



General Certificate of Education

Psychology 5186

Specification B

Unit 3 (PYB3) Practical Investigation

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - June series

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Unit 3 (PYB3): Practical Investigation

General

The standard of work was similar to that seen in recent sessions, although this standard did vary greatly between centres. There were a number of very popular themes for investigation which included gender, leading questions, face-recognition, memory and the audience effect. It was pleasing to see a range of topics being submitted by many centres, but others clearly restricted the choice available to candidates.

Most scripts were well organised into the appropriate format, with the 30 criteria being demonstrated within this structure. A few candidates seemed to be unaware of the required format; these candidates tended to structure their report using the 30 criteria as headings. Disappointingly, many of the scripts were very formulaic and in some centres the work of candidates was strikingly similar. It was apparent that candidates had been closely led through the process of planning their investigation and completing the written report. Supervising teachers must be aware that the requirement of this Unit is that the investigation should be the independent work of candidates. Examiners should be able to see this independence in the work of individual candidates even if those candidates are investigating the same topic. When examiners have doubts about the independence of candidates' work, centres will receive notification of these concerns and may have to explain the processes they have in place for supervising the work of candidates.

Many scripts were extremely bulky, containing numerous consent forms and completed task sheets. It should be noted that one copy of a consent form, brief and debrief will suffice, although a completed task sheet, or similar, is required from both conditions of an experiment. Candidates should be encouraged to organise this material into a logical order in the Appendix section of the script. Examiners should not be expected to hunt through 50 consent forms to find evidence of a calculation, for example.

A few candidates submitted studies that were unethical. Supervising teachers should have advised against such studies: centres will receive separate feedback about such issues. Other issues related to candidates who were resubmitting scripts from an earlier session. Some of these candidates had tried to improve sections of the report, such as the limitations, by including a page of amendments, whilst leaving the original description of limitations in the script. The resulting report now contained two attempts at this criterion, which were often contradictory and failed to demonstrate an adequate understanding of the problem. This is not appropriate: candidates should be encouraged to re-write sections which they wish to improve.

Quality of written communication was at a standard similar to that seen in previous sessions, with the majority of candidates demonstrating adequate use of psychological terminology. There were, however, a number of contradictory statements in some scripts, for example candidates stated in the procedure that 1 minute was allowed to read a word list when in the standardised instructions participants are told they have 2 minutes to do so. Investigations into certain topics were prone to the use of inaccurate terminology. Many candidates referred to participants having to "recognise" a face in a photograph, when in fact the task required the identification by name. Vague detail was apparent in studies on the primacy-recency effect when candidates referred to the "beginning" of a word list but failed to explain how many words comprised the beginning.

Comments on the criteria

- A1 Very few candidates scored two marks for this skill as most were unable to express a coherent concise aim. The aims stated were often vague or overly long.
- A2 This was generally well done and caused few problems for most candidates. The best candidates were well focused and did not include irrelevant information. Some candidates were less successful as they offered incomplete material for the hypothesis being tested. This was often the case in studies involving gender differences where candidates omitted background material regarding gender.
- A3 In many cases, the statements were either unclear or untestable with few candidates scoring two marks for the hypothesis.
- A4 Many candidates scored only one of the two marks. Common problems were that both conditions of the IV were not stated, or the DV was not operationalised.
- A5 This continued to be a skill which candidates found difficult to access. Most candidates scored one mark but few scored two. Whilst many candidates were able to identify an extraneous variable, they did not expand their answer to include why this was a problem or how it would affect the results.
- A6 Most candidates scored two marks as they were able to suggest a plausible control for the extraneous variable identified in A5.
- A7 Although the majority of candidates scored two marks for this skill, a disappointingly high number of candidates confused the target population with the sample and so scored zero. Some candidates omitted to include a verifiable location for their target population, limiting them to one mark.
- A8 and A9 These were generally well answered, although there were some contradictory statements included in a number of responses. Some candidates correctly identified their chosen method as opportunity sampling but then went on to say that this gave a representative sample and was also quick and easy.
- A10 Although the task and materials were generally included and described, there was rarely any justification of these, limiting the mark awarded.
- A11 This was a skill that showed improvement this session, with most candidates being able to identify an ethical issue correctly. Most of these were then appropriately controlled, so gaining two marks for A12.
- A13 This was reasonably well addressed. The most common problem concerned studies using independent design, when it was not made clear what both groups did.
- A14 It was disappointing that most candidates failed to score any marks for this skill. Frequently, candidates failed to include how or where potential participants were approached, the actual location of the task and the time allowed for the task. In investigations using independent design, it was rarely explained how participants were allocated to the two groups. In those using repeated measures design, candidates often mentioned counterbalancing but failed to explain how this was implemented. Candidates should also be made aware that for their investigation to be replicable, they need to provide answers to the task.
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- B1 In this session, the standard of the brief and debrief seemed to have deteriorated. Often the brief was attached to the standardised instructions as if the initial approach was part of the actual experiment with not much chance for the participants to decline the offer of participation. Many candidates failed to include an adequate debrief - this often did not explain the aim to the participants, or failed to explain it in such terms that a younger participant, or a non-psychology student would understand.
- B2 A large number of candidates did not include evidence of the task being completed. Sometimes a completed word search, for example, was included but it was not evident if this was the answer to the word search which would be credited in A14, or if it was completed by the participant, in which case it would be credited in B2. Conversely, a large number of candidates included a completed task sheet from every participant. This is not necessary: only one example from each condition is needed.
- C1 This was generally well attempted. Very few candidates were unable to present summary data.
- C2 Despite producing an accurate table of data, many candidates were then unable to produce adequate headings and labels for this. The headings often did not include both variables, and units were frequently omitted.
- C3 Calculations were usually accurate although a large number of candidates failed to include the full working. Candidates choosing to calculate a standard deviation frequently showed only part of the calculation, usually failing to show how the mean was obtained.
- C4 Many attempts were accurate and explained clearly the difference in results between the two conditions. Candidates who referred to "group 1" and "group 2" or the "experimental" and "control" groups were limited to one mark.
- C5 This caused very few problems.
- C6 Many candidates answered this well, although often there was no clear point of comparison between the two studies. It should be noted that a comparison of results, not methodology, is the requirement here.
- C7 This continued to be an area of difficulty for many candidates who simply re-stated the results. The best candidates provided a clearly-explained and plausible way in which the findings could be applied to a situation in everyday life.
- C8 and C9 These were areas where many candidates revealed a number of misunderstandings. Only a very few candidates showed an understanding of the limitations of sampling methods or made appropriate reference to the target population.
- C10 This was not well demonstrated by the majority of candidates. Many suggestions involved the addition of an extra variable but candidates failed to explain how all these variables would be manipulated. A large number of candidates made only vague and superficial suggestions, consisting of a single sentence.

- D1 A surprising number of candidates failed to score two marks here. The appendix was often not labelled as such and the quality of many titles was poor, providing no idea of the IV and DV of the investigation.
- D2 Most candidates scored two marks as they were able to include evidence of accurate terminology.
- D3 The abstracts were usually accurate, including all the necessary points. Some were awarded only one mark as they were not concise.
- D4 A disappointing number of candidates failed to include a correctly referenced book. The author's name was often included in full, or the information was in a confused order. Website references still tended to lack information about the date of access.

Administrative points

A number of centres sent work that comprised loose sheets in a plastic wallet, or sheets held together inadequately by a paperclip or staple. Loose materials tend to fall out of these wallets during transit and frequently the examiner has no means of identifying which script the material belongs to. The most appropriate method is to hole-punch all sheets and fasten these together by means of a treasury tag. A large number of scripts are unidentifiable once the Candidate Record Form is removed; candidates are requested to write their name, candidate number and centre number on at least the front page. Some Candidate Record Forms were not signed by the supervising teacher.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.