



GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Psychology
A 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.edugas.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 (edugas.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

It was pleasing to see an improvement in the performance of candidates in Components 1 and 2 in Summer 2024.

In Component 1, the majority of candidates attempted all questions, but with many AO2 answers lacking links to the question asked. Candidates can use AO3 knowledge when answering AO2 questions but with direct links to stimulus material for top band marks. AO1 questions were not the most attempted, unlike in previous series. Questions similar to ones used in previous examinations had formulaic responses indicating that some centres may be using model answers rather than allowing candidates to understand topics. This significantly affected responses to some questions. Despite resources and articles, centres are still using textbook/learnt model essays for contemporary debates, which can result in candidates falling lower in the mark bands. Greater attention should be paid to conclusions, as many AO3 marks are lost due to weak, basic, or non-evident conclusions.

In Component 2, the candidate performance in this research methods component has improved, but persistent issues still hinder candidates accessing the top marks. Many candidates struggle with 'explain why' questions, and although the quality of contextualization has generally improved, many candidates still don't link their knowledge in answers to questions about Personal Investigations or Novel Scenarios. Applying knowledge and understanding (AO2) is worth as much in this component as in Component 1 and Component 3 combined. Additionally, many candidates are struggling when displaying mathematical skills, which are crucial for Component 2 attainment, as they account for a significant proportion of the component's marks.

In Component 3, the majority of candidates demonstrated an understanding of three applications and knowledge of a controversy, demonstrating AO1, AO2, and AO3. However, a handful of candidates did not follow the rubric and answered more Section A questions than necessary. Many candidates answered a Section B Controversies question first, resulting in well-developed responses. Fewer unfinished Section A responses were evident, suggesting better preparation by candidates. To improve further, candidates should identify subtleties in questions, i.e. specified areas like effectiveness, ethical implications, or social implications. AO1 marks are not awarded for application (AO2) in questions, so candidates should not waste time explaining explanations or methods of modifying behaviours. In response to Section B Controversies questions, candidates should be aware of the need for using appropriate evidence and use key phrases or link words to help candidates apply evidence effectively and provide a more effective debate overall.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Raine et al's (1997) research	'Raine' pdf Resource (edugas.co.uk)	Knowledge organiser.
	Resource (edugas.co.uk)	Psychology journal summary.
	'5.0 Raine's research' Biological approach - Blended Learning (d3kp6tphcrvm0s.cloudfront.net)	Blended learning.

Psychodynamic therapies	'Dream analysis description' pdf or 'Group analysis therapy description'. Resource (edugas.co.uk)	Knowledge organiser.
	'Know and understand how the approach can be used in therapy' found in '3.0 Therapy 1: dream analysis' Psychodynamic approach - Blended Learning (d3kp6tphcrvm0s.cloudfront.net)	Blended learning.
Contemporary debate	'Contemporary Debates: The mother as primary caregiver of an infant – Blended Learning' Resource (edugas.co.uk)	Blended learning.
Predictive validity	'Validity' pdf Resource (edugas.co.uk)	Knowledge organiser.
	'Validity' in 'Understanding research methods terminology.' Participants Introducing key terms Psychology (wjec.co.uk)	Overview of key terminology.
Measures of dispersion	'Descriptive Statistics' pdf Resource (edugas.co.uk)	Knowledge organiser.
	'3.0 Measure of dispersion' Descriptive Statistics - Blended Learning (d3kp6tphcrvm0s.cloudfront.net)	Blended learning.
Observational sampling	'Participants' in 'Understanding research methods terminology.' Participants Introducing key terms Psychology (wjec.co.uk)	Overview of key terminology.
	'9.0 Observational sampling' Participants - A level Psychology - Blended Learning (d3kp6tphcrvm0s.cloudfront.net)	Blended learning.
Reliability	'Reliability' pdf Resource (edugas.co.uk)	Knowledge organiser.
	'Reliability' in 'Understanding research methods terminology.' Participants Introducing key terms Psychology (wjec.co.uk)	Overview of key terminology.
Non-human animals	Resource (edugas.co.uk)	Blended learning.
Cultural bias	Resource (edugas.co.uk)	Blended learning.

PSYCHOLOGY

GCE A level

Summer 2024

COMPONENT 1 PSYCHOLOGY: PAST TO PRESENT

Overview of the Component

All questions were attempted by the majority of candidates. As in previous sessions, AO2 answers lacked links to the question asked but this skill is improving gradually. Candidates should be encouraged to use their AO3 knowledge when answering AO2 questions but with direct links to the stimulus material in order to display the necessary skill for top band marks.

Surprisingly, AO1 questions were not the most attempted, which is not the typical trend. On the whole candidates answered questions that were most similar to ones that had appeared in previous examinations. This indicates that centres are teaching candidates model answers rather than allowing them to fully understand specification topics and then apply their knowledge to the question asked. This significantly affected responses to a number of questions in the 2024 examination.

Unfortunately, although there is a wealth of Eduqas/WJEC resources, as well as many articles in the public domain, centres are still using the typical textbook/learnt model essays for contemporary debates. Advice about this has been given every year since the 2017 Examiner's Report. Until centres take this advice on board, candidates will fail to reach higher than reasonable marks that fall lower in that band, mainly because they do not understand the debate and simply learn information to answer a question that has not been asked.

Greater attention should be paid to conclusions because many AO3 marks are being lost due to weak, basic or no evident conclusions. They can be full conclusions at the end of an essay or brief ones throughout, as long as they are included

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** Although this was an AO1 question, it was the lowest attempted on the examination. Many candidates included conclusions which weren't asked for. Although marks are not deducted for this, it does mean that the candidate's time is wasted. Candidates generally provided good answers but those that scored in the lower bands lacked specific terminology e.g. 'subjective well-being' and failed to provide data that would be needed for the top band e.g. 170,000 participants in Inglehart's research on age or 40% of people in the Netherlands being happy.
- Q.2** This was the most attempted and most highly awarded question. Answers were also better structured than when similar questions have previously been asked. There was some confusion between determinism and reductionism, therefore this should be a focus for centres. Weaker answers simply evaluated Raine's research or described a biological therapy rather than evaluating the approach overall. With the question being worth 10 marks a conclusion was required. When conclusions were attempted, they gained basic or lower marks due to simply being a repetition of what had already been written. Conclusions should bring in some form of new information or argument.

- Q.3** Systematic desensitisation was the most commonly answered therapy. Marks were mainly lost due to candidates writing about ethics when the question requested effectiveness. Many answers read like a list therefore marks could not be awarded for depth. It is important to note that answers could enter the top band if only effectiveness strengths or weaknesses were provided. Candidates did not have to provide a combination of both.
- Q.4** For a straightforward AO1 question the answers were disappointing. Findings tended to be confused, especially between the left and right side of the brain, or they were very brief with lots of incorrect detail. Conclusions were very weak with many candidates stating information that was not true. It is of the utmost importance that original articles are read so that answers contain accurate details. Some answers lost marks due to candidates not referring to either 'NGRI's', 'experimental group' or 'control group' because without these references, it was difficult to understand who the findings were about.
- Q.5** Although this was an AO2 question, it was attempted more, and gained higher marks with less variance between candidates, than question 4. Arguments were generally good when structured well, but the issue was that the arguments did not contain links to stimulus details such as 'better', 'student', 'university' etc. There were plenty of opportunities to link in the scenario, but candidates are still not understanding the AO2 skill. Weaker answers simply gave the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches with no element of comparing or contrasting. Such answers did not gain credit.
- Q.6** This question was answered fairly well with some great answers cross-referencing information with Component 3 content e.g. the role of the cognitive triad and how cognitive behavioural therapy is used in anger management (prisons) and for schizophrenia. There were very few candidates describing rational emotive behavioural therapy. When it arose, the main issue was that there was plenty of range but very little depth to candidate responses. The better answers linked assumptions to the reasoning behind how the therapy works. Centres should use the assumptions as a natural link between what the approach assumes and how therapy is devised from those assumptions.
- Q.7** Both ethical issues and social implications needed to be evident for candidates to access marks above the 'basic' band. Some ethical issues were inappropriate e.g. stating that participants did not have the right to withdraw. It was acceptable, however, for candidates to state that the participants may not have felt that they had the right to withdraw because they were Loftus' own students. The best answers considered both sides of psychological harm when writing about ethics i.e. harm could have been caused at witnessing a car accident but showing a video clip from a police training video was more ethical than participants seeing a real car crash. Conclusions were expected but the same issues as with question 2 were encountered.
- Q.8** This was the least answered and lowest scoring question in the examination. Candidates generally misunderstood what was being asked. This comes back to the general comments where model essays had been learnt to tackle questions about psychodynamic therapies without candidates truly understanding the reasons as to why the therapy would be used. Candidates could have used a range of information e.g. how the assumptions are the basis of the therapies and research to support that psychodynamic therapy is effective and therefore that is why they are used. Any information detailing why the therapies would not be used was not credited.

Q.9 Again, as with past examination series, there were a variety of responses to this question. Overall, structure has improved, and better answers included impressive social implications such as girls of mothers who work earned on average 4% higher salaries when they were of working age. Some centres had used the blended learning resources, and it was evident that those candidates understood the debate because the topic had been engaged with on a deeper level of understanding. However, some candidates simply wrote essays about attachment rather than the mother as a primary caregiver, which gained minimal credit due to not fully answering the question that was asked. Other weaker answers centered around one very narrow theme e.g. the benefits/damage of sending a child to day care. Such answers were restricted in range and tended to lose focus on the actual debate because they read more like whether a child should attend nursery or not rather than day care versus the mother or other alternative child rearing practices. Sadly, textbook answers still prevailed, displaying a lack of engagement with the wide range of issues that such debates are open to discussing. The best conclusions generally brought in the ethics and social implications of the mother as a primary caregiver.

PSYCHOLOGY

GCE A level

Summer 2024

COMPONENT 2 PSYCHOLOGY: INVESTIGATING BEHAVIOUR

Overview of the Component

It was pleasing to see an overall improvement in candidate performance in this component, however, there are still some persistent issues which are preventing candidates from accessing the top marks.

Knowledge and understanding beyond that of basic definitions of research methods terminology is still quite limited, as such many candidates had difficulty with questions that asked them to 'explain why'.

Although the amount and quality of contextualisation has improved, there are still too many candidates not linking their knowledge to the either the Personal Investigations or the Novel Scenarios in their answers. This is a problem as applying knowledge and understanding (AO2) is worth as much in this component as the amount of AO2 in Component 1 and Component 3 combined.

It was disappointing to see how many candidates were unable to display mathematical skills, such as being able to identify critical values from a table. Candidates should be reminded that displaying mathematical skills is a key aspect of Component 2, accounting for a notable proportion of the component's marks.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1**
- (a) Many candidates were able to give at least a basic definition of the term 'Researcher bias'. Some candidates were able to give a clear, appropriate definition that explicitly gave details on how a researcher may be biased and what can happen if they are. Some responses simply reworded the phrase, for example where the researcher is biased.
 - (b) This question was answered very well. The majority of candidates were able to give a definition of the term 'Demand characteristics'. Clearer responses highlighted that the participants have worked out the aim of the study and then went further to explain that this impacted their behaviour. Some responses were incorrect by suggesting the definition was about characteristics of the sample.
 - (c) Many candidates did not attempt this question. Those that did were incorrect or gave only a basic definition of 'predictive validity'. Stronger responses were able to refer to future outcomes being predicted. Reasonable responses required candidates state the future outcome, e.g. outcome on a broadly related topic or using an example, IQ test can be used to predict GCSE results.
 - (d) This question was answered well. Better responses often used an example to demonstrate their understanding of 'secondary sources'. Examples given alone received no credit without a definition.

- Q.2** (a) Candidates were required to identify the distribution in the diagram as negative or left skew(ed) and only some candidates were able to do this accurately. Incorrect responses identified it as a negative correlation or left, which received no credit. There was often confusion between 2(a) and 2 (b) where they were identified the wrong way round.
- (b) Candidates were required to identify the distribution in the diagram as positive or right skew(ed) and only some candidates were able to do this accurately. Some responses identified it as a mean, which received no credit.
- Q.3** Candidates should be reminded to pay attention to the command words in the question to receive full marks, as responses that explained what ethics committees and ethical guidelines are did not go beyond superficial. Responses that accessed the reasonable band were able to go beyond a basic explanation of how and were able to show evidence of a specific process for how ethical guidelines are used (e.g. debrief after any deception) and for how ethics committees are used (e.g. not allowing unethical research to go ahead or give advice on a consent form). This question has two equal parts but often responses focused on only one or the time spent on each part was not equal distributed.
- Q.4** (a) Many candidates did not attempt this question. This question was answered poorly. Candidates were required to give an accurate explanation for why standard deviation might be used and then go onto to justify it. Inaccurate answers were explanations that could also be applied to range (e.g. it is allows you to see the dispersion, uses all data points). Explanations stating it is 'precise' or 'accurate' got no credit but for a basic explanation, candidates could compare by stating 'it is more precise than the range because...'. Some candidates gave a definition for standard deviation which received no credit.
- (b) Like 4 (a), this question was answered poorly. Candidates were required to give an accurate explanation for why range might be used and then go onto to justify it. Inaccurate answers were ones that could also be applied to standard deviation. Answers like 'easy to calculate' and 'quick' got no credit as they were not compared to standard deviation. For a basic explanation, candidates could compare by stating 'it is easier to calculate than standard deviation because...'. Some candidates gave a definition for range which received no credit.
- Q.5** Many candidates were able to explain one strength with justification. Candidates need to be sure to provide one strength when only one is asked for.
- Q.6** This question was answered with a reasonable amount of detail by most candidates with some evaluation of brain scans, but full marks were often missed by candidates who did not fully develop their evaluation points. Better answers were able to evaluate precise methods of studying the brain and could ensure their answers linked to examples from psychological research (i.e. not brain tumours). Some responses described how brain scans work and received no credit as this question was AO3.

- Q.7** (a) This question assessed the candidate's ability to discuss limitations of Kohlberg's methodology. Where marks were lost was a lack of engagement with the command word discuss which requires arguments that go back and forth (e.g. a limitation of longitudinal is high attrition rates but longitudinal is needed to study childhood development). Stronger responses went beyond generic points and were clearly contextualised to Kohlberg's methodology. Many candidates referred to features of Kohlberg's sample, but these parts received no credit as sampling is not part of the methodology.
- (b) This question assessed the candidate's ability to discuss ethical issues with Kohlberg's research. Where marks were lost was a lack of engagement with the command word discuss which requires arguments that go back and forth (e.g. a lack of consent as they are vulnerable participants, but Kohlberg may have asked their parents for consent). Candidates should be encouraged to make specific evaluation points which can then be contextualised to Kohlberg's study. This question was answered better than 7 (a).
- Q.8** (a) (i) This question was mostly answered well. Candidates needed to make it evident what they changed in their personal investigation to gain full marks.
- (ii) This question was not answered as well as 8 (a)(i). Candidates needed to make it evident what they measured in their personal investigation, and this needed to be measurable/quantifiable to gain full marks. Some candidates gave incorrect responses that outlined the procedure for their investigation.
- (b) This question was answered well. Candidates could identify one extraneous variable and explain an appropriate way they managed this. Better responses could explain how this would deal with the extraneous variable. Some candidates identified confounding variables and received no credit (e.g. participants being tired, IQ, age). The most common creditworthy extraneous variables identified were noise, time of day and weather. Some candidates wasted time by explaining the extraneous variable, instead of focusing on the command word for that part which was 'identify.'
- (c) Candidates could explain one ethical issue and explain an appropriate way they managed the issue, but it was sometimes not in context. Candidates should be reminded to pay attention to the command word as those who merely identified one ethical issue and went immediately onto explaining how it was managed received no credit. The ethical issue had to be explained, not just identified, and contextualised.
- (d) This question asked candidates to identify and justify the inferential statistic that they used in their personal investigation. Candidates would sometimes achieve 1 mark for correct identification, but many then lost marks for not contextualising their justification. Some candidates received no credit for this question because they provided a descriptive statistic such as the mean or standard deviation. As this personal investigation was an experiment, no responses with correlational inferential statistics gained credit.

- Q.9**
- (a)
 - (i) This question was answered very well. Many candidates wrote an appropriate hypothesis but did not operationalise all variables, with some struggling to operationalise mobile phone use. Teachers need to remind students that a hypothesis is a prediction so it must be written in future tense (e.g. 'there will be') and not past tense (e.g. 'there was').
 - (ii) This question was answered very well. Most could identify the direction of their hypothesis.
 - (b) This question was answered poorly due to candidates misreading the question. Either event, time or another form of observational sampling techniques needed to be identified, however, many responses were incorrect as they identified a sampling technique they used to select participants (e.g. opportunity sampling). Once correct identification had been made, candidates were making errors when explaining it. For example, some candidates incorrectly suggest that watching for 30 minutes was time sampling. Teachers need to ensure students can explain both event and time sampling clearly.
 - (c) As in previous years, candidates should be reminded that very basic statements such as it is 'quick and easy', or 'more representative' are subjective terms and are not eligible for credit. These evaluation points can be credited if direct comparison to other sampling methods is made (e.g. 'I used an opportunity sample as this was a quicker and easier way of selecting participants than quota sampling...'). Responses gained no credit if there was no application to their personal investigation
 - (d) Responses to this question were very disappointing as most candidates could not offer two improvements to their own non-participant observation. Credit could not be given for improvements to sampling, as per the question, but many of the candidates' improvements were sampling-based (e.g. sample size, sampling technique, sample gender). Some candidates answered by changing the study from a non-participant observation but this got no credit. Teachers must remind students that when students are suggesting improvements that they do not change the study (i.e. make it a non-participant observation). Basic credit was given when candidates failed to explain how their suggestion would improve the observation. To move a reasonable response to thorough, candidates needed to make explicit reference to the 'psychologist' as this was in the question.
- Q.10**
- (a) Some candidates displayed the data as a bar chart which received credit, but then could not accurately plot a fully labelled bar chart with a title to receive the full marks. Some candidates incorrectly plotted the data in a line graph, scatter diagram or histogram. Credit was given for displaying the total for number of bags of popcorn eaten during the action and romantic movie, as well as a correctly calculated measure of central tendency for each movie.
 - (b)
 - (i) Most could identify an accurate measure of central tendency, but very few could justify why this measure was the most appropriate. Justifications that could be equally applied to all other measures were not credited (e.g. it takes all the data into account, it allows comparisons, it is an average). Better responses used an example of a piece of data from Figure 1 to support their justification. Incorrect responses suggested measures of dispersion (e.g. range or standard deviation).

- (ii) This question was mostly answered well. It required the candidates to calculate the measure of central tendency identified in 10 (b) (i) for Group A only, not Group B. Many candidates wasted time by calculating for both groups. Full workings needed to be shown including all stages of the calculation. Candidates need to provide an accurate final calculation, so those who rounded the final figure up or down gave an incorrect calculation.
 - (c) (i) This answer was not attempted by many candidates. Some candidates could identify the accurate critical value. Teachers should practice these questions with students to ensure that they understand how to interpret a critical values table correctly.
 - (ii) This question was answered very poorly. As this question is AO2 a clear reference to the novel scenario was required to receive any credit. Some reasonable responses that did contextualise went on to explain $p \leq 0.05$, referring correctly to the following three features: 'chance', 'less than or equal to' and '5%' in their responses.
 - (iii) Some candidates were able to state that the null hypothesis should be rejected but could not fully justify why. Basic responses were able to explain that the calculated value was less than the critical value. Reasonable responses used both the calculated value of 57.5 and the critical value of 72 in their responses to get full credit.
 - (d) The question required an explanation for why a psychologist would choose an independent groups design over a repeated measures design, therefore this question was an AO3 question that required comparisons (e.g. however, whereas). Better responses were able to show understanding of why order effects are not an issue in independent groups, for example, and this could be elaborated on further by linking to validity. This question did not require application to the novel scenario, but no marks were lost for this reason. Responses that explained why repeated measures design would be used rather than independent groups design received no credit.
- Q.11** (a) Many candidates gave basic comparisons, highlighting one strength of qualitative data in comparison to quantitative data. Candidates struggled to move beyond basic explanations. As this question is AO2 a clear reference to the novel scenario was required to receive any credit.
- (b) This question was answered very poorly. It required the candidates to explain one issue of reliability in the research. Many candidates confused reliability with validity by suggesting one issue of validity (e.g. social desirability bias). Many candidates did not explain how the researcher could have dealt with the issue of reliability. Teachers need to ensure that when students are explaining issues of reliability that they look for any inconsistencies in the procedure and materials used by researchers. As this question is AO2 a clear reference to the novel scenario was required.

- (c) This question required a comparison between semi-structured and structured interviews and candidates lost marks for not making an implicit or explicit comparison. Many responses achieved basic credit because they focused on quantitative and qualitative data, suggesting that semi-structured interviews only collect qualitative data and structured interviews only collect quantitative data, which is not true. Similarly, open and closed questions can be asked for both methods, so this gets no credit too. Candidates should focus on the wording of the question. This question did not require application to the novel scenario, so no marks were lost for this reason.

PSYCHOLOGY

GCE A level

Summer 2024

COMPONENT 3 PSYCHOLOGY: IMPLICATIONS IN THE REAL WORLD

Overview of the Component

Most candidates demonstrated a broad understanding across three applications and knowledge of the controversies. There were a range of answers with varying ability to illustrate the skills of AO1, AO2 and AO3. There were, however, a small number of candidates who did not follow the rubric and answered more Section A questions than necessary.

Many candidates attempted the Section B controversies response first. This enabled these students to maximise time spent on this question and resulted in some very well-developed responses to the Section B questions.

Furthermore, there were fewer unfinished Section A responses this year which suggests that centres are better preparing their candidates in terms of time management skills. However, there were still a number of scripts where handwriting was challenging to read. Credit cannot be given for work that is illegible.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 Addictive behaviours: this application continues to be a popular choice with approximately 50% of candidates attempting this question

- (a) (i) & (ii) Most answers covered ethical issues, such as side effects and harm, in more detail than social implications. Stronger answers had named research and/or facts/data e.g. amount of money or specific number of deaths. Weaker answers were often generic and sometimes strayed into effectiveness for each therapy.
- (b) Overall, this question was answered very well. The scenario was clearly well understood and allowed candidates to develop a really good level of engagement to get the AO2 marks on this question. Many candidates made consistent links to the scenario so often achieved 4 or 5 marks. The most common issue with AO1 was candidates only discussing 3 or 4 characteristics of addictive behaviour and ignoring other characteristics they did not think were relevant to the scenario. For example, most discussed tolerance, salience and mood modification, but often only top band answers had also covered relapse and broken withdrawal and conflict into the different types.

Q.2 Autistic spectrum behaviours: this application continues to grow in popularity, with almost 20% of candidates attempting this question. However, it still remains one of the least popular applications of Section A.

- (a) (i) The most common explanations described were amygdala dysfunction and genes predisposition. Most candidates covered both explanations in equal detail. Unfortunately, there were still some candidates who only wrote about one explanation, despite the question asking for plural. For the 'genetic predisposition' explanation, many candidates focused on Bailey and twin studies, however, not many covered a breadth of points, or, if they did, it was very brief. The amygdala dysfunction explanation was the same, with few candidates covering range and depth, and weaker candidates writing vague points about the amygdala being squished by other areas.
- (ii) Many candidates continue to struggle with these 5-mark AO2 questions. Most candidates were able to correctly identify a biological explanation of autistic spectrum behaviours (usually amygdala dysfunction or genes predisposition) and an appropriate method of modifying the behaviour (usually Picture Exchange Communication or Relationship Development Intervention), however, many struggled to demonstrate reasonable skills of application. Where candidates modified autism spectrum behaviours through the amygdala dysfunction explanation and applied it to oxytocin (the example in the textbook), this was generally done very well.
- (b) Some candidates struggled to meet the demands of this question. Many responses focused on the effectiveness of RDI, with just a hint of ethical implications, therefore, these answers were not always balanced. The tendency in such responses was to include a weak, superficial evaluation of ethics, e.g. parental consent. There were also a number of candidates who strayed into social implications, some managed to pull this back by linking clearly to ethics, but this was not the norm. Very few responses named researchers e.g. Gutstein. Some responses described RDI, rather than evaluated.

Q.3 Bullying behaviours: As with previous years, this application remains the least attempted in Section A. However, it is growing in popularity with almost 10% of candidates attempting this question.

- (a) There was variety in terms of the responses to this question. Bullying genes, evolved gender differences and narcissistic personality were the most popular explanations. Stronger answers covered a range and depth of balanced arguments both for and against the explanation, followed a logical structure, referred to relevant research evidence and reached appropriate conclusions, often with mini conclusions throughout the response. However, many answers did not follow logical structures and neglected to include any conclusions at all. Some candidates failed to gain any marks at all as they described the explanation, instead of evaluating it.

- (b) This question was scenario based and was also assessing the candidate's ability to describe the Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme, so required candidates to use both AO1 and AO2 skills. The Olweus Programme was often only described basically, with many candidates either describing one level of the programme in depth or covering all four levels very briefly. Therefore, many responses didn't have the depth and range for higher marks. The responses tended to display secure AO2 skills when answering this question, with many using all aspects of the scenario in their response. Most candidates tried to bring Gareth into the answer, and this usually went beyond just using his name. Where effective AO2 was shown, candidates used material from the whole scenario and embedded it throughout their answer.

Q.4 Criminal behaviours: this application is amongst the most popular in Section A, alongside Schizophrenia, with over 80% of candidates attempting this question.

- (a) Most candidates described the social psychological explanations of differential association and gender socialisation. When this question was answered well, candidates allocated equal time to describing both explanations, demonstrating both depth and range. Better answers also incorporated effective use of terminology and referred to research evidence or theorists relevant to the explanation. However, many candidates described one explanation in detail and the other very superficially, or only included one explanation so were capped at a maximum of half marks. Weaker answers did not use key terms well and missed the opportunity to add depth i.e. by not including SLT. Some candidates muddled the two explanations together using gender as an example of DAT.
- (b) There was a variety of detail for this question. Some shorter answers made a clearer link between individual differences explanations and modification than some longer answers which failed to apply the explanation to the MOMB. The most common explanation was the cognitive factors applied to anger management. This was frequently done well, linking the explanation to the various stages of anger management to secure depth to their application. Some weaker responses focused on restorative justice without making it clear how this would modify individual difference explanations. What often held candidates back was answers being description only either of the explanation and/or the method of modifying.
- (c) Answers were split between the role of the amygdala and inherited criminality. On the whole, this question was answered fairly well, with better answers covering a range and depth of balanced arguments both for and against the explanation, following a logical structure, referring to relevant research evidence and reaching appropriate conclusions. However, there were a substantial number of answers with no overall conclusion or a conclusion that was very basic/repetition of the main body of answer. Stronger answers were specific and detailed, using accurate details of studies and explaining why this was a strength/weakness of the explanation, whereas weaker answers used generic phrases regarding 'study support' and vague outlines of research.

Q.5 Schizophrenia: this application was not attempted by as many candidates this year but remains popular, answered by over 80% of candidates.

- (a) Candidates were generally able to cover two explanations for this AO1 question and showed breadth in their inclusion of different points. The psychodynamic and cognitive approaches were the most frequently used explanations. The most common issue with this answer was not stating how the explanation led to schizophrenia/symptoms, instead just outlining regression, for example, but not how this then explained schizophrenia. Weaker responses recycled their approaches knowledge here – e.g. writing a lot about oral fixation in a general way without making strong links to schizophrenia or similarly making quite general points about the cognitive triad without making the link. A further common issue was many candidates described one explanation in detail and the other very superficially, or only included one explanation so were capped at a maximum of half marks.
- (b) This AO3 question was mixed, with some strong and well-structured responses but also some candidates getting caught up in ethical issues (side effects with no link to efficacy being a common error) or social implications. Stronger responses were able to briefly use side-effects as an efficacy point by linking these to research attrition or more commonly treatment aversion in schizophrenic patients. Candidates tended to write about antipsychotics first, this sometimes meant quite a bit more depth on this method of modifying behaviours than Cognitive Behavior Therapy. There were a substantial number of answers with no overall conclusion or one that was very basic/repetitive of the main body of answer. This year, there were fewer students providing descriptive responses to the evaluation so that was good to see.
- (c) Most candidates were able to correctly identify a biological explanation of schizophrenia (usually dopamine hypothesis) and an appropriate method of modifying the behaviour (usually antipsychotic drugs). Common errors included providing a lot of detail about the dopamine hypothesis without much link to the method of modifying behaviours, and often very speculative application of genetic explanations bolted onto the end such as suggestions of the genetic explanation allowing for pre-emptive psychosurgery on possible future schizophrenics. Where answers had attempted enlarged ventricles, the application was often superficial.

Q.6 Stress: this application continues to be a fairly popular choice, with almost 35% of candidates responding to this question

- (a) These AO1 responses seemed evenly split between hardiness and type A, type B personalities. Stronger candidates were able to add in named research, make good use of terminology throughout and explain the components or traits in more detail, but some candidates rushed through responses which didn't go much beyond listing the 3 Cs or very basic comparisons between type A and B personality traits. Some candidates didn't achieve any marks for this question as they incorrectly identified and then explained daily hassles or life events as an individual differences explanation.

- (b) This AO3/AO2 question generated a range of responses, with some weaker ones focusing on the scenario in terms of embedding the details in their responses (most were able to include the singing and swimming, for example) without providing a good quality of evaluation. In these types of responses, candidates would often describe the action of treatments in relation to the symptoms in quite repetitive ways. There was also a tendency for candidates to get drawn into detailed discussions of side effects - and occasionally cost - without these being commented on much in terms of impact for effectiveness. It appears that candidates are less clear what is being assessed when asked about effectiveness and interpret it as a catch-all term for any evaluation.

Q.7 Non-human animals: This question required both AO2 and AO3 skills and was the more popular of the two controversies questions, with over 70% of candidates attempting the question.

Stronger answers focused in on the therapeutic use of animals in particular, as opposed to the ethics of animal research in psychology more generally and used this as a frame for a broad discussion. Most answers focused on the use of AAT and comparative/ethological research. Answers often used Harlow, Fossey, Lorenz, BPS and speciesism but sometimes did not make these relevant to the discussion and instead focused on why these studies were unethical. Many candidates took a synoptic approach to this question by referring to behaviourists, such as Skinner and Pavlov, with fewer candidates using the biological approach, e.g. Selye, than in previous years. Most responses followed a logical structure and links to the statement were often done well using mini conclusions.

Q.8 Cultural bias: This question required both AO2 and AO3 skills and was the less popular of the two controversies questions, with under 30% of candidates attempting the question. It was also the controversy where candidates struggled more to access the higher marks, as many answers were very brief.

The main discussion in most responses focused on ethnocentrism and cross-cultural research with stronger answers including cultural relativism and historical/social issues. Most answers attempted the use of key terminology throughout, but this was often muddled and not used well in relation to research, in particular alpha and beta bias. Some of the stronger answers showcased what centres can do in terms of bringing in psychologists such as Frantz Fanon. It would be good to see more of this as there is a tendency to rely heavily on Kohlberg, Buss and other cross-cultural work which doesn't necessarily give the same opportunity for higher level students to think critically about ethnocentrism.

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