



AS

Psychology

7181/1 Introductory topics in psychology

Report on the Examination

7181
June 2024

Version: 1.0

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

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges 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 schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General

The overall performance indicated that many students had been well prepared for this examination and demonstrated excellent understanding, with some high-quality responses. The amount of detail and specialist terminology students included in their answers varied. Very few wrote more than was required this year, other than a few students on question 14, where some students wrote 12-mark instead of 8-mark answers. However, some students did not include sufficient detail, particularly in question 14 and 19. On some questions a number of students failed to address the demands of the question. This was most noticeable on question 13, where students were asked to evaluate research into post-event discussion. Some students defined post-event discussion or simply described research, which was not creditworthy. Students generally tailored their responses to the actual question and did not waste time writing irrelevant or excessive material which was an improvement also seen last year compared to earlier exam series.

Performance across the sections was markedly different. Performance on Section A (Social Influence) was highest with a mean of 63%. Section B, (Memory) produced a mean score of 55%, whilst Section C (Attachment) had the lowest mean score of 48%. This may have been because there were a couple of questions in the Attachment section that students found challenging, including the 12-mark essay at the end of the paper. Pleasingly, marks on the Research Methods questions were much improved compared to earlier exam series. The majority of students appeared to complete the paper in the time allowed.

Performance on questions 13, 14 and 19 suggested that many students should work to improve the higher order skills of evaluation/discussion. Students need to present contextualised arguments rather than generic points which do not constitute effective evaluation/discussion. On the application questions and on research methods questions students must apply their answers to the context of the question. Some students were able to do this effectively, some needed to apply their knowledge to the scenario and a small minority of students failed to answer some of the questions.

Most students wrote their responses clearly in the appropriate space provided. Students should still be reminded to avoid writing outside of the boxes. Several responses stopped mid-sentence and it was unclear whether the answer continued elsewhere in the question paper, or on additional pages. Students who run out of space when writing their answer should use the additional pages at the end of the question paper and should clearly indicate that their answer continues here. They should also clearly write the question number on the additional page. These additional pages will then be reviewed by the examiner and marked as a complete answer. It is also important that students' handwriting is legible, and they use black ink or ball-point pen as instructed. The quality of handwriting of a minority of students continues to make some responses very challenging to read.

Section A Social Influence

Question 1

This question was one of the easier questions on the paper, with the second highest mean as a percentage of the maximum marks (77%). Knowledge of how variables investigated by Asch affected conformity was generally good with over 87% scoring half marks or more and 50% gaining full marks. Some students only named one or more variable which was not creditworthy. Good answers explained how each variable was manipulated and the impact of each on conformity (increase/decrease/percentage conformity). Students would benefit from understanding the difference in requirements between 'naming' and 'outlining how.'

Question 2

Another Asch question which many students answered well, with 30% of students gaining full marks. However, some students did not read the question and their answer did not focus on ethical limitations. Some students gave general weaknesses of Asch's research: students need to be reminded to read the question carefully and address the question set. Good answers explained their chosen ethical limitations within the context of Asch's investigations.

Question 3

Some students gave particularly good answers outlining two distinct reasons why Asch's conformity investigations could be considered unrealistic within the context of Asch's research, with 25% of students achieving full marks. The strongest answers also used specialist terminology appropriately, for example, lack of mundane realism. Some students only gave general weaknesses of Asch's research without explaining why it was unrealistic or they were only able to give one suggestion.

Question 4

Most students could identify an appropriate alternative sampling technique to volunteer sampling, but not all could explain how it could be carried out. Explaining random sampling still seems to be causing some students issues, with a lack of clarity in many answers trying to explain how it would be carried out. Stating 'names out of a hat' is not detailed enough for 2 marks. A minority of students named stratified but described how they would carry out systematic sampling.

Question 5

Most students answered this question well, with just over 50% scoring full marks. There was generally a good understanding of what flexibility was and how it acted as a factor in minority influence. A minority of students confused flexibility with consistency in their description. A few students did not attempt this question. In this section of the paper, this question had the highest percentage of students, approximately 13%, gaining no marks.

Question 6

This question was the most challenging in the Social Influence section, with the lowest mean score of just half the available marks. This question required a description of the roles of both consistency and commitment in minority influence as well as application of both to the scenario. This was different from previous 8-mark questions that required description and evaluation. It was clear that a lot of students did not focus on the demands of the question, instead offering evaluation in their answer, which was not creditworthy. Students need to pay careful attention to the command terms in the question. Stronger students explained commitment and consistency and then applied them to the scenario. Only 10% of students described both terms with some detail, effective application, and appropriate use of specialist terminology, achieving level 4 marks. Some students used circular definitions which did not display understanding of the terms.

Section B Memory

Question 7

This was an straightforward multiple-choice question with 89% of the students able to identify the correct answer. Very few students did not attempt the question and most students marked only one answer. There was no obvious distractor with the other options chosen in equal measure.

Question 8

This appeared to be another straightforward question for students. Many students could describe the sensory register often including several accurate features of the store in some detail. Almost 46% of students scored full marks and only 6% received no marks. Weaker responses simply stated that it was the first store of the multi-store model, with no detail of the features. Stronger responses referred to capacity, coding and/or duration of the store.

Question 9

Whilst 36% of students scored full marks on this question, there were many who did not know what a conclusion was/how it was different from a finding. Weaker students did not make a comparison between the two conditions, just restating the data in table 1. Strong answers demonstrated that the conclusion needed to refer to accuracy rather than overall memory. Some students expressed their conclusion as a correlation which was not acceptable as this was study comparing high and low anxiety conditions, not measuring levels of anxiety. There were the fewest not attempted parts for this question, with less than 1% leaving the answer blank.

Question 10

Many students understood a strength and/or limitation of volunteer sampling, but many also did not apply their knowledge to the scenario as the question asked them to do. Some students gave limitations of the (target) population identified in the question, not the sampling method. Strong answers were able to provide explicit application, for example, the students being more motivated to complete the questionnaire as they had read the poster and knew what they were signing up to. A third of students gained 3 or 4 marks on this question, with only just over 6% scoring no marks at all.

Question 11

There was generally a good understanding of strengths of open questions, but answers were not always placed in context. Some students focused on the problem of closed questions rather than explaining why using open might have been better, which was not explicitly answering the question. Good answers went beyond saying 'gives more detail' and were able to give explicit application to the scenario, for example, gives the researcher more detail into which parts/aspects of the video clips the participants remembered. For this question, 46% of students scored full marks and the mean score was one of the highest on the Memory section, with 66% of the max marks available.

Question 12

This question was answered particularly well, as 62% of students scored full marks with a mean of 74% of the max marks. Most students could identify an appropriate alternative experimental design or solution to the problem of participants taking part in both conditions of the experiment, such as a time delay between the conditions, but not all could explain how it would be carried out.

Question 13

This question was answered poorly by many students: mean of 36% of available marks, 52% receiving no marks, with 3.54% of students not attempting the question. This was the first time this question had been asked and many students did not address the command word, describing what post-event discussion was, instead of evaluating. Stronger responses understood the command term 'evaluate' and offered a strength or weakness of the research with some elaboration. Answers which presented research findings needed to offer it as strength or limitation, not simply a description of a study, as this did not address the question. Some students used inappropriate studies where no post-event discussion had taken place. Students would benefit from understanding the difference between post-event discussion and post-event information. This question was a good discriminator of student responses.

Question 14

This was another question which discriminated between students. Weaker responses tended to focus solely on description or contained no/limited effective evaluation. Some students simply provided a very brief and thus limited description, only defining proactive and retroactive interference. It is important to remind students that in these questions there should be an equal amount of knowledge and discussion/evaluation. Some students gave the definitions the wrong way round. The best description included reference to the effect of similarity and explained why interference leads to forgetting. Good evaluation used evidence to support or contradict the theory and some students did this extremely well. There were a number of students who muddled retrieval failure theory with interference theory. A few students wrote long essays more suited to a 12-mark essay, and thus students need to be mindful of how much to write for an 8-mark question, and not use valuable time on material that is not needed. Just under 8% of students achieved level 4 marks, with a mean mark of 43% of the available marks.

Section C Attachment**Question 15**

A pleasing number of students gave a clear and coherent description of Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation, with 30% scoring full marks. However, there were some students who explained his attachment theory, rather than focusing on maternal deprivation. Strong answers gave some detail about one or more aspects of maternal deprivation and used appropriate terminology, for example, critical period, poor internal working model. This was the best answered question of the Attachment section.

Question 16

There were some highly effective answers to this question, where students were able to link knowledge of Bowlby's maternal deprivation hypothesis to the scenario with effective and detailed application. Seventy-five percent of students scored at least half the available marks, with a third achieving level 3. Weaker answers just described Bowlby's maternal deprivation theory which was the requirement of the previous question and not the requirement of this question, which needed application of knowledge to the scenario. Some students showed only superficial engagement with the stem, just saying 'Holly' rather than referring to her behaviour and linking it to aspects of the theory. Some answers gave speculative suggestions rather than focusing on the information within the stem.

Question 17

There was a good deal of variation in the response to this question. A significant number of students found this question challenging, with the highest number of not attempted answers across the paper (just under 5%) and almost 45% scoring no marks. However, there were also some strong answers with 30% of students scoring full marks. A considerable number of students referred to cultural variations in secure attachments which did not address the question. Good answers identified a variation in a type of insecure attachment, linked to a country or culture and were able to give details of the difference or explain why the variation occurred.

Question 18

There was also variation in the response to this question. Many students found it challenging, with the second highest number of not attempted answers across the paper (4.5%) and almost 40% scoring no marks. However, a pleasing 60% scored full marks. Some students gave a limitation of strange situation research per se and did not focus their answer on requirements of the question, which was a limitation of van Ijzendoorn's research. With a range of possible creditworthy options, most students focused on ethnocentrism, generalisability issues or lack of standardised methodology across the studies within the meta-analysis.

Question 19

This was one of the least well answered questions on the paper with mean of 38% of the available marks. Whilst 30% of students produced level 3 and 4 answers, poorer responses tended to focus solely on description or contained no/limited effective discussion. Almost 16% of students scored no marks and 3% did not attempt the question. Some students simply provided a very brief and thus limited description. It is important to remind students that in these questions there should be an equal amount of knowledge and discussion/evaluation. The best discussion linked evidence to the theory and some students did this extremely well. It is important that students use appropriate classical/operant conditioning terminology here as this was required for top level responses. Some students used relevant terminology for the learning theory but used it incorrectly. It was pleasing to see fewer responses that did not focus their answer on how learning theory explained attachment and simply described the process of classical and/or operant conditioning. There were still students who continue to confuse learning theory with Bowlby's theory of attachment, or gave details of Pavlov's dog study, both of which were not creditworthy. This question was answered slightly better by students than the equivalent question last year, with 41% as opposed to 33% achieving half marks or more. This question provided the greatest discrimination across the paper.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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