

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

PSYCHOLOGY

H567

For first teaching in 2015

H567/03 Summer 2023 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

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.

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Paper 3 series overview

Applied Psychology is a consistent theme and candidates need to be able to apply their knowledge to scenarios, debates, issues and real life.

In general, candidates performed well this year, with the majority of candidates able to attempt all of the questions.

A consistent issue on this paper was the limited understanding shown by candidates of the issues and debates. Using them effectively in an evaluative essay was something many candidates found challenging. Candidates gained more marks if they did this. Consistency in both options was also necessary for higher marks.

Candidates who did less well tended to be more descriptive showing AO1 skill of knowledge and understanding more than application or analysis.

| Candidates who did well on this paper generally: | Candidates who did less well on this paper generally: |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • had good knowledge, understanding and evaluation of the genetic model in Section A • had good knowledge and understanding of key research • described strategies for the scenarios in Section B (c). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applied an alternative explanation for mental disorders to a specific scenario in Section A • were not able to apply the key research to the scenario of the question in Section B (a) • did not consider the specific scenario of the questions in Section B (c). |

Section A overview

The shorter responses at the start of this section were answered well and it was anticipated this would help the candidates to settle down in preparation for the rest of the paper.

The most challenging question seemed to be Question 2, with candidates often not reading the question to identify the required perspective to take or not applying it correctly to the question.

There were some challenges for candidates in Question 4 and Question 5. However, the required knowledge and understanding was shown in many responses. There were several ways to respond to some of these questions and any appropriate route was given marks. Some candidates were unable to link two concepts or theories, as in Question 4, and others were unable to specify the contribution of Szasz, which meant no marks could be given. However, it was rare for these questions not to be attempted.

Question 1

1 Identify **one** specific disorder **and** outline an appropriate biological treatment for it.

[4]

This was a good opener, with the vast majority of candidates able to respond to the question. For full marks, the examiners were looking for the identified disorder, then a treatment specific to the disorder such as SRRIs for depression and 2 marks of the effects of the treatment, such as synaptic re-uptake inhibition and improved neural transmission. Some weaker responses simply referred to levels of serotonin in the brain.

Electroconvulsive Therapy was credited with more procedural details, as the actual effects on the body are relatively unknown.

Common errors included describing the symptoms or treatments of a specific disorder. These were not creditworthy. Although this would have no impact on the marks given, as there is positive marking, it does take up time the candidate might make better use of elsewhere on the paper.

Question 2

- 2 Charlie is the manager of an office with approximately 100 members of staff. She is worried about mental health problems experienced by some of the people in her office. Charlie wants to find out whether her workplace could be causing these mental health problems.

What might a psychologist say to Charlie about whether the workplace could be causing some of her employees to have mental health problems?

Refer to **either** the humanistic **or** the psychodynamic **or** the cognitive neuroscience explanation of mental illness to inform your response. [5]

Candidates generally performed less well on this question. Candidates who chose the cognitive approach for their response gained zero marks as this was not one of the options given in the question. Candidates need to be aware of the difference between the cognitive approach and cognitive neuroscience. Some responses went beyond the scenario to advising Charlie how to find out about the causes, how to deal with disorders, or changes Charlie could make to the workplace. Again, these were not correct.

Exemplar 1

A psychologist might explain to Charlie that her employees are experiencing mental health problems due to psychic conflict arising from childhood experiences and memory, resulting in a strong superego which can lead to guilt, anxiety and depression or a weak Id that can lead to psychotic and uncontrollable behaviours (eg schizophrenia). The psychologist would inform Charlie that these are factors outside her control therefore it is not the workplace that is causing mental health problems.

Exemplar 1 demonstrates a strong response. There are 2 marks for outlining the psychodynamic explanation (AO1) and 3 marks for applying it to the scenario of how a psychologist might explain mental illness in this particular context (AO3).

The response could just as easily have made a case for saying the workplace is responsible. Either argument would be given marks if supported by the outline of the explanation.

The description of the psychodynamic explanation is succinct and detailed for this question. This isn't the only way to consider the psychodynamic explanation but it is noted. The link to the scenario involves the psychologist saying it's not within Charlie's control, that the factors outside the workplace cause conflict and feelings of guilt leading to uncontrollable behaviours such as schizophrenia.

Assessment for learning



If a teacher chooses to teach the cognitive-neuroscience explanation of mental health, there needs to be consideration of how it actually explains mental disorders, not related to a specific disorder. A consideration of what the treatment would involve, focusing on the differences from the cognitive treatments could be assessed on any exam paper for the current specification.

Question 3 (a)

3 (a) Outline the genetic explanation of mental illness.

[3]

The responses to this question showed good knowledge and understanding, supported often with research. Evolution and inheritance were both notable approaches.

Question 3 (b)

(b) Evaluate the usefulness of the genetic explanation of mental illness.

[6]

It is worth noting that evaluation in terms of eugenics or foetal manipulation to reduce mental disorders is not considered appropriate for an A Level candidate to be considering. There are enough other evaluative points about this explanation, and even if expressed in terms of it is unethical, it will not gain marks.

Question 4

4 To what extent can historical views of mental illness be considered scientific?

[7]

Combining a knowledge of the features of science and a knowledge of the historical views of mental health was something that many candidates attempted to do with varying degrees of success. The more usual features being cited were unfalsifiable and subjective. These could apply to many of the historical views. Candidates often tried to balance their argument with views that were more scientific and links to the sciences of biology and chemistry were given marks as making a view more scientific. The extent to which the views are scientific was often lost in description.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be aware of responding to the requirements of the question, such as in this question, the need for plurality (i.e. more than one) of the historical views.

Question 5*

5* Assess the contribution that the key research by Szasz (2011) makes to the topic of alternatives to the medical model of mental illness.

[10]

Candidates showed better knowledge and understanding of Szasz than on previous papers. This question wanted Szasz's contribution to the topic of alternatives to medical model (which is where it sits in the spec) and the minority of candidates did link his views to each of the alternatives they knew. Other candidates focused on his view as an alternative to the medical model. Both of these were creditworthy courses to take. The assessment required an evaluation of this contribution, which could be both positive and negative.

There was some confusion with Rosenhan's study being described and evaluated.

Section B overview

As in previous years, the majority of candidates understood the basics of key research, evaluation issues and debates, and strategies.

However exam techniques can often let candidates down in the follow ways:

- application of key research to real life situations in (a) doesn't go beyond the findings or relates to different research
- the discussion of debates as opposed to the knowledge of them in (b), means this response is limited to description rather than evaluation
- applying the strategies to a specific scenario in part c often are peripherally relevant to the particular scenario or not responding to the question, for example by referring to an incorrect area or perspective.

Question 6 (a)*

OPTION 1

Child psychology

- 6 (a)* Outline the key research by Wood et al. (1976) and explain what it tells us about cognitive development in children. [10]

Wood et al.'s study was often confused with Piaget's theory, and was the key research of the four options which was answered in the most limited detail. It is important that the key features of research are understood, to gain the 5 marks of AO1.

The application to what it tells us, again often went into Piaget's theory. The findings and conclusions of this study lend themselves to responding to this part of the question. Candidates who understood the staged development and its relation to behaviour in children signifying cognitive development without referencing Piaget gave better responses.

Question 6 (b)*

- (b)* Discuss whether research into cognitive development and education is ethnocentric. [15]

Candidates who explored the issue of ethnocentrism in relation to research (theories or empirical evidence) and showed a good understanding of what might be the differences between cultures, relating it to features of the education and/or environment a child would experience gave better responses.

Weaker responses tended to simply consider population validity or related the same point to more similar research without adding anything more to the discussion. Age, gender, social class are not features of ethnicity. We credited ethnicity broadly so were able to accept cultures or countries, whatever their actual ethnic makeup. Of course, ethnicity could also have gained credit if it were considered within a culture.

Question 6 (c)*

(c)* Nina helps run teacher training courses. She is planning a session for trainee teachers on how they can improve revision or learning among the children they teach. Nina wants some guidance on cognitive strategies that she could include within this session.

Outline **at least one** cognitive strategy to improve revision or learning that a psychologist might advise Nina to include in her session. [10]

The strategies had to be cognitive based, so conditioning did not gain marks. The scenario had to be specifically linked to access top level marks, so what Nina would tell the teachers. Revision and/or learning could be considered.

It is possible to gain 10 marks with one strategy, but rarely is one strategy detailed enough to meet the criteria for the top level. It would have to be beyond what examiners would expect to see as a standard response.

Naming a strategy such as mind maps or scaffolding is not going to gain many marks without explaining exactly what Nina would tell the teachers to do, or what Nina would do with the teachers to show them what to do. Candidates need to know to give sufficient detail, assuming that the examiner will not know the strategy referred to. Of course, the examiner will know, but this gives an idea of the detail required.

Strategies and techniques

In an Applied Psychology paper, many questions have an application aspect within them. It could be applying a technique to a scenario, or an explanation or treatment to a specific situation. It can also be applying findings of research to a real-life situation. In all of these cases, it is very important that the details of the application are enough to gain full marks. Candidates should be encouraged to write in detail about the application and to be aware of when there is a need to evaluate these strategies and techniques as evaluation is often not required and so will not gain marks. This is particularly relevant to Section B (c) responses which require justification (clear psychology underpinning the suggestion) rather than evaluation. There are no AO3 marks (analysis and evaluation) available in these questions.

A main consideration, and one which is often overlooked, is that the application needs to be appropriate to the scenario. Generic pre-prepared responses will often only gain lower marks and vague links which repeat words from the question usually gain lower marks.

As a guide in Section B (c), candidates could consider what they will use (described in detail), where they will put it, how it will be used, maybe when would it be used, and why they will use it, the why being the psychological justification.

Question 7 (a)***OPTION 2****Criminal psychology**

- 7 (a)* Outline the key research by Wilson and Kelling (1982) **and** use it to explain how the features of neighbourhoods can influence crime. **[10]**

This research is unusual in that it is an article as opposed to a research study. Candidates could gain AO1 marks for knowledge and understanding by describing the situation of where and how the researchers gained their information, the participant observation or by identifying the features of the neighbourhood considered in the article. A mixture of both was also given marks. The application marks were given for a discussion of the impact of these features, such as reducing fear but not crime.

There was some confusion with other research, in particular Zimbardo and Newman, being used either on its own or as part of the application. In this section, the only creditworthy material is from Wilson and Kelling's research.

Question 7 (b)*

- (b)* Discuss the freewill/determinism debate in relation to research into crime prevention. **[15]**

Candidates showed they understood the debate, however the main issue with the responses was that the debate was discussed in relation to crime prevention strategies rather than research into crime prevention. While the examiners took a flexible approach to research as in theories and research evidence, there were still many responses that were simply descriptive, as in 'this is determinist and this is free will'. The attempt at discussion then simply became a conversely 'however there could be free will as not everyone committed a crime' and this was used for every point made.

Candidates seem to find it difficult to discuss an issue or debate. For example, examining the strengths or weaknesses of adopting a particular stance. Better responses would consider the disadvantage or advantage of, for example, research assuming that crime prevention techniques were deterministic.

Question 7 (c)*

(c)* Many people travel to work by train. Some of these people cycle from home to their local railway station, and they leave their bikes at the railway station during the day. Taylor has the job of creating a cycle parking area at the local railway station. The bikes left there during the day need to be safe from being stolen.

Outline **at least one** crime prevention strategy a psychologist might advise Taylor to apply when designing this cycle parking area. **[10]**

The response to this question should focus on features that could be incorporated into the design of a bike park. These could include, CCTV, posters, target hardening i.e. lockable pods for bike storage, being clearly visible to the public etc. Such suggestions should be specific and detailed for higher level marks.

Features such as police patrols, Neighbourhood Watch, regular maintenance and cleaning are not features of design and so were peripherally relevant therefore were predominantly in the bottom level of marks or if done very well, with a breadth depth trade off, could reach the lower half of the allocated marks.

Responses could be limited by sparse detail of strategies limited by the lack of clearly identifiable psychological underpinning of the strategy, or by limited application to the scenario.

Exemplar 2

One crime prevention strategy that Taylor could put in place is surveillance. By placing CCTV in the cycle parking area it may deter criminals from committing crime in these areas this area. This is because it will lead to easier persecutions from the authority as individuals can be tracked down. Although, if the surveillance does not have a view of the whole cycle parking crimes could still occur in areas that are out of sight.

Another crime prevention strategy would be to use zero tolerance policing. This would mean that police would not accept any type of crime to be committed in this area. This strategy works well particularly if there are high levels of policing in the cycle parking area. However, if there is not then this strategy would not be the most beneficial for crime prevention.

Exemplar 2 has the first strategy of surveillance by placing CCTV in the area. However, the lack of detail in this suggestion prevents it from getting above the basic level. There is no clear psychology underpinning this suggestion, although as examiners, we know there is some, so it gets a mark.

The second suggestion isn't part of the design process. Taylor can't design zero tolerance policing. However, as it is a crime prevention strategy it can gain a mark for being peripherally relevant. Two such strategies would be unlikely to get above 3 marks. This is slightly better than that as the first strategy is relevant but lacking detail.

Question 8 (a)*

OPTION 3

Environmental psychology

8 (a)* Outline the key research by Black and Black (2007) **and** use it to explain the impact of environmental stressors on our biological responses.

[10]

This option was chosen by very few centres, but the responses to this were generally well done. The clarity of the study here was helpful and the majority of candidates achieved the full AO1 marks. The application was what this tells us about the impact of stressors on biological responses, which was less well done. The response has to focus on environmental stressors (volume and frequency) of noise, and biological responses so specifically health related measures such as physical illness, blood pressure, hormones etc.

Question 8 (b)*

(b)* Discuss research into stressors in the environment in relation to ethical considerations. [15]

Candidates identified ethical considerations and related these to appropriate research, and many candidates did this well and in detail. However, the evaluation of ethical considerations was not done as well. Often the same point of causing harm or vague sentences such as upholding the reputation of psychology, was repeated at the end of each point made. This reduced the level of evaluation in the response, so often limited the response to achieving 8-11 marks.

Question 8 (c)*

(c)* Jamal is a student revising for his exams. He has tried studying at home and the town centre library, but he finds both environments stressful to revise in. Jamal is keen to do well in his exams and really needs somewhere suitable to do his revision.

Outline **at least one** strategy a psychologist might suggest for how Jamal could manage environmental stress to be able to revise effectively for his exams.

[10]

The issue with addressing the scenario and question requirements was often seen. The candidate would relate concepts such as context dependent memory, but the question asks for reduction of stress not increase in performance. Better responses considered how Jamal could mitigate stressors such as crowding, noise and heat.

Question 9 (a)*

OPTION 4

Sport and exercise psychology

- 9 (a)* Outline the key research by Kroll and Crenshaw (1970) **and** explain what it tells us about the relationship between personality and sport. [10]

The majority of candidates knew the research, although some did confuse the findings, relating them to extroversion and introversion. Again, as with (a) in other options, the application of what this tells us was weaker than their knowledge of the study.

Question 9 (b)*

- (b)* Discuss the reliability of research into personality and sport. [15]

Reliability is often confused with validity; many responses were using features which would impact on both, but some clearly referred to accuracy. Some candidates did not actually refer to reliability or validity which limited them, and better responses actually looked at the impact on reliability of identified aspects of research and evaluated this impact. Evaluations should go beyond 'this therefore makes the results more reliable or replicable'. Replicability is still being confused with reliability by many candidates. Replicability leads us to be able to repeat research to test reliability but doesn't, in itself, make a study reliable.

There is a link between reliability and validity in that they are both impacted in different ways by the same features of research. Evaluation in terms of the standardising of procedures giving a consistent experience for every participant and therefore increasing reliability, can be evaluated in terms of the impact on ecological validity, but this needs to be a clear evaluation to gain marks.

Question 9 (c)*

- (c)* The heptathlon requires female athletes to compete in seven sports over two days. Events include the 200-metre sprint, the high jump, and javelin throwing. Mia is in charge of improving the performance of her country's best heptathletes.

Outline **at least one** strategy a psychologist might suggest for how Mia could use knowledge of personality to improve the performance of the heptathletes. [10]

A common misconception here was that athletes could be assigned to one sport in the heptathlon rather than actually having to do all seven. This limited the responses for some candidates. Also, the question related to improving performance of the heptathletes, not the performance of the team, so using personality tests to decide on who should be in the team was not directly responding to the question. Marks were given for a brief outline of what Mia might do to get the personality type of her athletes, but this couldn't be the whole response. There needed to be details of how Mia would work with groups of athletes with particular personality characteristics, such as extroversion and introversion.

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