



GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**PSYCHOLOGY
A LEVEL**

SUMMER 2023

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COMPONENT 1 Psychology: Past to Present

General Comments

Overall, candidates attempted the majority of the questions on Component One, with one main exception that is noted below. As with previous sessions, A02 answers gained the lowest amount of marks in general, with some candidates failing to link to the scenario and therefore only gaining marks in the 'superficial' band. However, there were some candidates who have clearly started to understand this skill and be able to use it effectively. A note of thanks to centres for supporting these candidates to apply their knowledge appropriately. Conversely, A01 questions were answered well overall whilst responses to A03 questions varied across the examination. Unfortunately, there has been some regression back to the typical textbook/learnt model essays that we have seen previously meaning that for longer questions, especially question 8, many candidate's answers were no more than basic because the question asked was not actually addressed. There is a wealth of resources provided on the Eduqas website, as well as elsewhere, that candidates can access in order to really engage with the contemporary debates that appear on the specification.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** Overall, question 1 was the most answered question on the paper with a 99.8% attempt rate.
- (a)** The question required candidates to describe neurotransmitters, but many candidates focused their answer on the role of neurons, which was not creditworthy. Examples were evident and pleasingly many linked to psychology. On occasions serotonin and dopamine were named, but their role in psychological disorders were not explained and were therefore not creditworthy.
 - (b)** Candidates knew what evolution is, but many answers were repetitive, brief and lacked key terms e.g. 'survival of the fittest', 'natural selection', 'environment of evolutionary adaptiveness'. In general, examples were very good and were taken from a broad range of psychological behaviours such as altruism, kinship and phobias. Examples of the evolution of non-human animals were not credited e.g. giraffes with long necks or birds having sharp beaks.
 - (c)** Unfortunately, it was rare to see an answer that was any better than basic because candidates in the main wrote about the positive assumption of 'the good life' instead of the 'authenticity of goodness and excellence', and examples were not provided. Those rare answers that gained marks in the 'reasonable' or 'thorough' bands referenced signature strengths, the role of the positive approach in aiming to use scientific methods of research and the acknowledgement that feelings of happiness and mental health are as authentic as mental illness.

- Q.2** Most candidates chose to write about CBT over REBT but in both cases, evaluations were brief. There appeared to be some confusion between CBT and dream analysis with candidates writing about regression and traumatic childhood experiences, rather than the processes used such as dysfunctional thought diaries and unconditional positive regard. It was extremely disappointing that the overwhelming majority of candidates failed to put any research evidence into their answers. There is an abundance of research detailing the effectiveness and ethical issues of cognitive therapies and yet it seemed that candidates had learnt a rote list of evaluative points that had barely any depth. Many candidates had not included an overall conclusion or mini conclusions throughout.
- Q. 3** Answers for this question varied greatly, showing a lack of understanding about the findings and conclusions of Bowlby's research, perhaps explaining why it attained the lowest attempt rate on the paper. Some candidates focused on Bowlby's general findings whilst other mentioned individual case studies e.g. Betty, Derek etc.; both of which were acceptable. There were some reasonable answers but those that were awarded basic marks tended to have inaccurate values and very brief, if any, conclusions. Many candidates outlined the six character types but did not state how many children were in each category, so this is not classed as evidence of findings unless values were also stated. There were occasions where candidates outlined the methodology of Bowlby's research, which was not the question asked and therefore received no credit.
- Q.4** This AO2 question attracted very few candidates who gained marks above the bottom of the basic band because there was a lack of any reference to 'Beth', 'Ravi', 'disagrees' and 'useful'. It was clear that in general candidates had learnt a model answer to evaluate the psychodynamic approach, as evidenced by the overall mean mark of 3.9 out of 10, therefore they did not understand how to link the answer to the given scenario. Those candidates who did engage with the scenario were able to use the key reference points to apply their evaluation points in an effective way.
- Q.5. (a)** It was satisfying to award so many top band answers for this question. There were a range of aspects of Loftus and Palmer's methodology that candidates could refer to and may did. When answers were awarded with lower marks this was due to a description of the procedures or candidates not stating the specific type of experiment conducted by Loftus and Palmer, evidenced by a large standard deviation in the marks.
- (b)** This was the answer mentioned in the general comments that was not attempted on many occasions. When a response was attempted, many candidates evaluated ethical issues of the research, rather than evaluating the methodology. Also, answers tended to be generic because references to Loftus and Palmer's research specifically were missing; many answers could have been any piece of research that utilised an experimental method. This was a good example of where writing about alternative evidence that used a different methodology to create more ecologically valid results on eyewitness testimony could have gained credit e.g. Yuille and Cutshall's real life eyewitness testimony methodology in contrast to controlled experiments.

- Q.6** It was very rare to see answers where candidates only provided a one sided argument; many detailed at least one similarity, one difference and another similarity or difference, which is what this question requires. This was very encouraging and answers in the higher bands made a point of using research to back up the comparison points. Answers that gained basic marks simply described the approaches in isolation, without the use of conjunctions such as 'whereas', 'similarly', 'conversely'. They also did not offer mini conclusions or an overall conclusion that introduced new information or made a judgement on/preference for one particular approach, which would be a good way to conclude such an essay. It is essential that candidates use research evidence within their answer in order to compare and contrast the two approaches. Not only does this add depth, but it also prevents the answer from being a generic one.
- Q.7** This was the least answered question on the paper. As with question 4, the other AO2 skill-based question, few candidates thoroughly referenced 'Rachel', 'appropriate' or 'clients'. There were a large number of answers that provided a description of the positive therapy, rather than evaluation, therefore gaining no credit. Some candidates referenced 'Body Scan Meditation' (which uses mindfulness) and the 'Dark Night of the Soul' in relation to the negative side of mindfulness which brought about independent and interesting answers.
- Q.8** Although the attempt rate was high, the answers to the question were quite possibly the most disappointing of the whole examination because generic answers drawn from one of the textbooks and displayed a serious lack of engagement with the actual question that was being asked. The question stated, 'the extent to which conditioning techniques should be used to *control* children' and '*including ethical implications*'. Pre-learnt responses meant that not only did candidates not fully understand the debate, but they did not answer the question with any depth or knowledge of ethics and control. In general, references to ethical issues were minimal in number and poorly discussed and it was rare to see an actual discussion about control in particular, therefore most answers lay within the basic band for both A01 and A03 content. The role of peers was not credited when it was based around the principles of social learning theory because that does not link to control and the use of token economies in prisons was not credited because that is not about controlling the behaviour of children. There were many cases where 'punishment' was confused with 'negative reinforcement' and 'negative reinforcement' was misunderstood. On the plus side, there was some evidence of conclusions at the beginning of essays, as well as mini-conclusions throughout.

Summary of key points

As stated in the 2022 Examiners' Report, AO2 answers must use key terms from the statement/scenario. Good practice would be for candidates to highlight the key terms and ensure that they read back over their answer to check that they are evident in their answer.

Research evidence is essential for top band marks, especially in evaluation essays where points are made, and evidence can be used to back up the points. Psychology is a research-based subject; this needs to be reflected in candidates' answers.

For the contemporary debates questions especially, centres need to encourage candidates to really show off their independent knowledge and understanding of key debates that have been part of the history of the discipline. Learned, generic 'model' answers will never gain more than basic marks because candidates do not then engage fully with the specific question asked.

Again, as stated in the Examiners' Report of 2022, conclusions are required in all AO3 questions where 10 or more marks are awarded. Conclusions should not be repetitive, but should reflect the 'tone' of the answer provided and possibly include information or their opinion on e.g. the use of methodologies, issues of reliability and/or validity, social implications of a theory, therapy, classic evidence etc.

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COMPONENT 2 Psychology: Investigating Behaviour

General Comments

Overall the quality of responses on this paper was disappointing. Short answer explanation questions of psychological terminology were often not detailed enough for the full marks and candidates should be reminded to examine the mark allocation for each question as a guide for how much detail is required.

Many marks were lost when candidates did not appear to have read the question thoroughly, or in questions relating to the personal investigations and the novel scenarios marks were frequently lost due to a lack of contextualisation.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** Most candidates could answer this question although the correct identification of variables was mixed, with confusion over extraneous and confounding variables. Most candidates could correctly identify the independent variable.
- Q.2**
- (a)** Many attempted to explain the significance level by rewording the statement for example the level of significance. Others simply provided p values without explaining what significance level was.
 - (b)** Many candidates could not explain what the p value meant, with muddled answers such as a 0.01% chance of chance.
 - (c)** When attempting to justify why a researcher would use a p value of 0.01, many candidates used expressions or reliability or validity, or made statements such as it is more significant.
 - (d)** Question was mostly answered well. When candidates did get the answer wrong it was usually the inaccurate expression, stating that the value was greater than rather than less than.
- Q.3**
- (a)** The demands of the question were to explain how a random sample was collected and candidates who lost marks mostly reworded the phrase, for example by selecting a sample randomly. Most candidates did not identify the target population or sampling frame, which prevented full marks from being awarded.

- Q.3 (b)** The question required evaluation of random sampling and as in previous years candidates should be reminded that very basic statements such as it is quicker, easier, or more representative do not attract credit. These evaluation points can be credited if direct comparison to other sampling methods or made. Where candidates only received minimal credit, answers were descriptive rather than evaluative. Many candidates confused random sampling with self-selecting sampling methods.
- Q.4 (a)** Many responses simply reworded the phrase, for example there would be a test and then it would be retested. Very few candidates could achieve full marks as they did not say what would make the findings reliable, i.e. consistency between the two tests.
- (b)** Many candidates were confused as to when a split half test was appropriate, for example suggesting that two groups of participants should be tested and compared to each other. Few candidates could achieve full marks because again they did not explain consistency.
- Q.5** The question required a comparison between field studies and laboratory studies and candidates lost marks for not making this comparison.
- Q.6** Credit was given for a description of the process of peer review which many candidates could do successfully. Those who lost marks often responded by repeating the question, for example, research is reviewed by peers.
- Q.7** Many candidates gave good comparisons, highlighting the benefits of quantitative data in comparison to qualitative data. Remarks were lost, candidates offered evaluation points about methods, such as quantitative data can be repeated and therefore it is reliable. Many candidates gave superficial evaluation points such as it is easier to read in a table which attracted no credit.
- Q.8** The question assessed the candidate's knowledge of developmental research, but most responses focused on Kohlberg's study. Where marks were lost, the most common reason was generic and says that we're not contextualised to either Kohlberg 's study or other developmental research. Some evaluation points that were offered of Kohlberg's study did not achieve the credit for contextualization as they relied on assumptions about Kohlberg's research. Teachers should be reminded that credit can only be given four features of the original published research article. For example, many candidates discussed the lack of consent or right to withdraw, neither of which feature in Kohlberg 's original publication. Candidates should be encouraged to make specific evaluation points which can then be contextualised to psychological research.
- Q.9 (a)** Many candidates wrote an appropriate aim but did not operationalize all variables.
- (b)** The question required a description of the process that the candidates had followed when carrying out their content analysis. Many stages of the content analysis were not clear, for example how codes were established or measured. This question attracts AO2 marks, so therefore generic comments that are not linked to the personal investigation do not receive credit.

- Q.9 (c) & (d)** These two questions required the candidates to explain issues of reliability or validity which they experienced when carrying out their personal investigation. Many candidates confused the two and marks were lost in the second part of each question which asked the candidate to explain how they managed the issue of validity or reliability. Many candidates did not explain their way of managing the issue in context to their personal investigation, so could not receive any AO2 credit. Candidates who offered suggestions of how they could improve their personal investigation also did not receive credit.
- Q.10 (a)** Most candidates attempted to operationalize stress but did not gain the full 2 marks as they did not explain the scales which they used fully, for example, only stating on a scale of 1 to 10, without explaining which one was high or low stress.
- (b) (i) & (ii)** Candidates could offer an ethical issue and an appropriate way of managing the issue, but it was often not in context. 10b (iii) Most candidates could identify and explain one strength and one weakness of using a questionnaire but again could not contextualise these evaluation points to their personal investigation.
- (c)** 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.
- Q.11 (a)** This has been an issue on previous papers and teachers need to remind students that they cannot draw an inferential conclusion from descriptive statistics or raw data. Or the candidates lost marks for simply stating findings without drawing a conclusion at all.
- (b)** This question required the candidates to identify an appropriate descriptive statistic, justify their choice and then calculate the statistic. Incorrect identification, e.g. the mean, meant that credit could not be given in part (ii) for justification, but candidates could achieve credit in part (iii) for correct calculation.
- (c)** Many candidates could identify the critical value but could not justify why the null hypothesis should be accepted.
- Q.12 (a)** Some candidates suggested a bar chart which received credit, but then could not accurately plot a bar chart to receive the full marks in part (ii). Some candidates identified a bar chart in part (i) but then plotted a scattergram in part (ii) which could then not be credited. Most marks were lost for inaccurately suggesting a line graph or a histogram.
- (b)** Incorrect responses included correlation and mean; when candidates did suggest a level of measurement it was usually accurate.
- (c)** Most could identify an accurate measure of dispersion, but very few could explain why this measure was the most appropriate. Responses that applied to all / other measures when not credited, for example it takes all of the data into account.

- (d) Candidates could often correctly identify strengths and weaknesses of self-selecting samples, but where marks were lost was when candidates were confused about who does the selecting, often talking about the researcher being able to select certain people for the study. This question did not require application to the novel scenario so no marks were lost for this reason, however marks were lost for generic comments such as it is quick or it is easy. Candidates should be reminded that basic comments like this do not attract credit on this paper, unless proposed in comparison to other sampling methods.

Summary of key points

Overall the quality of responses on this paper was disappointing. Most marks from the personal investigations and the novel scenarios were lost due to a lack of contextualisation.

Teachers should practise these questions with candidates to ensure that they understand the demands of questions which award AO2 credit.

Candidates should also be reminded that the quality of answers for A-level credit needs to go beyond basic and generic comments.

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COMPONENT 3 Psychology: Implications in the Real World

General Comments

Overall, most candidates found this paper accessible and there were a range of answers with varying ability to illustrate the skills of AO1, AO2 and AO3.

The majority of candidates attempted all questions required for this component and most demonstrated broad understanding across the three applications and knowledge of the controversies. There were, however, a small number of candidates who did not follow the rubric and answered more section A questions than necessary.

Whilst marks for section B responses remained fairly consistent compared with marks awarded in previous exam series, we have seen a drop in the overall standard of section A candidate responses. There was clear evidence that candidates were well prepared for the section B controversies in particular. However, candidates section A responses tended to be less developed in comparison to previous series.

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 section B responses. However, candidates must also be aware of the timings for each question to avoid unfinished section A responses.

There were a number of scripts where handwriting was very challenging to read. Credit cannot be given for work that is illegible. Teachers of candidates whose writing might not be legible when responding under examination conditions should seek advice from their centre's examinations administration staff.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Addictive behaviours

- Q.1 (a)** Addiction continues to be a popular choice with over 48% of candidates attempting this question. Most candidates described the biological explanations of dopamine and addiction genes. When this question was answered well, candidates allocated similar 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 great detail and the other very superficially, or only included one explanation so were capped at a maximum of half marks.

- (b) Many candidates struggled with these 5-mark AO2 questions. Most candidates were able to correctly identify a biological explanation of addictive behaviours (usually dopamine or addiction genes) and an appropriate method of modifying the behaviour (usually agonist and antagonist substitution or aversion therapy), however, some struggled to demonstrate reasonable skills of application. Where candidates modified addiction through the dopamine explanation and applied it to the agonist and antagonist substitution or varenicline (the example in the textbook), this was generally done very well.
- (c) This question was generally answered quite well. Candidates mostly chose to evaluate agonist and antagonist substitution or aversion therapy. Candidates who did this successfully, considered both the effectiveness and ethical implications by offering both strengths and weaknesses of the method, as well as including research evidence and appropriate conclusions. A common error on this question and reason why some candidates dropped marks was due to them only evaluating the effectiveness or the ethical implications of the method or providing only generic evaluative points. Also, some candidates made the mistake of describing method of modifying addiction, instead of evaluating it.

Autistic spectrum behaviours

- Q.2** (a) Autism continues to grow in popularity, with 18% of candidates attempting this question. However, it still remains one of the least popular of the Section A: Applications. The most common explanations described were theory of mind and weak central coherence theory. Better answers demonstrated effective use of terminology and referred to research evidence or theorists relevant to the explanation. The weaker answers lacked depth or range when describing the explanation and sometimes mixed up the two individual differences explanations.
- (b) This question was scenario based and was also assessing the skill of evaluation, requiring candidates to use both AO2 and AO3 skills. Better answers contained balanced arguments for and against the effectiveness of both PECS and RDI, displaying depth and range. Weaker answers either only evaluated PECS or RDI. Furthermore, some answers lacked focus and evaluated the ethical and social implications of these methods, rather than the effectiveness. Also, some candidates made the mistake of describing PECS and RDI instead of evaluating them. The scenario was broad enough to allow candidates to embed it throughout their response. Where effective AO2 was shown, candidates used material from the whole scenario and embedded it throughout their answer. There were fewer answers in the top band due to parts of the scenario not being used or not referring to the scenario at all in some of the response. Weaker responses referred to the name 'Molly' but very little else in the scenario.

Bullying behaviours

- Q.3 (a)** As with previous years, bullying remains the least attempted application. However, it is growing in popularity. Many candidates answered both (i) and (ii) parts of this question very well, especially considering the quite specific nature of this questions. These candidates evaluated both ethical and social implications of CAPSLE and Olweus in detail, with reference to research evidence. However, candidates who did not do as well on this question tended to lack focus and drifted into evaluation of the effectiveness or a vague, generic evaluation of the methods of modifying behaviour.
- (b)** This question was scenario based and was also assessing the descriptive skill, so required candidates to use both AO1 and AO2 skills. Most candidates described narcissistic personality or theory of mind. Better answers demonstrated both depth and range in their explanations, included effective use of terminology and referred to research evidence or theorists relevant to the explanation. The scenario was broad enough to allow candidates to embed it throughout their response. Where effective AO2 was shown, candidates used material from the whole scenario and embedded it throughout their answer. There were fewer answers in the top band due to parts of the scenario not being used or not referring to the scenario at all in some of the response. Some candidates continued to only use the name 'Ethan' and did not apply the rest of the scenario to their response.

Criminal Behaviours

- Q.4 (a)** Criminal behaviours continues to be the second most popular behaviour, with over 80% of candidates attempting this question. Most candidates described the individual differences explanations of Eysenck's criminal personality and cognitive factors. Some candidates used the psychodynamic/Bowlby theory in relation to psychopathy, however, these responses were limited in number. When this question was answered well, candidates allocated similar 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 great detail and the other very superficially, or only included one explanation so were capped at a maximum of half marks.
- (b)** This question was generally answered quite well, with many candidates reasonably evaluating both methods of modifying behaviour. Better answers were able to evaluate arguments for and against both AM and RJ, demonstrating depth and range in their responses. These candidates also referred to relevant research evidence and some also included appropriate conclusions. However, some candidates just evaluated anger management or restorative justice, rather than both. Weaker responses were able to get some credit by making critical comments on issues like limited application to some crimes. The stumbling block for this question was occasional drift into ethical and social implications. However, where this occurred, candidates usually also managed to make points on effectiveness and sometimes issues of social or ethical concern were linked to whether these then impacted on effectiveness.

- (c) There was a lot of variety in the level of detail for this question. Sometimes shorter answers made a clearer link between biological explanations and modification than some longer answers which failed to move from detail about explanations to modifications. Better answers used the example of genetic engineering, from the textbook, to modify defective MAOA genes. Some weaker responses focused on diet and yoga without making it clear how this would modify biological explanations.

Schizophrenia

- Q.5 (a)** Schizophrenia was the most commonly attempted of all the Section A: Applications. On the whole, this question tended to be answered fairly well. The better answers covered a range and depth of balanced arguments both for and against the explanation, followed a logical structure, made reference to relevant research evidence and reached appropriate conclusions. There was quite a lot of variety in terms of the responses to this question. Biological explanations were the most popular and tended to be done the best in terms of use of research and breadth of evaluation points. Social psychological explanations tended to be done better for EE/dysfunctional families, than sociocultural factors, where some responses were limited to only evaluating urbanicity. Candidates who chose to evaluate the individual differences explanation of the psychodynamic approach, sometimes struggled to move beyond quite general evaluation of the approach itself to arguments that were specific to schizophrenia.
- (b)** This question was scenario based and was also assessing the candidate's ability to describe CBT, so required candidates to use both AO1 and AO2 skills. CBT was generally described reasonably well. The better answers were able to be specific in focusing on how CBT is used for schizophrenia and were able to demonstrate depth/breadth through considering different stages or aspects of the method of modifying behaviour. The candidates generally demonstrated secure AO2 skills when answering this question, with many using all aspects of the scenario in their response. Most candidates made an attempt to bring Alia into the answer and this usually went beyond just use of her name. Where effective AO2 was shown, candidates used material from the whole scenario and embedded it throughout their answer. However, there were still some candidates who continued to only use the name 'Alia' and did not apply the rest of the scenario to their response.

Stress

- Q.6 (a)** Stress continues to be a fairly popular choice of application. This was a 20-mark question that assessed the candidate's ability to describe and evaluate one social psychological explanation of stress, so, it required candidates to use both AO1 and AO3 skills in their answers. Most candidates described and evaluated the social psychological explanations of life events or daily hassles. Some candidates covered locus of control, however, these responses were limited in number. When this question was answered well, candidates allocated similar time to both describing and evaluating the explanation. In terms of AO1, the better answers demonstrated both depth and range, included effective use of terminology and referred to research evidence relevant to the explanation. In terms of AO3, the better answers included balanced arguments both for and against the explanation, followed a logical structure and reached appropriate conclusions. Unfortunately, this answer was not always answered well.

The weaker answers lacked depth or range when describing and evaluating the explanation and ended up making quite basic or even superficial points. Another error in some responses to this question, was candidates incorrectly describing and evaluating an explanation that was not social psychological. When this happened, the candidate often incorrectly described and evaluated the individual differences explanations of type A and B personalities or hardiness.

- Q.6 (b)** As previously mentioned, many candidates struggled with these 5-mark AO2 questions. Most candidates were able to correctly identify an individual differences explanation of stress (usually type A and B personalities or hardiness) and an appropriate method of modifying the behaviour (usually beta blockers or SIT), however, some struggled to demonstrate reasonable skills of application. Where candidates modified stress through the hardiness explanation and applied it to hardiness training (the example in the textbook), this was generally done very well.

Controversies

As with previous years, it was noticed that many candidates chose to answer the controversies questions first, before moving on to respond to Section A questions. When adopting this approach, candidates should be mindful of the tight time constraints attached to this question, approximately 33 minutes. Plans are also useful before responses to the controversies questions are attempted as this may help the candidate to remain focused on the statement and prevent them from veering away from focus of the particular question.

Furthermore, it is important for candidates to contextualise by introducing their understanding of the key terms before introducing the relevant evidence/psychological studies. Once contextualised, the discussion should lend itself to a clearer structure and more opportunities to demonstrate depth and breadth in the answer.

- Q.7** This question required both AO2 and AO3 skills and was the slightly less popular of the two controversies questions. Some of the responses showcased sophisticated and articulate interpretations that displayed real engagement with the statement and issue in question. Stronger answers adopted a well-developed structure, often introducing the main characteristics of science first (e.g. FORCE), followed by a sequential examination of aspects of psychology that related to these statements. Responses were well informed by reference to research studies or explanations within psychology that illustrated these characteristics of science. Studies such as Loftus and Palmer, Raine, Watson and Raynor illustrated that candidates could take a synoptic approach to their response, by taking first year content and applying it to a response with a different purpose. Comparison to Freud's Psychodynamic approach was a popular and often very effective way to show the lack of science.
- Q.8** This question required the use of both AO2 and AO3 skills and was the slightly more popular of the two controversies questions. Better answers used effective use of terminology throughout their response. They defined concepts such as androcentric, alpha bias, beta bias and heterosexism. Appropriate research often included Freud, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Taylor and Murphy. Stronger answers also explained how the presented evidence demonstrated that any gender differences found are either real or the result of gender bias. Weaker answers used less terminology and usually described these words, with very little supportive evidence. Once again, it was good to see that mini conclusions (AO3) are being used effectively by many candidates, often making application to the statement (AO2).

Summary of key points

To assist centres with preparing their candidates for future exam series, centres may consider:

Numbering of questions and part-questions: Reminding candidates to make it clear which question/part their answer refers to.

Time management: Ensure students are aware of the suggested timings for this paper to avoid incomplete responses or rushed answers:

- o 5 marks question – 7 minutes
- o 10 marks question - 13 minutes
- o 15 marks question – 20 minutes
- o 20 marks question – 26 minutes
- o 25 marks question – 33 minutes

Exam strategy: Ensure candidates have a clear plan of what order to answer questions e.g. candidates might consider responding to the controversies question first, therefore minimising the impact of poor timing on a question with such a large mark.

Identify and respond to subtleties in questions: Ensuring that the candidate read the actual question and don't just write everything they know about the behaviours. Subtleties within the question need to be identified; for example, only responding with one explanation when the question asks to 'describe explanations of...' or when a question asks, 'to evaluate one method of modification', but the candidate writes about two. The mark for the best of the two methods would be credited, however, the candidate has lost valuable time in the examination that could have been used to add detail in other questions.

AO2 skills when a scenario is used: Simple reference to names alone is insufficient to display application. Therefore, centres should ensure suitable practicing of questions that allow candidates to practice applying descriptive and evaluative skills to scenarios.

Integration of skills: Develop AO1, AO2 and AO3 skills with a particular emphasis on how to effectively combine these skills in relation to the specific demands of the question. Evaluation questions especially continue to pose a challenge to many candidates, in comparison to descriptive AO1 skills, or even AO2 skills. Candidates have learned detailed descriptions of explanations/methods of modification with appropriate research evidence, often found it difficult to evaluate without being descriptive. Centres could ensure that candidates have sufficient practise of AO3 skills and fully understand the difference between using evidence for description and for evaluation.

Controversies: Centres might consider ensuring that, for the controversies question, candidates are aware of the need for AO2 to be able to ensure that the evidence they select is appropriate and that it is then effectively applied back to the statement. Also, the use of key phrases and link words would aid structure and provide for a more effective debate. For example, 'however', 'conversely', 'a counter view', 'similarly', 'in contrast', 'on the other hand', 'in agreement with' 'disagreeing with this point of view', 'providing support for', 'other researchers have found that'



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