

Psychology

Advanced GCE **A2 H568**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H168**

OCR Report to Centres

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Overview

There is evidence to suggest that the availability of past papers, mark schemes and examiners' reports are being used effectively by centres to prepare candidates. Most candidates handled the technical and strategic demands of the papers well, demonstrating the assessment objective skills capably.

G541 is being well addressed by candidates, the main differentiation coming from how well the candidate *applies* their answers to the context of the question. G542 is acknowledged as demanding, but candidates respond well in demonstrating the AO2 skills as well as the knowledge/understanding requirement. In G543 the main differentiator is the elaboration and development of argument in the part (b) questions in particular. In G544 candidates seem comfortable with the practice of applying their knowledge to novel scenarios.

A key issue relates to the need to read and respond to the precise question asked, not merely the general content area of the question. The injunction is relevant, and a response would allow candidates to more readily access higher mark bands. Some candidates continue to respond to the general area of the question rather than the precise focus and the specified command. Underlining the key commands and words in the question might help candidates in this skill.

G541 Psychological Investigations

General Comments

In general, candidates seemed well prepared for the paper and were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of research methods and centres should be commended for preparing their students appropriately. There also seemed to be a greater number of candidates securing higher band marks by the inclusion of context in their responses. However, in many responses this was a 'token reference', with the use of a single key word (eg 'beach') lifted directly from the research scenario presented. Candidates adopting a more sophisticated approach had more detailed responses that elaborated on the theme of the research such as referring to problems recording all behaviours accurately, when the beach was full with lots of people doing different things at the same time eg sunbathing, swimming, running around, and with the researcher trying to pose as a holidaymaker.

There were a number of key psychology terms in this paper (alternate hypothesis, positive correlation, event sampling) which were good for differentiating. It may be useful for candidates to compile a glossary of important terms and concepts in preparation for such questions.

It was notable that many higher scoring candidates spontaneously used examples to illustrate their answers, even on questions that did not require context (eg in response to Q7(a) when explaining what event sampling meant) which helped clarify their response and provide greater detail and understanding that other candidates did not demonstrate.

It may be helpful for candidates to have time to engage in some practical work to reinforce their learning and understanding of the concepts covered. This would consolidate knowledge as well as affording some enjoyable experiences in planning and conducting research in psychology, and acknowledging that psychology is a data gathering subject that requires practical work.

The majority of candidates finished this paper in the time allowed and very few omitted any questions.

Comments on Individual Questions

Q1 Many responses clearly stated an appropriate alternate hypothesis in response to this question. Reference to 'public speaking' when referring to the variable assessing 'confidence' was credited. Although not necessary to have fully operationalized variables, it is nevertheless good practice to include some operational details to increase clarity of response when writing hypotheses. This practice should be encouraged in centres when preparing candidates. It was perfectly acceptable here to advance a one-tailed alternate hypothesis, which some responses did very successfully. A small number incorrectly cited null hypotheses, and a similarly small proportion wrote experimental hypotheses, predicting differences between variables, rather than relationships (or correlations).

Q2 This question was answered very well by most candidates. Popular themes, when discussing the strength, were the use of quantitative data that was easy to collect, analyse and display. Common themes when discussing the weakness included problems related to misinterpretation of the scale used; reference to a lack of detail/insight about why confidence was rated; how it was and the influence of demand characteristics and social desirability (participants wanting to appear more confident than they actually were). Candidates achieving higher band marks included more detail in their answers, using examples to elaborate and respond in context. For example '*... a weakness is that the scale could have been interpreted differently by individual*

participants. One person may have thought 60 on the scale was only slightly confident (but would still feel nervous about talking in front of a large group of people), whereas someone else may have thought 60 on the scale meant they were very confident, providing they didn't have to address a very large group. This would affect the reliability of the measure of confidence.'

- Q3** Responses to this question were impressive, with evidence of good preparation in centres enabling candidates to present data clearly in an appropriate visual display. Some responses needed labels, and/or units of measurement on the axes, and sometimes there were one or more pieces of data that were not plotted. The main issue preventing a response being awarded full marks was not including details differentiating what each end of the 1-10 scale for the confidence variable referred to (which would be crucial for being able to interpret the scatter graph accurately).
- Q4** There were many full mark responses for this question, with clearly stated findings, often supported with quantitative data, although this was not crucial. It was appropriate to cite overall trends in the data (eg refer to the positive correlation between height and confidence), or comment on individual aspects of the data (such as who was the tallest, shortest, most/least confident, or anomalies). Some responses cited incorrect data in terms of the confidence level of the tallest, or shortest person. Some responses only provided one, rather than two, findings.
- Q5** The majority of candidates knew what a positive correlation referred to and were able to respond clearly to this question. Some responses incorrectly used words/expressions related to experimental research and the study of cause and effect that is not applicable/appropriate to correlational research. For example, referring to '*dependent variables*', or claiming that one variable '*causes*' the other to increase. Candidates need to be careful how they phrase their responses to such questions so that there is no confusion between the two different types of research.
- Q6(a)** For full marks, responses to this question needed to be fully replicable. Sometimes the actual behavioural categories to be used in the observation study were missing, or there was only a casual reference to some of the categories. There was also a lack of replicable detail concerning how the observation would be conducted, with just brief reference to the use of time or event sampling, but little detail on how such techniques would be implemented. A more thorough approach which referred to *who, what, where, when* and *how* resulted in a comprehensive description that would enable full replication.
- Q6(b)** A successful approach to this question was to write two separate paragraphs, one referring to reliability and the other to validity. Some responses, which discussed reliability and validity together, sometimes lacked clarity as to which comments referred to reliability and which to validity. In a small number of responses the terms were the wrong way round, making comments related to reliability when discussing validity and vice versa. The best responses were in the form of two separate paragraphs with the use of examples in context of the area of research being investigated.

Some responses thought that a failure to obtain the same outcomes if the research were to be repeated meant that the research was low in reliability. The concept of test-retest reliability only relates to more controlled experimental research and does not apply in the same way to non-experimental investigations like observations. Here reliability is concerned with the consistency by which the research can be conducted, and the extent to which it could be repeated in the same way in the future (eg by having standardized, clearly operationalized behavioural categories). There was also some confusion concerning inter-rater reliability, with some candidates believing that simply by having two or more observers the research would automatically increase in reliability.

- Q7(a)** Many candidates obtained full marks on this question. The hallmarks of a good response were reference to recording *all* occurrences of *specific* behaviours outlined in a coding scheme. Sometimes there was not enough distinction to differentiate event sampling from time sampling. A good strategy adopted by some candidates made a comparison between the two that clearly showed an understanding of the concept of event sampling and how it differs from time sampling. Some candidates were not clear on what event sampling referred to, for example, thinking it to be when observations are made at an event (like a pop concert).
- Q7(b)** The best responses were in the form of two separate paragraphs – one referring to a strength of using event sampling, the other referring to a weakness. High scoring responses drew upon procedural details for conducting the study that had been previously outlined in Q6(a) to provide examples that were in context.
- Q8** Most responses suggested an appropriate ethical issue, but many did not answer in the context of the theme of the research presented. Most common responses referred to a lack of informed consent, but some candidates acknowledged that, as a beach is a public place, this is not always necessary. Invasion of privacy was another popular theme, with higher scoring candidates elaborating on how/why this would be a problem eg because people dressed more minimally in beachwear and possibly engaging in intimate behaviours whilst relaxing on holiday. This provided a good opportunity to answer in context in a more sophisticated way.
- Q9(a)** The question required the experimental design used to be named – ie repeated measures design. The majority of responses did this, but some suggested it was an independent measures design. Some responses were not clear to what the term design refers to when conducting research, claiming that it was a laboratory experiment that was used in the study.
- Q9(b)** The best responses were in the form of two separate paragraphs – one referring to a strength of using repeated measures design, the other referring to a weakness. For a strength, the majority of responses referred to the control of participant variables and individual differences. Some responses did not do this in context of the theme of the research presented, especially those which discussed the advantage of needing fewer participants overall. For a weakness, the majority of responses referred to the problem of order effects, but again sometimes did not answer in context.
- Q10** The majority of candidates knew the difference between an independent and dependent variable. Clarity and detail was required to obtain both the marks here. The independent variable was the colour (creamy white vs green) of the mashed potato, not the two different types of mash. Stating *two different types of mash* could have meant other attributes as variables, eg hot vs. cold, spicy vs. non-spicy, fluffy vs. non-fluffy, that were not assessed. Similarly, with reference to the dependent variable, the correct answer was the taste of the mashed potato, or how much it was liked, and not simply the 1-10 scale without any reference to what it was assessing.
- Q11** This question was a good differentiator. The most successful responses were the simple and direct ones. Responses which clearly described (in replicable detail) an alternative way to measure the dependent variable (how the mashed potato tasted), then went on to evaluate what they had suggested (often with one strength and one weakness) in context, achieved the best marks here. A popular suggestion was to use some form of self-report questionnaire which was acceptable, providing that some examples of the specific questions to be asked were included. It was also perfectly acceptable to modify the existing scale that had been used eg increase or decrease the range and provide more verbal descriptors along the scale. The important thing was to maintain the original aim of the study ie to investigate the influence of the appearance of

the colour of food on how it tasted. Some responses deviated from this eg with the suggestion to blindfold participants so they could not see what they were tasting. Responses which did this not only changed the whole purpose of the study, but also often retained the exact same way of measuring the dependent variable.

G542 Core Studies

General Comments:

The paper seemed fair and accessible to candidates and overall there was a good range of marks across both candidates and the paper. There were even less 'no responses' than in the previous series though there remained some examples of handwriting that were difficult to decipher. Such candidates may be eligible for access arrangements.

To achieve high marks in both Section A and Section B it was necessary for responses to be thoroughly and clearly contextualised. Q17(b) and Q18(b) in Section C required candidates to demonstrate their understanding of psychology; in Q17(b) how the cognitive approach could explain inaccuracies of eyewitness testimony or in Q18(b) how the social approach could explain helping behaviours. Q17(c) and Q18(c) required candidates to identify an appropriate similarity and difference between any Core Studies that take the chosen approach AND support these appropriately with evidence from two Core Studies that take the selected approach. Q17(d) and Q18(d) in Section C required candidates to both identify and justify appropriate strengths and weaknesses, all needed to be supported by appropriate evidence from any of the Core Studies that take the selected approach.

There was less evidence than in previous series of candidates not understanding general injunctions. The quality of written communication prevented some candidates from attaining higher marks.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

- 1(a) This question was well answered though often the identified strength was not contextualised to Loftus and Palmer's study.
- 1(b) This question was well answered though often the identified weakness was not contextualised to Loftus and Palmer's study.
- 2 This question was well answered with candidates referring to: the IV occurring naturally, the IV not manipulated by the researcher, all three groups.
- 3 This question differentiated well. Most candidates were able to identify the system correctly though there were weaker responses which only referred to the electronic lexigram/a lexigram being a board with geometric symbols on.
- 4 This question was well answered by some candidates. Some responses described the procedure for either the conservation of volume or the one judgement condition and therefore scored 0 marks and some responses failed to identify that the two Playdoh cylinders were initially identical so failed to score full marks.
- 5 This question was well answered.
- 6(a) This question differentiated well. The question was answered well by the majority of candidates, but there were instances where candidates had not read the question carefully and answered instead in relation to either the giraffe or parenting fantasy.

- 6(b)** This question differentiated well. Candidates who gave a good response in 6(a) tended to score well in this question as well. There were few links to the chosen study and many of the suggestions could be applied to any study.
- 7** This question was well answered. Some weaker responses showed confusion between 'controls' and experimental conditions.
- 8** This question was well answered. Weaker responses failed to refer to both groups of participants ie the taxi drivers and the non-taxi drivers.
- 9** This question was well answered. Weaker responses gave confused and incomplete descriptions eg 'if an image was flashed to the RVF patients could point to it'.
- 10(a)** This was a well answered question with most candidates correctly identifying two results from the given table.
- 10(b)** This question was a good differentiator. Although most candidates drew an appropriate conclusion from the table many referred to 'the presence of a legitimated authority figure' which was not shown on the table. Some conclusions were not supported by evidence from the given table so only gained partial marks.
- 11(a)** This question was a good differentiator. Most responses defined the term 'field'. Few responses went on to qualify this in relation to the term 'experiment' ie they said that a field experiment is a study conducted in the natural environment but failed to complete the definition by adding, eg 'where the researcher manipulates at least one independent variable.' This response did not need to be contextualised.
- 11(b)** This was a well answered question. Where the identified advantage was not contextualised to Piliavin's study only partial marks could be awarded.
- 12** Many candidates gave good, accurate and detailed responses. Some responses referred to such things as guards being given better uniforms, better food etc than prisoners, which was not required. Confusion was also shown with the Zimbardo study. The question required candidates to describe the environment (prison) constructed by the BBC at Elstree Studios and should have included descriptions of the prisoners' quarters, the guards' quarters, the isolation cell, the exercise area, the observation area etc.
- 13(a)** This question was well answered though some responses only referred to hospitals/hospital wards and failed to include the term mental/psychiatric.
- 13(b)** This question was well answered. Responses which were contextualised gained higher marks.
- 14** This question was well answered. Weaker responses failed to refer to more than mere personality traits, forgetting to mention either physiological or psychometric measures. Responses describing 'Jane' rarely scored highly.
- 15** Some good answers were given to this question. Some responses failed to include the fact that participants had to speak all their thoughts aloud whilst actually playing on the fruit machine. There was some confusion over how the data was gathered and some responses stated that Griffiths stood nearby recording by hand using a coding system.

Section B

All three studies were equally popular with overall performance being similar.

- 16(a)** Most candidates were awarded at least one mark on this question though some failed to give a clear, fully contextualised answer eg Freud: so he could find evidence for the Oedipus complex.

- 16(b)** This question was a good differentiator. Many candidates gave full, accurate and contextualised answers so gained the full two marks. The question required candidates both to state the length of the study and to contextualise their response in relation to the participant(s). Some responses stated that the study was longitudinal because it went on a long time. This was deemed not creditworthy.
- 16(c)** Most candidates were able to identify both an appropriate strength and an appropriate weakness of longitudinal studies and contextualised these to their chosen study. Few were able to fully expand on their answers by giving accurate and detailed examples from their chosen study to support their identified strength/weakness.
- 16(d)** Some candidates gave good answers in relation to the findings of their chosen study. Many responses were basic in relation to Freud's study eg Little Hans' fear of horses was considered by Freud as a subconscious fear of his father. This was because the dark around the mouth of a horse and the blinkers resembled the moustache and glasses worn by his father. Candidates who chose either the Rosenhan or the Thigpen and Cleckley study tended to give more detailed and accurate answers. Weaker responses on Rosenhan often only referred to the first study and on Thigpen and Cleckley confused the IQ scores for Eve White and Eve Black, thought Jane had also done an IQ test, got the results of the inkblot test the wrong way round and thought Thigpen and Cleckley killed off Eve White and Eve Black.
- 16(e)** This question was an excellent differentiator. Many candidates showed little understanding of how observation was used in their chosen study and many referred to self reports. Many responses described strengths and weaknesses of observations which was not what the question asked and could not be credited. Suggestions were not supported with evidence from the chosen study saying such things as 'observation allowed Hans to be observed in his own home so the study had ecological validity'; 'observations are open to observer bias so Thigpen and Cleckley may have misinterpreted some of Eve's behaviours'.
- 16(f)** This was a good differentiator. The question was generally well answered with some good changes suggested and appropriate evaluation points made. There were few links to the chosen study with many suggestions being generic and therefore applicable to any study. There was also a notable imbalance between description and evaluation with many evaluation points being extremely basic, failing to show any real understanding of the implications of their suggested changes eg have a larger sample which means it will be more representative and so the findings will be more generalisable. There were some instances where candidates suggested changes that were already carried out within the original study, demonstrating a lack of true knowledge and understanding of the chosen study. There were also some instances where candidates showed confusion over their suggestions eg Freud – use 5 girls and 5 boys to see if they all experience the Oedipus complex in the same way as Little Hans.

Section C

The cognitive approach and the social approach were equally popular.

- 17(a)** Most candidates phrased their answer as an assumption. Some responses needed to link the assumption to behaviour eg 'the human mind works like a computer – it inputs, processes and responds to information.'
- 17(b)** This question was an excellent differentiator. It required candidates to not only show understanding of psychology but also apply this understanding to a given situation. Strong candidates were able to describe, and support their description with appropriate evidence from Loftus and Palmer's study, how the cognitive approach can explain inaccuracies of eyewitness testimonies. Weaker responses gave either a generic

answer with inappropriate/no evidence from the named study or merely cited results from Loftus and Palmer's study eg 'Loftus and Palmer showed that memory can be affected by leading questions so eyewitness testimony can be inaccurate'.

- 17(c)** This question part was answered better than in previous series. Most responses identified an appropriate similarity and an appropriate difference but many did not support these by appropriate evidence from their named studies. For example, some candidates correctly identified a similarity between Loftus and Palmer's study and Baron-Cohen's study to be that they were both conducted in controlled environments but failed to demonstrate how the environments were controlled in each of the studies
- 17(d)** This question was a good differentiator. There were fewer study and/or methodology-specific answers than in previous sessions and many gave answers that allowed them to access the third band and score between 7-9 marks. As in previous sessions some of the strengths/weaknesses were merely identified, not identified and justified and many supporting examples did not support/illustrate the identified strength/weakness. There was the occasional instance of wrong studies being cited eg Samuel and Bryant.
- 18(a)** Most candidates phrased their answer as an assumption. Many responses needed to link the assumption to behaviour eg 'The social approach assumes people are influenced by other people and their surroundings.'
- 18(b)** As in previous series, this question was an excellent differentiator. It required candidates to not only show understanding of psychology but also apply this understanding to a given situation. Strong candidates were able to describe, and support their description with appropriate evidence from Piliavin's study, how the social approach can explain helping behaviour. Weaker responses gave either a generic answer with inappropriate/no evidence from the named study or merely cited results from Piliavin's study eg 'Piliavin's study showed that people in our environment can influence whether or not others will help a victim.' There were many instances where responses referred to either diffusion of responsibility which was not found in this study or the cost-benefit model which, as written, was a cognitive explanation not a social one.
- 18(c)** This question part was answered better than in previous series. Most responses identified an appropriate similarity and an appropriate difference but many did not support these by appropriate evidence from their named studies eg Both Milgram and Reicher and Haslam had only male participants.
- 18(d)** This question was a good differentiator. There were fewer study and/or methodology-specific responses than in previous sessions and many gave answers that allowed them to access the third band and score between 7-9 marks. As in previous sessions some of the strengths/weaknesses were merely identified, not identified and justified and many supporting examples did not support/illustrate the identified strength/weakness. There was the occasional instance of wrong studies being cited eg Bandura.

G543 Options in Applied Psychology

General Comments

The paper was fair and reliable, with no flaws or inconsistencies between questions. There were few rubric errors. A good range of marks was accessed. Candidates with a good knowledge of the material and well-practised skills performed best whereas those with gaps in knowledge and skills found it harder to access the higher marks available. Most candidates produced a consistent level of response across the four questions.

The general quality of candidate responses varied, ranging from impressive insight and developed lines of argument to quite poor construction and poor response to the specific question posed. Knowledge was generally good; it was the skill in using this knowledge which produced most of the variation, as well as level of detail. Candidates continued to be thoroughly prepared, even more so than in previous sessions. Marking is mindful of the expectations of standard, of a typical 17/18 year old with the wide specification coverage and demand of the exam; hence the level of detail required for a good mark is not as exacting as may be feared by some. More significant in differentiating award of marks is the extent to which candidates responded to the precise demand of the question. This has been referred to previously.

Purely formulaic responses are less in evidence. There is a clear improvement in student engagement with the material, and there are more expedient approaches than the formulaic answer. As stated, better candidates answered the question asked, whereas others did not (eg Q2a saw weaker students describing E-fit and police use of it, whereas better candidates described how *researchers have used E-fit*, as the question demands).

Part (b) responses showed great variation. Better candidates developed their answers a stage further, such as with a challenge, an extension or a legitimate comparison. Effectively addressing the injunction was a key differentiating aspect. An extended demonstration within an answer would be sufficient to award a higher band mark even where the whole answer may not have maintained this level. A consistently strong band 2 response would access the top band.

Weaker responses made general points without the necessary application/contextualisation which was needed to take answers to higher bands. This was typified in pre-learned evaluative comment that lacked anything beyond a superficial understanding of the material. Part (b) responses improved when candidates went beyond being overly descriptive and points were well expressed in the context of the question. This was particularly evident in Q1(b). Some evaluation issues which have proved elusive for candidates in the past have now been well addressed most notably validity and ecological validity.

Candidates from some centres have clearly been taught to add a 'however' (or 'on the other hand') between paragraphs even though the information does not follow on or connect to the paragraph above it. Legitimate links are readily credited.

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Candidates answered this question well. Some responses focused well on how behaviour is learnt from others, often writing lengthy descriptions of Bandura's study for example, without relating it to criminal behaviour. Most candidates were able to describe how criminal behaviour can be learnt but some responses lacked detailed understanding or detail of research necessary for top band credit. Responses most frequently referred to Sutherland, but reference to Bandura or Farrington was also common, however the extent to which they were selectively reported or made relevant varied greatly.

- 1(b)** This question was well answered. The Sutherland, Farrington and Bandura studies were detailed well and related to the question by a majority of candidates. Other studies were also applied well. The better responses outlined a range of evidence, evaluated it and also included extension or alternatives such as biological and cognitive suggestions to balance the argument. Weaker responses offered a description of relevant evidence with little evaluative commentary or discussion of why people turn to crime.
- 2(a)** Candidates showed good knowledge of relevant research. Mostly responses referred to Bruce and provided a reasonable explanation of the study details but not all described the relevance of internal/external features, for example.
- 2(b)** This question was answered well with most candidates being able to pick apart strengths and weaknesses of research, with much reference to the Cognitive Interview. There was some confusion over research into interviewing witnesses and interviewing suspects.
- 3(a)** A variety of different studies were put forward in answer to the question. Better candidates were able to explicitly link the research to how it persuades juries.
- 3(b)** This question was answered well, with most candidates drawing on the practical applications of research and the use of mock juries. The better responses met the 'to what extent' criteria of the question; some responses made very good use of methodology to assess the usefulness. Whereas most candidates were able to at least present evidence and say it would therefore be useful, it was the better candidates that took the idea of usefulness beyond that to helping in the courtroom and developed their arguments.
- 4(a)** This question was not as popular, but those candidates who did answer it detailed appropriate research and tended to do well.
- 4(b)** The quality of responses to this question were varied. Stronger candidates applied strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research very well to prison research and made their examples very appropriate. Weaker responses put in fewer strengths and weaknesses of the two types of data and links to the prison research were sometimes tenuous.
- 5(a)** Most responses to this question covered relevant material, with most writing about Dannenburg's cycle helmet study. Better candidates showed precision and accuracy in details and clearly addressed the question of *how* legislation works.
- 5(b)** There were some good answers to this question. Some responses evaluated the method not the research. It was clear that candidates have been taught how to evaluate (methods) but the better responses were marked by specifically addressing limitations of research and this was either done very well or similarly the 'to what extent' aspect of the question was addressed by the better candidates.
- 6(a)** Many responses explained there are two classification systems but good responses showed how dysfunctional behaviour has been categorized, either with a classification system or other means. Better candidates showed knowledge of detail of their chosen response.
- 6(b)** Overall this question was answered much better in terms of reliability/validity distinction than in previous series. There is still some confusion over what affects validity/ reliability but less so than in previous series. Weaker responses failed to back up statements with evidence, leading to some rather anecdotal responses. Some weaker responses

strayed from validity and just evaluated in general.

- 7(a)** Stronger responses linked to faulty thought processing and irrational/illogical thinking. Some references to researchers and their work (Ellis, Beck) enhanced the better responses. There was occasional confusion over cognitive and behavioural explanations, or drifting into *treatment* without using it to provide a cognitive *explanation*.
- 7(b)** Candidates are increasingly attempting to draw out similarities and differences in response to 'compare' questions, although many still present their responses side by side. Better responses considered the explanations, as the question requests, rather than comparing methodology or research. The very best candidates considered whether different explanations were more or less appropriate for different types of dysfunctional behaviour.
- 8(a)** Most candidates appropriately selected systematic desensitization as a treatment for phobias. Other accepted treatments included token economies as used with schizophrenic patients and some referred to cognitive-behavioural therapy where credit was given as long as the behavioural aspects were detailed. Better candidates provided a suitably detailed response to the question, outlining a behavioural treatment as opposed to referring solely to research which may have considered effectiveness, for example, rather than providing the required outline.
- 8(b)** The better responses dealt with the treatments, namely the real-life applications, rather than evaluating strengths and weaknesses of the research/studies. Others presented the strengths and weaknesses but only the best candidates developed their answers to assess these strengths and weaknesses. Better responses were applied well to the treatments and avoided the rather generic responses that were less specifically applied.
- 9(a)** This question was well answered. Better responses addressed the 'how' component, linked to sport and addressed how aggression should be managed.
- 9(b)** Some good responses were given to this question.
- 10(a)** and **(b)** A well answered question but few scripts seen. Better responses dealt specifically with anxiety as distinct from arousal. Part b) dealt with limitations of *research* not how anxiety can limit *performance*.
- 11(a)** Candidates who attempted this question were competent in identifying an appropriate piece of research, most notably Zajonc and his cockroaches, although others were acceptable.
- 11(b)** Candidates have the measure of audience effect and how to evaluate ecological validity.
- 12(a)** and **12(b)** Candidates were competent in their knowledge of relevant research. The better responses applied this to address the question specifically rather than writing around the research.
- 13) – 16)** Fewer scripts were seen in the Education section. Above comments apply equally to this set of questions.

G544 Approaches and Research Methods in Psychology

General Comments

The overall standard of performance of the candidates was good and candidates appear to have knowledge of the appropriate material and to be well prepared for the style of questions. In section A candidates described a feasible investigation in detail which was both practical and ethical. Many candidates gave concise, replicable descriptions of a practical project based on the research question. Popular option choices were mobile phone usage, eating behaviour and study habits. It was pleasing to see that more candidates are answering the short questions in the context of their practical investigation. In section B, most candidates showed understanding of the questions under discussion but sometimes their points were not fully elaborated or their examples described in much detail. There were few rubric errors and most candidates were able to complete the paper in the allocated time although a few appeared to be short of time as the parts (d) and (e) on section B could be very brief. Although there is not a requirement to include research from the A2 options unit many candidates were over-reliant on AS studies which limited the scope of their answers. The AS studies were used to good effect in the candidates' responses.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

- 1 Most candidates wrote a clear aim which followed logically from the research question. The majority of candidates scored full marks and chose the option of mobile phone usage from which to develop their research aim.
- 2 This question was marked out of 13 and 6. 13 marks were given for the description of the practical project and its replicability and appropriateness. 6 marks were given for the design and its feasibility. The full range of marks (13) and (6) were awarded.

The method was clearly described although it was not always fully replicable. Most candidates knew how to use event sampling and gave some good examples of behavioural categories. Some responses specified careful and precise criteria for particular behaviour categories, whereas others gave lists without comment. Some candidates suggested pilot studies in order to identify appropriate observational categories and that pairs of observers should pre-check consistency in use of categories in order to ensure inter-observer reliability. Most observations were carried out within the candidates' own environment and these were better explained in a practical way than candidates who used shopping centres and parks, where impractical scenarios were often described. More care should be given to thinking about practicalities. Common room observations proposed over a fixed time period, such as school break or lunch-hour failed to consider the problems of keeping track of large numbers of people coming and going and failed to make it clear how multiple incidences of the behaviour (eg use of a mobile phone) by the same individual during the specified time slot would be scored. It is important that candidates describe research that falls within BPS ethical guidelines. Although some research was described using 10-15 year olds, most candidates are aware of the need to use participants over 16 years of age.

- 3 Candidates could gain full marks for describing the disadvantage of an observation and not from generic disadvantages of a research method. A common response was the ethical problems with lack of consent in covert observation. As the injunction was 'outline' there was no requirement for a lengthy explanation but the response needed to be clear and in the context of the practical project
- 4 This question gave candidates the opportunity to raise a number of evaluative issues in relation to the type of data collected. Most candidates focused on one strength and one weakness of quantitative data and were able to gain full credit if they explained them fully and in the context of their practical investigation.
- 5 Most candidates were able to describe how they could present their data in the context of their practical and often suggested a bar chart or data table.
- 6 Candidates have a good knowledge of ethical issues that arise in observational studies and can suggest appropriate ways of dealing with these but not always in the context of their own practical project. Debriefing and confidentiality were commonly used.
- 7 Most candidates could accurately describe time sampling in the context of their own practical.

Section B

- 8(a) Some responses made the distinction between replicable procedures (which may then be deemed reliable) and results which have been replicated. Candidates who referred to consistency of the measure in part (a) were more likely to provide appropriate answers to the remaining parts of Q8. Better responses included examples of types of reliability such as internal and external reliability.
- 8(b) Most of the studies were correctly identified as reliable and were often from AS, such as Milgram, Loftus and Palmer or Baron-Cohen. The research was often less well described when compared to previous sessions, or to question Q9(b). Rather than give detail on the study there was lots of links to reliability. Some candidates were able to do both and gain full credit.
- 8(c) There was some clear evidence of structure to these responses with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Better responses evaluated reliable research and used evidence effectively to support the points made. Candidates should be advised to direct their evaluative points towards the reliability of the research rather than the studies per se. Marks in all bands were awarded although the majority of marks fell between 5 -8.
- 8(d) This produced a good spread of marks and there were some good responses with candidates finding one similarity and one difference. Observations were the most popular comparison with the experimental method. Candidates could gain full marks with two well described comparisons if they were supported by appropriate evidence from both methods. Weaker responses attempted to describe the methods.
- 8(e) Candidates needed to discuss the usefulness of experimental research rather than simply give examples of useful research. Good responses discussed points such as psychology as a science, using controls and proving cause and effect. Candidates should develop a coherent discussion as top marks can be achieved without the support of numerous examples of experimental research.

- 9(a)** Good responses outlined individual explanations focusing on characteristics such as personality and intelligence and situational explanations such as environmental factors or learning experiences. Candidates should answer succinctly and avoid repetitive explanations such as ‘the individual explanation focuses on the individual’.
- 9(b)** A wide range of research was cited but Milgram, Piliavin and Bandura from the AS course were popular choices. Very little research from the A2 specification was cited. Many candidates were good at explicitly relating the description of research to a situational explanation of behaviour.
- 9(c)** Candidates need to discuss the strengths/limitations of research using a situational explanation of behaviour rather than simply evaluating research. It is important that candidates support their arguments with appropriate evidence. Responses should not be repetitive as there are many more points to be made than simply focusing on high ecological validity or practical applications.
- 9(d)** Good responses discussed several points of comparison arising from the different methods eg types of data collected, reliability, demand characteristics, ethics and samples. Many responses failed to make a comparison between methods but focused on comparing the explanations or describing research. The description of research was often accurate and detailed so received some credit
- 9(e)** Stronger responses made points about usefulness to clinical psychology or not being useful because of ignoring situational factors. There is no requirement to cite research to support the arguments but it may help a discussion to do so. Candidates should avoid describing research without a discussion with supporting arguments.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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Head office
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Facsimile: 01223 552553

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