



GCE AS Examiners' Report

Psychology
AS Level
Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.edugas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner Eduqas

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Executive Summary

Candidates are generally attempting to answer all questions across both components, and many candidates clearly displayed appropriate psychological knowledge. Overall, as in previous series, performance continues to be slightly better on Component 1 rather than Component 2. This difference may be because of less potential variability in question style in Component 1, or possibly the fact that the content for Component 1 generally takes longer to deliver. Candidates should be reminded that although they may study the content of Component 1 for longer, Component 2 is worth the same number of marks and therefore should be appropriately represented in their revision and preparation for these examinations.

AO2 (the ability to apply knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures) accounts for 31.25% of the marks available for the AS qualification and it continues to be a challenging assessment objective for many candidates. As AO2 is worth 50% of the marks of Component 2 and only 12.5% of the marks of Component 1, this could be another reason for the continued disparity in overall candidate performance in the two components.

In Component 1, Candidates generally coped well with most questions, and they structured their responses well, with good use of paragraphs. In relation to the AO2 requirements of question 2, the Principal Examiner notes, “the best responses made reference throughout to the quote and put forward reasons for and against it being limited”.

In Component 2, there was greater variability in how well questions were answered. Candidates’ mathematical skills were particularly concerning on questions relating to graphical representations and measures of central tendency. AO2 is worth 40 of the 80 marks available and, in this series, was credited as part of several part questions of questions 7 and 8. In Component 2, candidates tended to be weaker in their display of AO2 skills, with the Principal Examiner noting “teachers should continue to stress the need for candidates to contextualise their answers in ... the scenarios given in Section B”.

AO2 continues to be the skill that requires practise and encouragement. Although a candidate’s ‘knowledge and understanding’ of relevant psychological concepts is a key part of AO2, they are falling down in their ability to relate that knowledge to specific scenarios. Recalling relevant knowledge may be fine to achieve reasonable marks in AO1 questions, but for AO2 questions a failure to apply will lead to a failure to attract credit.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Cognitive assumptions	1.0 Cognitive assumptions Cognitive approach - Blended Learning (d3kp6tphcrvm0s.cloudfront.net)	Blended learning resource
	'Assumptions of the cognitive approach' pdf Resource (edugas.co.uk)	Knowledge organiser
Ethics of Neuroscience	The ethics of neuroscience - Blended Learning (d3kp6tphcrvm0s.cloudfront.net)	Blended learning resource
Graphical Representation	Graphical Representation - Blended Learning (d3kp6tphcrvm0s.cloudfront.net)	Blended learning resource
	'Graphical representation' pdf Resource (edugas.co.uk)	Knowledge organiser
Measures of Central Tendency	2.0 Measures of central tendency Descriptive Statistics - Blended Learning (d3kp6tphcrvm0s.cloudfront.net)	Blended learning resource
	'Descriptive Statistics' pdf Resource (edugas.co.uk)	Knowledge organiser
Format for reporting psychological investigations	The role of the scientific community in validating new knowledge - Blended Learning (d3kp6tphcrvm0s.cloudfront.net)	Blended learning resource

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COMPONENT 1: PAST TO PRESENT

Overview of the Component

This year there seemed to be an improved response rate on previous series and it was good to see that the majority of candidates attempted all the questions across the paper.

There was an impressive amount of descriptive detail included in several of the questions this year and candidates should be commended for their recall. 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.

Several issues that have previously been addressed in examination reports and therefore addressed in Professional Learning materials, were once again seen, and although these are addressed below it would be beneficial for candidates to revisit comments and guidance that has previously been given (materials available on Eduqas website).

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q1. This question was one of the most attempted question on the paper. Here candidates were required to describe two assumptions of the cognitive approach apart from the computer analogy. In general students did do this and some very good answers were seen in relation to schemas with the best answer clearly describing what a schema is and then backing this up with relevant examples such as self-schemas and the halo effect. The second assumption was internal mental processes and this was less well answered. Often candidates mentioned processes such as memory, attention and perception but did not take this further and describe what they are and how they work together. Too often this part of the response strayed into describing the computer analogy or multi-store model of memory and therefore could attract little credit.

Q2. This question had a slightly lower attempt rate than others on the paper. This was the AO2 question in this year's paper and as such required the candidates to engage with the statement and evaluate whether Myers and Diener's research was limited. This year there was an improvement in doing this shown by candidates. The best responses made reference throughout to the quote and put forward reasons for and against it being limited. Most answers centred on their reporting on research that used questionnaires/interviews and observations and better responses featured comments about correlations. It was pleasing to see some candidates refer to friends' answers correlating with participants suggesting validity. Weaker responses often had inaccuracies such as believing that the research in their paper was carried out by Myers and Diener themselves or they didn't engage with the statement and therefore were limited in what marks they could obtain. Other weaker responses focused on evaluating the positive approach rather than Myers and Diener.

Q3. This was another question that had a high attempt rate and the vast majority of candidates could clearly identify two features of the Raine, Buchsbaum and LaCasse's research and were therefore able to obtain full marks on this question.

Q4. Here there were some very well detailed descriptions of the procedures of the Bowlby study with details of where it was done and the steps that they went through to gather the information. A lot of the better responses also had clear details of the people that were involved in this and the role that they played e.g. social workers, psychologist and psychiatrist. Weaker responses tended to lack most of the detail above and/or included information such as the findings and unfortunately findings could not be credited.

Q5. This question had two parts with part a) requiring candidates to describe the components of dream analysis or psychodrama and part b) asking for candidates to evaluate the therapy that they described in part a). Here all candidates in this series opted to describe and evaluate dream analysis. Part b) attracted slightly better marks than part a). Although the best responses were highly detailed and covered multiple elements such as revealing the inner desires of the ID and the components of dreamwork often responses lacked the level of clarity and detail around these processes. Several candidates were seen to muddle up latent and manifest content. In the evaluation it was good to see that the candidates were evaluating the therapy and clearly linking this to dream analysis rather than producing generic responses that attract little credit. Most opted to talk about ethical issues and psychological harm however it was pleasing to see elements of unethical balance of control and overreliance of the patient on the therapist brought into better responses.

Q6. Here there were some good answers seen. Candidates in general had a good understanding of the strengths of the behaviourist approach and covered a variety of points such as determinism, scientific, reductionism and successful applications. Better responses included accurate detail of these and relevant examples such as linking to the benefits of systematic desensitisation. As an analysis question this did require a conclusion to be drawn and this was the area that was most lacking in responses. Weaker responses were more generic in nature or included a minor link such as naming Pavlov or Skinner, however, they did not make it clear why it was a strength. There were several answers where determinism and reductionism were muddled and others where the approach was described as either on a nature side of the nature/nurture debate or even being both. Where these inaccuracies occurred credit could not be given for these aspects of the response.

Q7. This year the debate question focussed on the ethics of neuroscience and in this case is neuroscience unethical. Most answers were textbook led so did not attract top band marks due to restrictions on depth of knowledge. Some candidates had little understanding of what neuroscience is and quite a few responses seemed to think that this was a biological treatments of psychological disorders question and gave arguments about whether drug treatment was ethical or not without linking it back to the neuroscience debate. Most answers had good structure, but the better answers threaded the opposing arguments throughout and kept referring to the quote throughout the essay. Most answers managed to cover multiple aspects of the debate such as consciousness, and its ability to treat criminal behaviour with good use being made of the Raine study although there was less focusing on neuromarketing. Some conclusions were very basic and did little but reiterate what had been written previously.

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COMPONENT 2: INVESTIGATING BEHAVIOUR

Overview of the Component

It was pleasing to see that most candidates attempted to answer all questions this year. There was some variation in candidates' responses, but a few notable areas can be highlighted for future teaching and learning guidance. Candidates should be commended for their knowledge of Kohlberg's developmental research along with a good understanding of ethical issues in psychological research. However, it is a concern that candidates lack basic knowledge of using graphical representations and measures of central tendency in psychological research. It is also notable that very few candidates demonstrated knowledge of the process of reporting psychological research. Finally, as with previous years, teachers should continue to stress the need for candidates to contextualise their answers in relation to developmental/social research or to the scenarios given in Section B.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 This question was mostly answered very well, and many achieved full marks for successfully explaining the difference between a structured and semi-structured interview. Those achieving full marks were able to elaborate on the difference in terms of asking follow-up questions based on the answers to the set questions.

Q.2 Although most candidates attempted this question, most were unable to achieve the full two marks. Many responses were based around simply being able to compare the groups of participants - which is true of all types of experimental design and therefore not creditworthy. Those obtaining the full marks were able to explain what is being controlled (e.g. participant variables, order effects).

Q.3 Answers to this question rarely achieved the full two marks available. Although most candidates were able to identify that ratio data has a true zero point, very few were able to move beyond this basic description by also explaining that ratio data has equal intervals between values.

Q.4 Answers to this question rarely achieved full marks. Many responses included very generic descriptions which were applicable to all research methods rather than specific to the method of a case study. Those who were awarded credit were able to explain key features of a case study method such as being longitudinal or involving several methods.

Q.5 Parts (a) and (c) of this question were answered very well with most candidates achieving the mark. However, part (b) was the worst performing question on the paper. For part (b) it was noted that candidates could identify the term being described is related to inferential statistics but were unable to identify the specific term being described (i.e. incorrect answers included critical value or $p=0.05$).

Q.6 (a) Whilst this question was attempted by most candidates, there was a large variation in responses. Candidates were required to describe the sample and methodology of Kohlberg's research and it was pleasing to see some responses included an impressive level of detail and accuracy. Those obtaining lower marks often included detail relating to the procedures of the research, which were not relevant to this question, or were lacking in their detail and accuracy (i.e. the sample size and ages).

Q.6 (b) The evaluation given for this question was mostly basic with generic comments which were largely one-sided and lacked context and relevance to social psychological research. Some candidates simply offered a description of general ethical issues in psychology without any reference to Milgram or social psychology and therefore were unlikely to obtain any marks. Unfortunately, some candidates also referenced Kohlberg's research which further highlights the importance of reading the question carefully before writing a response.

Better performing candidates were able to analyse issues, such as deception, using examples from social research such as Milgram. Those accessing the higher mark band were able to provide a more balanced analysis of the ethical issues. As recognised in previous examiner's reports, candidates would do well to recognise strengths as well as criticisms of Milgram's research (i.e. Milgram's claim that participants were 'de-hoaxed' at the end versus Perry's criticism that some participants had to wait up to a year for their debrief). Candidates have also continued to offer a superficial argument on the supposed lack of right to withdraw without recognising that this was necessary for the aims of the research to investigate obedience to authority and that 35% of participants did withdraw from the study.

As this question was worth 10 marks, the mark scheme makes it clear that candidates should include a conclusion. Many candidates did not include any form of conclusion beyond repeating what had already been written in their answer. The best performing candidates offered a conclusion based on whether the issues analysed can be justified based on the knowledge gained from the research.

Q7. (a) Although most candidates attempted to answer this question, very few achieved full marks. Candidates were able to offer a directional, non-directional or null hypothesis for this question. Candidates often lost marks due to a lack of operationalisation of the variables and it would be worthwhile reminding candidates to use the headings/labels available in the question to support this. Some candidates were unable to obtain any marks for this question due to writing the hypothesis in past tense rather than as a predictive statement made prior to carrying out research.

Q7. (b)(i) Although all candidates attempted this question, some did not recognise that a scattergram was the most appropriate graphical representation for this data. In this case, candidates were able to access the mark if they were then able to correctly apply this to part (ii).

Q7. (b)(ii) There was a large variation in how candidates chose to display the results from Figure 1, often combining several different types of graph into one display, and it was clear that candidates lacked confidence and skill in this area. For those candidates that did draw a suitable graphical representation, marks were sometimes unfortunately lost due to lacking a title or operationalised labels for both axes.

Q7. (c) Most candidates attempted this question but with a range of responses. All parts in question 7 required the candidate to apply their knowledge of research methods to the scenario described in the question. Unfortunately, many of those who did offer the strengths and weaknesses of conducting research on-line did not demonstrate the necessary application skills and this significantly affected the marks they achieved.

Better responses referred to the students and enjoyment of history in their answers, for example; students may have been more honest about their enjoyment of history when answering at home rather than in the classroom with the presence of the teacher. Those few achieving top marks were able to suggest the implications of these issues, such as improved validity.

Some candidates also lost marks due to evaluating other methods within the scenario, such as the survey itself, rather than focusing on the location of the research as the question required.

Q7. (d)(i) Candidates appear to lack confidence in the topic area of inferential statistics as this question had one of the lowest attempt ratings in the paper. A notable proportion of candidates who did provide a response to this question included inappropriate answers such as mean or standard deviation.

Q7. (d)(ii) Similar to part (i), this question had a low attempt rate. Those candidates who did attempt to answer the question were able to offer correct justification for a Spearman's Rho test, but unfortunately both justifications were often not linked to the scenario i.e. the enjoyment scale (1-10) for ordinal data and relationship between the enjoyment rating and number of pieces of homework completed.

Q7. (e) This question was attempted by most candidates. This was an AO2 question, and whilst candidates were able to identify an appropriate strength and weakness, many did not clearly link these to the scenario given. Some gained credit through weaker links such as 'the psychologist' but those who were awarded full credit included further links such as 'history students'. Better answers also made comparisons in their explanation, such as being quicker and easier than stratified sampling. It was also pleasing to see some candidates elaborate on their response to include how the strength/weakness may affect validity.

Q7. (f) Candidates appeared to be less confident with this question. Most candidates attempted this question although many could not write an appropriate explanation for using the median with the data given in the scenario. Many candidates offered a description of what the median is rather than why it should be used. Some candidates suggested the median is appropriate as it provides an average of the data for enjoyment history, but this would be true of all measures of central tendency and therefore this was not awarded credit. Those candidates who did achieve full credit tended to focus on the median being appropriate due to being less affected by outliers and clearly linked their response to the outlier of participant 4 (score of 0) in the data.

Q7. (g) As noted in previous examiners reports, candidates' responses were often descriptive rather than evaluative and therefore inappropriate for an AO3 question. Many also tended to suggest that quantitative can be used to compare, collate in graphs or carry out data analysis whereas qualitative cannot do this and candidates should be reminded that this is not accurate. Many answers focused on quantitative data being 'quick and easy' which on its own is not appropriate or creditworthy. More basic answers suggested it was 'quicker' or 'easier' but those who achieved higher marks were able to compare quantitative data to qualitative data to develop their evaluation further.

Q7. (h) This question had the lowest response rate in the paper and, unfortunately, those candidates who tried to access the marks often gave an inaccurate response. Many candidates were unable to explain the format for writing psychological investigations, often getting this muddled with peer review or using graphs and descriptive statistics to report the findings. For those candidates who did have knowledge of the reporting process, they were often able to explain it in good detail but sadly this was rarely then linked clearly to the scenario in the question and therefore these answers could obtain a maximum of two marks. Some candidates were able to achieve higher marks through detailed explanations of the different elements of a psychological report and how these might look in terms of the scenario, for example, 'in the methods section she should describe how she used opportunity sampling and carried out the research on-line'.

Q8. (a)(i) It was pleasing to see that this question was attempted by most candidates. Unfortunately, many candidates offered a confounding variable, such as whether readers had social media, and therefore this was not creditworthy. Some candidates were able to offer appropriate and insightful extraneous variables which were clearly linked to the research. Some examples of these are: the location of the book display in the store; the price of the books; the month (when people are more likely to be buying gifts).

Q8. (a)(ii) As many candidates were unable to access marks for (a)(i) due to an inappropriate answer, this meant they were also not able to achieve any marks for this part of the question. Those who had identified an appropriate extraneous variable were generally able to receive full credit for explaining how it could be dealt with, such as making sure the price for both books was the same so different prices wasn't a factor that influenced which book was purchased.

Q8. (b) & (c) These questions had a very high attempt rate and nearly all candidates were successful in achieving marks for interpreting the graphs correctly.

Q8. (d)(i) There was a lower attempt rate for this question and, when attempted, it was often not answered well. Unfortunately, many candidates suggested validity was poor because the book reviews were biased and subjective as a result of researcher bias. Candidates may have misinterpreted the aims of the scenario study where the reviews had been purposefully designed to be contrasting and it would be beneficial for teachers to encourage candidates to take more time when reading the scenarios in section B. Those few who were successful focused on external validity in relation to the research being based on one local bookstore.

Q8. (d)(ii) As many candidates were unable to access any marks in part (i), this meant they were unable to achieve any marks in part (ii). Those who were successful in part (i) generally were able to provide an appropriate way of dealing with the issue, such as using a wider range of stores/locations across the country to improve the generalisability of the research.

Q8. (e) This question had a slightly lower attempt rate but was generally answered quite well. It is worth noting that answers based on lacking consent for recording sales were not credited as this is data that is typically recorded by all businesses. Some candidates were unable to access full marks as they had not clearly linked their responses to the scenario given. More successful responses focused on the issue of deception as a result of the misleading book reviews or risk of humiliation/status to the author due to the negative book review.

Q8. (f) With a lower attempt rate, this question proved less appealing to candidates. Some responses were descriptive rather than evaluative of the longitudinal method. A few candidates attempted to link their response to the scenario, however this was an AO3 question and therefore not necessary and this resulted in answers which were less focused on the strengths and weaknesses of longitudinal research. The best performing candidates often discussed the issues of attrition rates resulting in a bias which lowers the validity as well as controlling for participant variables by comparing longitudinal research to cross-sectional research.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4284

Email: psychology@edugas.co.uk

Qualification webpage: [AS and A Level Psychology | Edugas](#)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | Edugas](#)

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