



GCSE

Psychology

8182/1 Cognition and Behaviour Paper 1

Report on the examination

Version: 1.0
June 2025

Further copies of this report are available from aqa.org.uk

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Summary

Overall performance:

The purpose of this report is to highlight some areas of good practice and areas for improvement stemming from students' answers in Paper 1 in 2025. Where appropriate, it will also offer guidance as to how future performances might be improved.

This was the seventh series of examinations for the current specification - the fifth sat by all of the students entered for the qualification.

Overall performance suggested that students were generally well-prepared for the exam, with clear evidence of sound psychological knowledge being seen in many of the answers. As in previous years, it was pleasing to see many impressive scripts, with students able to demonstrate their knowledge of relevant material, indicating effective teaching and learning. The performance this year was generally comparable to that of last year; there were relatively few scripts with unanswered questions and little evidence that students had run out of time.

It was good to see an improvement in the 'application' questions this year, with many more students applying their knowledge to the scenario (e.g. Questions 4.1, 4.3, 5). Similarly, the 'Design a study' question (Question 17) was answered well this year, with more students correctly focusing on the bullet points for their answer. It is important that students are reminded that marks are **only** awarded for addressing the bullet points in this type of question.

Some issues identified in previous years continue to be seen in 2025. In particular, many students appeared to have misread the questions, whilst others did not address the command term. These errors unfortunately resulted in students, who often seem to have relevant knowledge, receiving few or no marks for questions in which they may otherwise have achieved a much higher mark.

Once again, the majority of students wrote their responses to questions in the appropriate space provided. However, it is important to remind students that these papers are marked on-screen; answers written in the margins, or in blank spaces below other questions, can result in complete answers not being scanned correctly. Students who need to write more than the given space allows should use the additional pages; these will be matched with the response and marked as a complete answer. It is also important to remind students to clearly identify the question number to which their response in the additional pages refers, for example, writing '10.2.' rather than just '10' or providing no number at all.

Unclear handwriting continues to be an issue. Some answers were barely legible, thus posing a challenge for examiners using on-screen marking. Where clear handwriting is known to be a problem, teachers would do well to make special arrangements to ensure that their students are not disadvantaged.

It is also recommended that centres are aware of the specification content contained in Appendix A: mathematical requirements, as this is not exactly the same as the Data Handling content listed as part of the Research Methods topic.

Comments relating to students' performance on specific questions are provided below. It is hoped that these comments will be helpful in guiding the teaching of the specification and the preparation of students for future exams.

Areas where students performed well

Multiple choice questions: these were generally answered well with the majority of students gaining the marks available in Questions 1, 2, and 20.3 (over 80%), and over 75% gaining the mark for Questions 7, 12.1 and 18. It was especially pleasing to see that students were, in the main, indicating their choice of response in the appropriate mark box, and correctly amending their choices when necessary.

Maths questions: as in previous exam series, these questions were generally answered well. Over 85% of students correctly identified the percentage in Question 9.1, and in question 4.4, the majority of students successfully gave the ratio in its simplest form. For answers not reduced to its simplest form (for example, 180:140, or 18:14), the mark scheme was written in such a way that students could still be awarded 1 mark.

AO1 knowledge: 'Describe' questions were answered well this year, often displaying an impressive amount of knowledge. In Question 14 (Hughes' study) almost 50% of students gained a level 2 mark, and it was clear that many had prepared well for a question of this nature, providing clear aims, procedure, findings and conclusions. Similarly with Question 15 (Dweck), over 50% of students gained a mark in Level 2.

Application questions: in Question 5, it was pleasing to see that many students were able to accurately apply their knowledge of one type of long-term memory to the scenario **and** justify their answer; over 60% gained a mark in Level 2 for this question.

The graph: many students were aware that the word 'mean' was necessary in the labelling of the axes; scaling of the axes and plotting of the results were generally done well and over 60% gained 3 or 4 marks. However, as is often the case, many students did not include a title – and if they did, it often was not creditworthy; just over 20% of students gained the full 4 marks.

Areas where students performed less well

Evaluation questions: in Question 6, although there were many excellent descriptions of Murdock's study, the evaluation often contained very generic points that were not linked at all to the study – thus limiting the marks that could be awarded. Approximately 6% of students gained all 9 marks, with just over 30% gaining a Level 3 mark.

Similarly in Question 8.2 (Briefly evaluate Bruner and Minturn's study), there were many completely generic evaluations that limited the marks available.

Synoptic question: it would appear that the main issue with this question was students not reading the question carefully. There were several instances where either laboratory experiments or field experiments were outlined, rather than both; some students included a published experiment for both laboratory *and* field experiments whilst others named a published experiment but did not use it.

Memory

Questions where students performed well

Question 2: It was pleasing to see that almost 50% of students gained the full 2 marks for this question, with many writing detailed answers. However, students do need to understand that if they are making one point (a strength or a weakness), then it does need a brief elaboration in order to gain two marks.

Questions 4.1 and 4.3: these application questions were mainly answered well, with over 45% of students in 4.1, and over 50% in 4.3, gaining the 2 marks. Where students did not secure full marks in 4.1, it was often because only one condition of the IV was given. Students do need to be reminded that *both* conditions of the IV need to be stated in order to gain the marks. Similarly, the IV needs to be clearly defined in order to gain the mark; for example, simply stating 'the word list' did not gain credit.

Question 5: Over 60% of students gained a mark in Level 2 for this question. Knowledge of long-term memory was good, and students were able to outline an appropriate type of long-term memory and apply it to the scenario. Where full marks were not awarded, it was often because students did not justify their answer.

Questions where students performed less well

Question 3: Whilst there were some good answers to this question, with approximately 45% of students gaining 2 marks, there were a significant number who stated that retrieval was 'recalling information from the brain,' instead of from a memory store, and so were limited to 1 mark.

Question 6: This 9-mark 'describe and evaluate' question proved to be challenging for many students, with just over 5% achieving 9 marks, and just over 30% achieving a Level 3 mark. A common problem was the imbalance in the amount written for each element of the question; many wrote lengthy descriptions of the study, with far more being written than the marks can actually reward. This often meant that the evaluation was limited both in length and effectiveness; generic statements that did not engage with Murdock's study gained few marks.

Common misunderstandings

Students need to be made aware that they need to focus on the number of marks available for a question. For example, a 2-mark question (e.g. Question 2) does not require half a page of writing – but it does need more than one or two words in order to gain the marks.

Perception

Questions where students performed well

Question 9.2: Many students were able to name two monocular depth cues, and over 65% gained the 2 marks.

Question 11: This 5-mark evaluation question was generally answered well, with over 30% of students gaining a mark in Level 3. The ‘visual cliff’ study was seen to be a popular way of arguing that there is support for Gibson’s theory. But many students gave too much depth, explaining the aims, procedures, etc. of the study, rather than simply using the findings.

Questions where students performed less well

Question 10: There were some good answers to this question, and familiarity with Gibson’s theory was evident. However, the application element of this question was not well addressed. Most students knew that Hani’s behaviour was unlikely to be learnt but very few were able to develop additional points and just restated the wording from the stem.

Common misunderstandings

In question 9.2, a common error was for students to refer to ‘size constancy’, or just ‘size’. The four monocular depth cues are named in the Specification, and students need to be able to accurately refer to them.

Development

Questions where students performed well

Question 14: This question on Hughes’ study was generally answered well, with almost 50% of students gaining a mark in Level 2. It was clear that many had prepared well for this question and a high proportion of answers were accurate and detailed.

Question 15: Some students were able to write a clear and accurate description of Dweck’s mindset theory, with many using their knowledge of Dweck’s work on praise to enhance their answer.

Question 17: This 6-mark ‘design a study’ scenario question was generally answered well, with almost 40% of students gaining 4 or 5 marks. Most were able to correctly identify the

experimental design and the type of experiment, as well as one ethical issue. However, less than 10% of students gained all 6 marks; many did not consider how they would deal with the ethical issue that had been identified, and a lot of answers referred to 'Group 1' and 'Group 2' and so were limited to 1 mark for the results. It is important that students are made aware that, in order to gain all the marks available for the results, they must include a clear and accurate description of the expected results for **both** conditions of the independent variable. Similarly, students must accurately identify the dependent variable in the study – in this case it was the driving test, and not (as was frequently seen) confidence, or self-efficacy.

Questions where students performed less well

Question 13: Many students were unable to give a correct definition of self-efficacy, with just over 30% gaining 2 marks and over 40% gaining no marks. Several answers referred to it as 'your own understanding of your abilities' which did not receive credit.

Common misunderstandings

In Question 15, a common error was for students to refer to 'open' and 'closed' mindsets instead of the correct terminology of 'growth' and 'fixed' mindsets. Whilst reference to praise was relevant to this question, some students focused too heavily on the role of praise and only included a brief reference to mindsets, which limited the marks available.

Research Methods

Questions where students performed well

Question 20.1: This maths question was answered well by the majority of students, with over 70% gaining both marks. However, almost 20% of answers were not creditworthy, indicating that some students did not know how to calculate a fraction.

Question 20.2: It was pleasing to see that the 'graph question' was generally answered well, with over 60% of students gaining 3 or 4 marks. Scaling was generally accurate, as was the plotting of the results. Many students were also aware that reference to the mean was necessary in the labelling of the axes to gain credit. However, many students did not include a title for the scatter diagram, and if they did include one it was often not creditworthy. A suitable title needed to have a reference to 'relationship' (or correlation, comparison etc.) and an appropriate reference to both variables. It is important that students are taught how to correctly phrase a title to a graph that uses the relevant information given in the stem.

Question 20.3: This question was answered well, with over 80% of students able to identify that the correlation type shown in the graph was a negative correlation.

Questions where students performed less well

Question 19: A surprisingly large number of students could not give an appropriate definition of a case study, with just over 20% gaining both marks – and approximately 45% receiving no

credit at all. The term ‘case study’ is in the Specification and therefore students should be able to clearly and accurately define it.

Question 20.4: It is fair to say that some very good responses were seen to this question. Students who gained a mark in Level 3 were able to explain the strengths and weaknesses of using correlations in psychological research *and* refer to the study in their answer. However, only 6% of students gained 6 marks, and just under 15% achieved a mark in Level 3. A significant proportion of answers indicated that many students were not familiar with correlations; several mentioned the IV and DV, and that ‘correlations could show cause and effect’.

Question 21: This question was not answered well. Less than 15% gained a mark in Level 3, with just over 30% gaining a Level 2 mark. It seems that the main problem was students not reading the question correctly; there were many responses where either laboratory or field experiments were outlined, rather than both. Some students referred to a published experiment for both laboratory **and** field experiments, and several forgot to name a published experiment. There was often a surprising lack of knowledge about laboratory and field experiments, beyond the setting where they were conducted.

Common misunderstandings

In Question 21, many students did not seem to understand how to ‘use’ their knowledge of one published experiment to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of either laboratory experiments or field experiments. There were several answers where a published experiment was named but with no further reference to that study when discussing strengths and weaknesses (of either laboratory or field experiments). Simply naming a study is not *using knowledge* of that study, and students need to be made aware of how to answer this type of question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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