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# **GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**PSYCHOLOGY  
AS**

**SUMMER 2019**

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# PSYCHOLOGY

## GCE AS

Summer 2019

### AS PSYCHOLOGY- COMPONENT 1

#### General Comments

There was an impressive amount of descriptive detail included in several of the questions this year and candidates should be commended for this. In addition, candidates maximised their opportunity of obtaining marks by just including the aspects of the classic study that were creditworthy, for example just including procedures. Overall timing seemed to have improved with the majority of candidates attempting every question on the paper and allocating an amount of time that reflected the marks available. Generally, the structure of answers was good with candidates separating their longer answers into appropriate paragraphs, thus aiding the clarity of the response. The spread of marks and the mean mark attained were in line with those seen last year.

Several issues that have previously been addressed in examination reports and also addressed in CPD, were unfortunately seen again. Although these are addressed below it would be beneficial for candidates to revisit comments and guidance that has previously been given (these materials are available on the Eduqas website). This is especially relevant to the AO2 marks available on the examination and this is an area where candidates should work on identifying these questions and then making sure that they address the apply aspect of the skill.

On an administrative note, candidates should be reminded that if they are continuing their answers elsewhere in the booklet they should indicate this on the continuation pages/booklet and clearly label the question number.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** There was a good response rate of 95.8% with a mean score of 4.4. Better answers were accurate and detailed and clearly set out what Loftus and Palmer did in their two experiments relating to the title. Weaker responses were muddled and, in some instances, contained details relating to the study about whether there was 'a' broken headlight or 'the' broken headlight. This is a separate study and these parts of the response did not attract any credit.
- Q.2** There was a very high response rate of 98.9% however with scores skewed to the lower end of the mark scheme with a mean mark of 2. This was an application question and as such needed candidates to link behaviourist assumptions to Dr Singh's choice of therapy. Better responses did this effectively by linking classical and operant conditioning to systematic desensitisation or aversion therapy. Alternative responses looked at the effectiveness or ethics of the therapies and whilst these are creditworthy they needed to be clearly linked to the scenario to show application. Otherwise they were limited to description of advantages of the therapies in question and this therefore did not meet the requirements of the question.

- Q.3** This question had the highest response rate on the paper at 99.5% and was high scoring with a mean mark of 1.5. Most candidates opted to outline the Id and did so effectively mentioning that it is present from birth and driven by the pleasure principle. Where full marks were not obtained it was usually because, although an appropriate part of the tripartite personality was named, details were muddled (for example ego was selected but the outline was for the superego.)
- Q.4** This question had the lowest response rate on the paper at 95.2% and a mean mark of 1.8. It can often be difficult to address the assumptions of the positive approach with clarity. Better responses covered positive psychology's acknowledgement that positive emotions are just as relevant as negative emotions and Seligman and his work on signature strengths. The top answers extended this and were able to give an example of these. Weaker responses gave little detail or in some instances gave information relating to other positive psychology assumptions such as the good life.
- Q.5** This formed the second application question and the response rate was 97.9%. The mean mark was slightly higher than question 2 at 2.3. In order to meet the requirements of the 'apply' marks candidates needed to refer to the quote that was supplied which was linked to biological processes. Unfortunately, many candidates just described the biological approaches explanations for why a relationship was formed with no reference to the fact that these were biological processes. In these instances, only minimal marks were able to be awarded as this was just description. Better responses when referring to evolutionary influences explicitly linked this to perpetuation of genes.
- Q.6** Some really good accurately detailed answers to this question. It was good to see that answers clearly kept focus on the procedures of Raine's study and included detailed information from the original research article. Most candidates attempted this question with a response rate of 96.3%, and lower marked responses were usually a result of lack of detail or confusion of procedures.
- Q.7** (a) More candidates chose to answer this question in relation to drug therapies rather than psychosurgery. Here better scoring answers contained accurate description of the drugs used to treat different disorders and how they worked or the different types of psychosurgery. Weaker responses failed to match the correct drugs with the disorders. Whilst most chose to include all three groups of drugs this was not necessarily needed to access all the marks. This question had a response rate of 97.3% and a mean mark of 3.6.
- (b) It was pleasing to see that effectiveness was incorporated in the majority of answers. Better responses linked effectiveness to specific studies and data whereas weaker answers discussed effectiveness, however these comments were not supported by evidence. In order to obtain the top band on this question a conclusion was required and effectiveness of either drug therapies or psychosurgery included alongside other evaluative comments. There was a very high response rate at 98.4% and a mean score of 4.6.
- Q.8** This question had the second lowest response rate on the paper at 95.8% and a mean of 4. As in a previous series there is still confusion in relation to evaluating the cognitive approach. This is particularly evident in information relating to reductionism and determinism and around nature and nurture where responses often lacked clarity. Quite a few responses indicated that the cognitive approach ignored nature and/or nurture. Whilst there are aspects of nature and nurture that the cognitive approach does ignore this was not made explicit in a large amount of responses and therefore this aspect of the response could not attract credit.

**Q.9** A high response rate on this question at 98.9% and a mean mark of 9.3. There was a full range of responses to this question and most directly tackled why this was a debate. Answers to this question generally followed the material included in one of the textbooks although wider material such as research from other cultures and the effect of day care was appropriate. Following on from previous years' feedback very few responses were seen where neither a conclusion or mini conclusion were included. The most effective responses addressed whether the mother should be the primary caregiver and then gave counter evidence and made it explicit what this meant to the debate. Whilst weaker responses made a point but did not link back to the debate for instance mentioning availability of formula milk but not following this through and commenting that therefore others besides the mother can take over a primary care-giver role. Candidates should bear in mind that this answer does need to include information about psychological research/theory and that generic personal opinions are insufficient to attract many marks. A small minority included mainly sociological comments, not backed up with psychological evidence and therefore these sections were not creditworthy. Whilst credit can be given for the benefits of breastfeeding for the baby, especially if linked to psychological development etc, this should not form the complete answer.

### **Summary of key points**

- Clarity of responses is needed in relation to reductionism/determinism especially in relation to the cognitive approach.
- In debate responses answers could be enhanced by material that goes beyond the textbook.
- Work still needs to be done with the AO2 application questions where there are always 10 marks available on the paper. This could be in one 10 mark question or split into two or more questions. It would be advantageous to spend time recognising what these look like. If a quote or scenario is included these must be engaged with to access the application marks.

# PSYCHOLOGY

## GCE AS

Summer 2019

### AS PSYCHOLOGY- COMPONENT 2

#### General Comments

The quality of answers offered by candidates on this paper seemed to show a slight drop in quality in comparison to previous examinations. The main cause for concern was the number of candidates who had a reasonable knowledge of research methods but did not apply this knowledge in the scenario questions, 8 and 9.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** Most candidates tried to access some marks from this question, with a 96.8% attempt rate, but it was disappointing that most offered limited answers (as was indicated by the mean score of 1.3) with a minority relying on answers such as *'it's where a colleague of the researcher reviews the research'*. Appropriate step-by-step/numbered process answers generally did very well.
- Q.2** Most candidates were more confident in attempting this question with a 99.5% attempt rate. Many described the ways of managing ethical issues that were named on the specification. These answers were generally sound, as indicated by a mean mark of 3.4, however a minority of candidates reported that the BPS acts as a clearing house for all psychological research conducted in the UK rather than being the organisation that sets ethical guidelines and monitors the behaviours of its members. A minority of candidates answered this question by describing how individual psychologists had dealt with ethical issues in their specified research; this was credited as long as the description of the method of dealing with the ethical issue was appropriate.
- Q.3** This question was challenging to most candidates with an attempt rate of 95.8% and a mean score of just 0.3. It was clear that there was a basic lack of knowledge regarding these two sampling techniques. The examining team were surprised by this seeming lack of knowledge as in previous exams candidates were typically quite knowledgeable about sampling techniques. Few candidates were able to accurately identify a difference between them.
- Q.4** Many candidates were able to answer this question well, as indicated by a mean mark of 3.1, but there were a minority of candidates who were able to offer only two of the three conditions. In both (a) and (b) candidates frequently omitted 'test of difference' from both the Sign test and the Mann Whitney U test. In (a) candidates received credit for 'related data', but they needed to include both 'repeated measures' and 'matched pairs' designs if they opted to use experimental designs. In (b) candidates did not receive credit when they only stated, 'ordinal level', but those who more accurately cited 'ordinal or above' or 'at least an ordinal level' received credit, as well as those who cited 'ordinal, interval or ratio levels'. It was pleasing to see the high attempt rate of 96.8 % for a question about inferential statistics.

- Q.5** Few candidates seem to enjoy displaying their knowledge of Standard Deviation, with just a 92.6% attempt rate, and it was very disappointing that few could offer even a basic definition of it as indicated by a mean score of 0.4.
- Q.6** All candidates attempted this question and it was clear to see with a mean of 1.8. that most candidates were capable of offering a good answer to this question; with most offering clear points of comparison in their discussion. A minority of candidates chose to focus their answer solely on the weaknesses of qualitative data without any comparison; this strategy is not recommended.
- Q.7** Again, every candidate attempted this question, however with a mean of 5.1 it was clear that many candidates did not read the command words properly. A sizeable minority of candidates offered a description of the ethical issues raised in Milgram's research - without any critical evaluation. As this was an AO3 question, evaluation (and not AO1 - knowledge and understanding) was essential. It was disappointing that some candidates must have spent quite some time writing their answers but did not achieve very high marks because they simply demonstrated the wrong skill.

Most candidates offered superficial levels of critical evaluation, whereas the best answers contained plentiful commentary and evaluation, a good conclusion and reflected on the statement in the question.

A large proportion of candidates are offering Gina Perry's work as a criticism of Milgram's work. This is acceptable, but a few were vehement in their belief that Milgram did not debrief his participants for a year and this is a clear ethical issue. It would perhaps be better for candidates to note that although Milgram claims to have 'de-hoaxed' all of his participants at the end of the research and therefore reducing the impact to the psychological harm he may have inflicted. However more recent claims by Gina Perry suggest that Milgram wasn't as thorough as he claims to have been, and there may have been up to a year before some participants were debriefed.

Again, many candidates criticised Milgram for 'not allowing participants to withdraw'. Few noted that if the experimenter had not challenged the Teacher, then the research could be considered to be invalid as it wouldn't be investigating obedience or that if the right to withdraw was really taken away, why did 35% of participants stop participating before 450 volts?

Better performing candidates considered if the nature of the behaviour being investigated by Milgram and his attempts to explain the genocide seen in World War II could be seen as the 'ends' that justifies his unethical 'means'.

Again, some candidates noted the issues that '*Milgram did not follow ethical guidelines*' or '*Ethical guidelines were not around when Milgram did his research*'. In fact, neither of these criticisms are accurate. Milgram complied with the APA's 1953 Ethical Code, and from this a better criticism would be that, although Milgram complied with the ethical code published at the time he did his research, the ethical code that we have today is very different and his research would not be acceptable by today's ethical standards.

As this question was worth 12 marks, the mark scheme makes it clear that candidates should include a conclusion. Many candidates did not include any form of conclusion; some offered a conclusion which did little more than repeat what had already been written in their answer. The best performing candidates offered a conclusion which offered some form of reflection on the statement in the question and offered their opinion with regard to the ethical issues in Milgram's research.

**Q.8** All candidates attempted question 8. All parts in question 8 required the candidate to apply their knowledge of research methods to the scenario described in the question. Although a lack of research methods knowledge is undoubtedly to blame for some candidates' poor performance on this question, many candidates are not consistently demonstrating the necessary application skills and this significantly affected the marks they achieved, perhaps explaining a mean score of 16.2.

**(a)** Most candidates attempted to answer this, but few were able to operationalise both the IV and the DV. A minority of candidates offered directional or null hypotheses, and these did not receive credit.

**(b) (i)** Most candidates spotted the sampling technique was an opportunity sample.

**(ii)** Many candidates still offer 'quick and easy' as a strength of opportunity sampling. This is only creditable when it compared to another sampling technique.

**(c) (i)** Most correctly identified repeated measures design.

**(ii)** Candidates were able to offer both a strength and a weakness although these weren't always explained with precision.

**(iii)** Nearly all candidates were able to identify independent groups or matched pairs, but a small minority lost out on marks when they offered an insubstantial explanation of how this other experimental design could be used - they may just have described a matching process without any comparison of how one group would have watched advert one and the other advert two and the number of shoppers who said they would buy the toothpaste could be compared.

A minority of candidates did not seem to understand the concept of 'experimental design' and so offered a variety of alternative methods. In these cases, no credit was awarded in (c) (i), but if the content of the answer to (c) (ii) was also relevant to repeated measures then the candidate received credit.

**(d) (i)** Most candidates were able to select an appropriate graphical representation.

**(ii)** Fewer candidates were able to explain why their selected graphical representation was appropriate. Some candidates did talk about nominal data or categories, but then didn't link it to the scenario.

- (iii) Most candidates were able to draw a graph to accurately represent the data. Most candidates lost a mark as they omitted a title for their graph. Candidates who incorrectly identified a histogram or line graph in (d) (i), could receive some credit in part (d) (iii) if the graph they had drawn would also have had similar labels on the y-axis and the title to the correct graphical representations.
- (e) Candidates are getting better at realising that if asked to explain one issue of validity, they may also be asked to deal with it.
  - (i) Most candidates offered a reasonable issue of validity;
  - (ii) Most candidates were also able to answer this part well. In a minority of answers, the answer to (e) (ii) would not have resolved the issue in (e) (i), therefore credit was only awarded for (e) (i). This was one of the few questions where candidates did apply their research methods knowledge well to the scenario.
- (f) **(i) and (ii)**

These were both answered quite poorly. Candidates need to be able to offer strengths and weaknesses that relate specifically to different types of interview. Unfortunately, many candidates offered generic strengths and weaknesses of interviews in general. On other occasions the strength they offered was really just a definition e.g. *'The researcher can ask additional questions if required'*. Frustratingly, candidates also assumed that semi-structured interviews would produce more qualitative data and they used this as both a strength and a weakness then went on to give a strength/weakness of qualitative data. The quality of the weaknesses offered were generally better than the strengths.

**Q.9** Although 100% of candidates attempted question 9, few candidates demonstrated consistent application skills across these questions and again this might explain the mean of 6.8 marks.

- (a) Few candidates were able to justify why a content analysis was an appropriate method in this research.
- (b) Most candidates were able to draw an appropriate conclusion from the mean scores, although some candidates were drawing inferential conclusions.
- (c) Few candidates were able to offer an appropriate advantage of the mean score. The idea that a strength of the mean is 'all scores in the data set are taken into account' isn't really a strength (all measures of central tendency use all of the scores) and candidates should be dissuaded from using it.
- (d) Many candidates were able to spot the outlying result in the table (Episode 5 of 'Rebellion') which would not have affected the median value but had affected the mean score. Some candidates produced generic answers such as *'median scores are better because they produce 'whole' numbers unlike means that can have a decimal place'*. This was not credited as obviously medians can produce results with decimal places.

However, where some candidates had applied it, such as '*the median scores for Rebellion and Head over Heels are both whole numbers and don't have decimal places and this is good because 0.3 of an aggressive act doesn't really make sense*', they did receive credit.

- (e) Some candidates were able to answer this question well and their discussion frequently considered the impact of previous research. However, many frequently failed to note the 1999 research as the 'previous research'. Other candidates just offered a generic description of a directional hypothesis.
- (f) Many candidates were able to answer this question well. Again, they mainly selected issues relating to validity of 'what is aggressive behaviour?' and dealt with it using a more clarified behaviour checklist etc.

### Summary of key points

- Candidates should be encouraged to demonstrate application in their answers to the scenario questions. Many marks are frequently being lost this way.
- In longer AO3 questions of ten marks and over, candidates need to include conclusions to their answers.
- Mathematics knowledge needs to be developed, especially standard deviation and drawing appropriate conclusions from descriptive statistics.
- When asked to 'Critically evaluate' candidates will not receive credit for just describing content. In this case, analysis, interpretation, evaluation or commentary are more relevant skills that receive credit.
- Candidates need to be more aware of similarities and differences between methodological concepts such as sampling techniques.
- Candidates need to be aware of the specific strengths and weaknesses of different types of interviews; not just relying on strengths and weaknesses that are common to all types of interviews.



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