates are gradually gaining competence in the formulation and articulation of argument and counterargument. Argument is explicit, and the use of clear signposts (e.g. a counter view) has ensured that candidates deliver a response that is not single sided and holds balance in its depth and range of reply. Centres should be congratulated on their work in further strengthening candidate competence in answering controversy responses, with a mean mark this year of 15.2. With relation specifically to the issue of sexism, the statement allowed for a very thorough discussion over a full range of issues rather than singularly around only one of the specification bullet points. Thorough responses were those that conveyed a clear argument. Initially looking at what sexism was, before then sequentially breaking the issue down into sub areas such as types of bias (Alpha / Beta) with supporting evidence, novel criticism of this often by the idea that older (sexist) theories of psychology are outdated. Examination of the invisibility of women within psychology, the issue of heterosexism amongst a wider range of other examples.

Those individuals that excelled and provided sophisticated and articulate interpretations were often those that extended their focus beyond the limitations of a textbook and used the synoptic nature of this question to its full potential referring to examples of research and issues over the length and breadth of psychology. A point mentioned last year, “conclusions are a skill that most students still need to work on and develop further”. Centres might be encouraged to help their candidates further with this – remembering that they should be appropriate, summarising the nature of the content conveyed.

- Q.8** In comparison to the sexism controversy, the science controversy was less popular with only 491 responses. In comparison, candidate’s and centre’s quality of controversy style questions continues to strengthen. The statement used was deliberately provocative and certainly initiated some good argument in candidate response. It is important to note here that while some students ended up giving a rather generic ‘is psychology a science’ type response, most candidates were able to pick up on the statement with a focal point being on the methods used by approaches. It was incredibly pleasing to see candidates who sequentially used the approaches of psychology and from these then examined the scientific nature of the subject based upon the methods used within them. The mean mark of this question was 14.5. Stronger responses typically assessed psychology’s scientific status based upon its use of varied methodologies in comparison to the core characteristics of science such as objectivity, falsifiability, replication, control etc. Well selected research studies were used, often beyond the realms of the current component and from the breadth of the course to illustrate the scientific or non-scientific nature of the subject. Candidates made use of research in novel ways for example noting how research from the biological approach (e.g. Raine) with its insistence of scientific rigour and need for reductionism might in actual fact be a limiting factor for psychology – “stifling its ability to examine the varied aetiology behind behaviour”. Insightful comments that added sophistication to answers.

### Summary of key points

In conclusion, candidates should be congratulated on their preparations for the June 2019 component 3 exam, and for responding to questions illustrating clear knowledge of content as well as the varied skills it required. To further develop candidate performance in future examinations centres should work with candidates to develop greater awareness of:

- **Identifying and responding to questions:** Ensuring that candidates can respond appropriately to the question asked.
- **Time management:** Following clear and well-established guides for individual questions times, thus avoiding non-completion of the paper.
- **Exam strategy:** Ensure candidates have a clear plan of what order to answer questions, maximising time and credit opportunity.
- **Application to statement or scenario:** Ensure candidates look beyond simple rewording of the statement / scenario, integrating it into the flow of the response that strengthens the points be made rather than being an appendage to it.



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