



A-level Psychology

7182/1/ Introductory topics in Psychology: Paper 1

Report on the exam

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Summary

Overall performance compared to last year.

Overall, many students managed their time well with this paper and managed to attempt nearly all questions in the time provided. In comparison to last year's paper, most of the questions were more accessible to students with fewer areas of potential difficulty. In this series, the paper contained only a limited number of questions addressing research methodology allowing students to progress through the paper more easily. Although the spread of scores and standard deviation is very similar to last year's paper, the mean mark was significantly higher and more in line with previous years. The paper differentiated well and the distribution of scores roughly equated to a normal distribution.

Topics and skills where students performed well.

Students performed well in both section A (Social influence) and section C (Attachment). Like last year's exam, students performed best on these two topics, yet social influence questions were deemed more accessible and familiar to students this year. This in part can be explained by students' growing familiarity with 'application' questions and being well versed in applying social influence concepts to novel situations. This year, in Social influence these application questions totalled 12 marks, and in both questions the mean average was well over half marks. In a similar fashion, students were able to access application marks in question D15 when applying the two-process model of phobias to a novel scenario.

Topics and skills where students performed less well.

Overall students found section B (Memory) the most challenging topic in the paper. This is in part due to the challenging research methods questions being attached to this section, as well as a short essay question on eyewitness testimony and post event discussion. As the research methods questions were embedded in a scenario, students had difficulty in applying the correct knowledge and understanding to these questions and/or had difficulty in understanding what the questions required. In the short essay question, it appeared that students were either poorly prepared for this type of question, and/or had a limited amount to say on this topic. In addition, overall, many students found the longer essays very challenging.

Assessment objectives

AO	Comment
AO1 Knowledge and understanding	36 marks
AO2 Apply knowledge and understanding	22 marks
AO3 Analyse, interpret and evaluation	39 marks

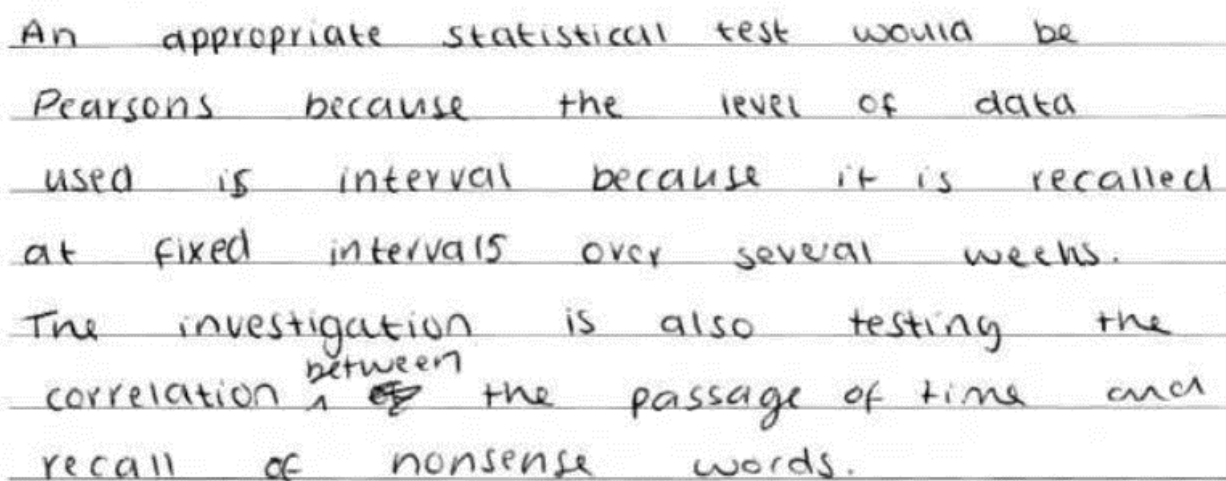
Research methods questions.

Questions where students performed well.

Students typically performed very well in question B6 which required students to identify an appropriate statistical test and outline two reasons for their choice. The scenario presented in the paper was a correlation, which required a test of relationship. However, the data presented could be reasonably interpreted/dealt with in two ways (at an interval or ordinal level) and as such both Spearman's rho and Pearson's r were deemed creditworthy. However, to gain further marks the reasoning behind the choice of level of measurement needed to be clear and precise. Overall, students scored well in this question, gaining a mean of 2.5 marks, and over thirty seven percent of students gaining either 4 or 5 marks.

Student A

Question B6 - Suggest an appropriate statistical test to improve this investigation. With reference to the study, outline **two** reasons for your choice of test (5 marks)



An appropriate statistical test would be Pearson's because the level of data used is interval because it is recalled at fixed intervals over several weeks. The investigation is also testing the correlation ^{between} the passage of time and recall of nonsense words.

In this strong student response, the only part missing for full marks relates to the justification of data. For Pearson's r , both variables need to be interval data, which would include time (as stated in the response), but also the standardised word list

Student B

Question B6 - Suggest an appropriate statistical test to improve this investigation. With reference to the study, outline **two** reasons for your choice of test (5 marks)

Spearman's rho. This is because it was a test of correlation testing the relationship between time and recall of nonsense words. Additionally, it used interval data - time intervals over several weeks and ordinal data - recall of words, this is ordinal as although it is numeric how many words they are able to remember, each word might have a different difficulty and therefore don't have fixed intervals between each value. As it is a test of correlation and the lowest level of data is ordinal, the statistical test should be Spearman's rho.

Although this response outlines the use of Spearman's rho, the student has fully justified this in the context of the scenario presented, and worthy of full marks

Questions where students performed less well.

Students had difficulty in accessing marks in question B5, which questioned how the use of inferential statistics would improve an investigation. A large percentage of students failed to score marks on this question. The most frequent responses suggested inferential statistics '...could establish whether the relationship is significant or due to chance...' but failed to elaborate on this. Although the mark scheme outlined multiple ways in which students could gain marks, students would be well advised to revisit this area and examine the rationale for using inferential statistics. In addition, it would be useful for students to be more familiar with the term inferential statistics to help reduce any misinterpretation.

Student A

Question B5 - Briefly explain how the use of inferential statistics would improve this investigation.

[3 marks]

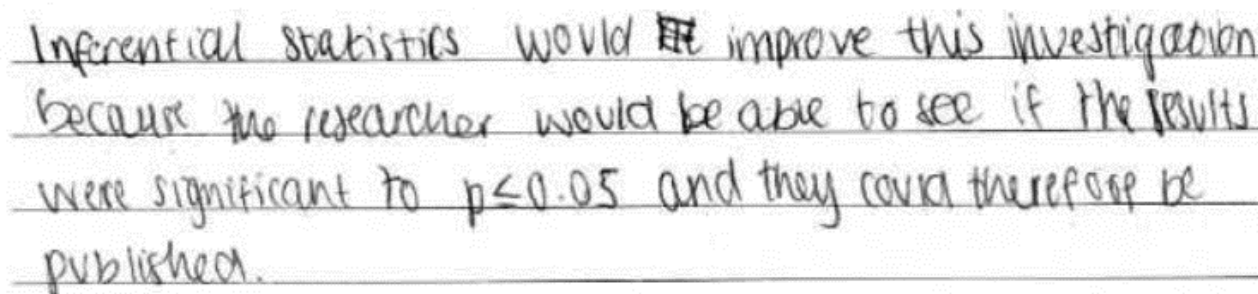
It can test if the results are significant at a 95% confidence level and show that it is simply not due to chance. It is also ^{be} falsifiable as it can show that the null can be rejected.

This student response was able to move beyond one mark by referring to acceptance/rejection of a hypothesis

Student B

Question B5 -Briefly explain how the use of inferential statistics would improve this investigation.

[3 marks]



Inferential statistics would ~~be~~ improve this investigation because the researcher would be able to see if the results were significant to $p \leq 0.05$ and they could therefore be published.

This response was generally the most common response given for this question, lacking in elaboration which has restricted the credit to just one mark

Common misunderstandings

With question B5 many student responses showed they did not understand what is meant by inferential statistics and would often reference different forms of descriptive statistics. In question B6 a common misunderstanding was to claim that the investigation was a test of difference as opposed to a relationship and this cost them marks. Students would be well advised to revise thoroughly statistical testing and develop greater familiarity with inferential statistics.

Short answer questions

Questions where students performed well.

Question 1

Outline **one** ethical issue that has arisen in social influence research. Refer to **one or more** social influence studies in your answer (4 marks)

Typically, students were able to score well with nearly seventy percent of students scoring 3 or 4 marks in this question, with a mean average of 2.78. Students were able to readily identify an ethical issue in social influence research and to refer to one or more social influence studies to elaborate this. The most common and well used studies were Milgram and Zimbardo's research, and to a lesser extent Asch's conformity study. The minor issue with this question was when students failed to outline the ethical issue in sufficient depth.

Question 2 and Question 3

A2 - Use your knowledge of conformity to explain Charlie's behaviour (6 marks)

A3 - Use your knowledge of obedience to explain the boys' behaviour (6 marks)

These application questions had very similar demands to a question in last year's paper about obedience. However, here, both questions were centred on the same scenario and question A2 required students to apply concepts from conformity whereas question A3 required students to apply concepts from

obedience. Although application of knowledge is typically an area of difficulty, students were able to engage with these questions well and applied a variety of knowledge to the scenario, from explanations to variables that affect conformity and obedience, respectively. Over twenty percent of students, (in both questions,) were able to gain level 3 marks, with the average mark for both questions exceeding 3.5

Student A

Question A2 – Use your knowledge of conformity to explain Charlie's behaviour (6 marks)

By Charlie still going to school in his jumper inside car, even though he is worried, and doesn't necessarily agree with it, he conforms. It can be seen he is here showing compliance, which is the shallowest form of conformity and is when we agree/go along with group publicly, but keep own beliefs privately, which can be seen as Charlie's 'worry' about idea. It can be viewed that Charlie is showing normative social influence, which is an explanation of conformity when we want to be approved of by the group/majority and liked, so conform to their behaviour and beliefs. A sense of identification can also be seen here too, Extra space this is when we agree and change beliefs and behaviour when in presence of the group as we value the group membership. Charlie thinks his group is 'cool' and they are popular too, so this shows why he would want to potentially gain that group membership and approval.

This student's response has included accurate and detailed knowledge of three conformity concepts (compliance, normative social influence as well as identification). Each concept has been correctly applied to the scenario. This was fitting of level 3 mark scheme descriptors

Student B

Question A2 – Use your knowledge of conformity to explain Charlie's behaviour (6 marks)

Conformity is when you change your public behaviour^{belief} for a group, but not your private beliefs. There are two types of conformity, informational social influence - which is the desire to be right, so you change opinions to be correct. The second type is normative social influence which is when you change behaviour with the desire to be liked. Charlie is displaying normative social influence as he wants the group of boys to like him and accept him so he goes along with the group to fit in and be liked, even though he is worried about it.

This type of response was less effective than that of student A. The knowledge is not always carefully applied to the scenario, and as such was classified as limited. With these types of application questions this kind of response was less common, illustrating students' growing capabilities with application of knowledge

Question 7

Outline **two** ways in which episodic memories are different from semantic memories (4 marks)

Over fifty percent of students were able to outline detailed differences between episodic and semantic memories and provide sufficient depth to gain between 3 and 4 marks. Common differences cited revolved around whether the memories seemed to be time-stamped, the general location of these memories in the brain, as well as commentary surrounding whether memories were autobiographical in nature. The average mark for this question was over 2.5, and less than seven percent of students failed to score marks here.

Student A

Question B7 – Outline **two** ways in which episodic memories are different from semantic memories

Episodic memories are time-stamped, meaning the ~~context~~ ~~at~~ contextual information such as the weather or other people present are interwoven to produce a single memory, whereas semantic memory is not time-stamped – we cannot remember when we developed a semantic memory.

Episodic memory involves information personal ~~to you~~ of significance to the individual e.g. first day at school, whereas semantic memory is knowledge we store about the world e.g. 'the capital of France is Paris'.

This is an excellent example from a student who has focused exclusively on the wording of the question. The answer contains two coherent and clear differences between episodic and semantic memories, with the student using language of comparison with clear structure and depth in their response.

Question 10 and 11

Question 10 - Which feature of caregiver-infant interaction does this example illustrate? (1 mark)

Question 11 - Which feature of caregiver-infant interaction does this example illustrate? (1 mark)

These short questions both required students to identify the aspect of caregiver-infant interaction shown within scenarios, and as such were classified as 'application' questions. The only caregiver- infant interactions named in the specification are reciprocity and interactional synchrony. Students did particularly well in these questions with mean averages of 0.78 and 0.81 and had minimal difficulty in identifying which caregiver-infant interaction fitted each scenario.

Question 12

Describe the concept of a critical period **and** the concept of an internal working model in the context of attachment (6 marks)

This was generally answered well by candidates, who were able to give precise and accurate information about the critical period and the internal working model. The mean for this question was 3.66 marks, with

less than two percent of students failing to score marks on this question. The mark scheme was very inclusive and did not overly penalise students for providing more or fewer details on only one concept.

Student A

Question C12 – Describe the concept of a critical period **and** the concept of an internal working model in the context of attachment (6 marks)

The Critical period is the idea that a child must develop a monothropic bond to a primary attachment figure within a certain time, or they will suffer serious emotional, social and intellectual problems. Bowlby suggested that the critical period was $2\frac{1}{2}$ years of age, although some other studies indicate it may be earlier (such as the Romanian orphan study, where it appeared to be around 6 months), after which less improvements were seen as the child developed. The internal working model (also devised by Bowlby) suggests that an childhood attachment type will go on to impact our future relationship, both in childhood and adulthood. A securely attached child will remain so, creating trusting, meaningful bonds throughout life, whereas insecure children will find this more difficult. After finding themselves lonely and unable to find meaningful bonds. It has also been suggested that if an attachment not made in the critical period, the problems incurred (due to the internal working model) will be permanent; sufferers of maternal deprivation in the critical period will always have intellectual, social and emotional maladjusting, going on to be poor parents themselves.

Several aspects of the critical period are addressed, with good elaboration of the model

Question 15

How would the two-process model of phobias explain Ken's fear of dogs? (6 marks)

Most students' responses managed to score well on this question, with a mean of 3.3 marks. Just over five percent of students failed to score marks on this question. As the question requested students to apply knowledge of the 'two-process' model to a novel phobia, it demanded reference to both classical and operant conditioning being applied to the scenario. Most students were able to apply both aspects of the two-process model to a phobia of dogs and scored well, yet students did not find this question as accessible as either question A2 or A3. This could be due to the time constraints inherent in A level examinations.

Questions where students performed less well

Question 8

Briefly describe retrieval failure as an explanation of forgetting. Outline **one** limitation of this explanation (4 marks)

Students generally did well in the knowledge element of the question yet struggled with the limitation. The knowledge tended to be well focused, and good use was made of the encoding specificity principle as well as descriptions of both state dependent and context dependent forgetting. The limitations offered tended to focus on criticising research that supports the model. However, many students did not link this back to the explanation and subsequently lost marks on the question. A smaller issue with the responses was when a minority of students misunderstood that the focus needed to be on retrieval failure due to an absence of cues, and wrongfully cited knowledge of interference theory. Nevertheless, the mean for the question was 2.04 marks, with less than twenty percent of students failing to score marks here.

Student A

Question B8 – Briefly describe retrieval failure as an explanation of forgetting. Outline **one** limitation of this explanation (4 marks)

Retrieval failure can be described as the absence of cues. For example, cue dependent forgetting is where we forget as we are lacking environmental cues that were present at encoding and state-dependent forgetting is where our mood etc is different when trying to recall information. A limitation is all research support lacks ecological validity, so we cannot be certain there is any real world applicable ~~truth~~ support to back up retrieval failure.

This type of response was quite typical of students with this question. The description of retrieval failure was the only part of the answer that gained credit, referring to the absence of both environmental and state cues. However, the limitation centred on research that supports the model, where the generic comment failed to link back to any impact on the explanation of forgetting.

Question 14

Which **two** of the following are emotional characteristics of obsessive-compulsive disorder? (2 marks)

Surprisingly, students found this multiple-choice question quite challenging. They were typically able to identify that one of the characteristics was low mood, yet often struggled to identify that self-loathing was the second emotional characteristic. In particular, option B (insight into excessive anxiety) was regularly mistaken as an emotional characteristic. Students would be advised to develop a greater understanding of the term 'anxiety' as used to describe characteristics of disorders.

Extended writing questions

Questions where students performed well

Question 4

Discuss consistency **and** flexibility as processes involved in minority influence (8 marks)

This question overlapped with some of the content from last year's paper, yet many were able to score well in this question. Despite the occasional amount of tautology seen in some responses, students typically made good use of diachronic and synchronic consistency and appeared well versed with flexibility. Further effective use was made of real-life examples e.g. the suffragettes' campaigns, civil rights movement, as well as research from Moscovici, Nemeth and Brilmayer and to a lesser extent Wood et al's meta-analysis of the role of consistency in minority influence. Typically, students were able to gain the

'knowledge' marks rapidly, and only a small minority struggled to gain 'discussion' marks. Nearly all students scored marks in this question, with ten percent scoring level 4 marks.

Student A

Question A4 – Discuss consistency **and** flexibility as processes involved in minority influence (8 marks)

Minority groups are said to be more persuasive when converting the majority if they are committed, consistent and flexible. Consistency involves the minority staying ~~th~~ with their stance / argument and repeatedly reinforcing it. This makes others consider their argument more carefully. ~~Moscow~~ ~~conducted an experiment into this and showed~~ ~~supp~~ Flexibility involves the group being non dogmatic, being willing to see other views, co-operate and negotiate. This makes them appear more reasonable and causes the majority to take their argument seriously.

One strength of the consistency process is study support from Moscovici. He had 172 female participants had split them into groups of 6 - with 5 naive participants (pps) and 1 confederate. The groups were shown 36 slides of varying shades of blue. The ~~confederates~~ individuals in the groups were told to answer out loud what colour they saw. The confederates in the consistent condition answered green for every shade but in the inconsistent they said 24 out of 36 were green. In the consistent condition, naive pps were swayed 8.2% of the time. In the inconsistent condition, they were

waited 1.25% of ~~the~~ the time. This shows minorities are more influential the more consistent they are. This said, this support is flawed. First the sample was gender biased as only women were investigated. There are actually often findings that suggest women conform more than men so it is unlikely this study and its findings can be generalised so its support for the consistency process in minority influence is limited. Second this study was carried out in a lab - an artificial setting. These women would have been strangers for the most part. In real life, minorities have ^{connections to majority} ~~connections to majority~~ so their dynamics between these ^{study and life} ~~study and life~~ may differ. The study lacks mundane realism and has low ecological validity so again there are issues generalising and limited applicability. This said, there is further support for these processes in how they have manifested in real life. For example the Suffragettes campaigned for women's votes for years and showed consistency in sticking to their message unflinching. They also showed flexibility - the first legalisation of votes for women was still very biased towards ~~other~~ men, however they negotiated and this progress was just the start. Now there are equal rights in the UK, showing the minority influence and processes they used to get there must have been effective.

This level 4 response cited excessive amounts of discussion, accurate and precise knowledge and presented the response with a coherent structure throughout. Effective use was made of research support as well as real life examples. Another strength of this response is seen when the student briefly evaluates Moscovici's research with commentary that relates back to the explanation of consistency.

Student B

Question A4 – Discuss consistency **and** flexibility as processes involved in minority influence (8 marks)

Consistency in ^{minority} ~~social~~ influence is over a period of time campaigning and speaking out about the same ~~a~~ topic. This shows dedication to the majority. A real-life example of this is the suffragettes. They campaigned for women's rights ~~for~~ over years and consistently spoke out about women's rights. ~~Consistency~~

However, SHARIF found that even if some people agreed with the ^{campaign} ~~campaign~~ topic, they did not conform as they ~~did~~ had the minority negatively labelled and didn't want to associate with them. This shows that people still may not conform even if the protest is consistent.

Flexibility is when the minority accepts some ~~points~~ counter-points from the majority. This shows they are being reasonable in their argument and are willing to accept the majority's views.

In contrast to student A, this response lacks sufficient depth. Although some valid 'knowledge' and 'discussion' points are included, the whole response is lacking in elaborative commentary focused on the question. In addition, the response has failed to include sufficient terminology that is needed to access higher marking levels.

Question 13

Discuss Romanian orphan studies (16 marks)

This was a straightforward essay question about Romanian orphan studies, generally answered well by students with over ten percent of students gaining level 4 marks. Due to the nature of the question some marks were awarded for relevant background to the Romanian orphan studies i.e. the fall of Romania's communist regime, and a large number of students cited this. Many students made effective use of research by Rutter, Zeanah et al and to a lesser extent that by Le Mare and Audet, citing an impressive level of detail in both procedures and results of these studies. However, despite this many struggled with the 'discussion' demands where students often provided generic/weak commentary e.g. about levels of ecological validity and control of extraneous variables without key details.

Student A

Question C13 - Discuss Romanian orphan studies (16 marks)

Rutter studied the effects of institutionalisation and if they can be reversed by the act of adoption at early times compared to later in 165 Romanian orphans. He also compared the development recovery to a group of non-orphaned British children, a control group. Rutter examined the intellectual, ~~and~~ emotional and behavioural functioning of these orphans by examining their functioning at different times of adoption. For example, those orphans adopted before the age of 6 months showed intellectual recovery as they acquired a 104 IQ at the age of 11-14. However, those who were adopted between 7 and 14 months showed a lower IQ of 86. Even those adopted later than 14 months developed disinhibited attachment where the orphan showed inappropriate and overfriendly behaviours towards strangers. The Romanian orphans were examined into their mid teens, and also at different ages.

One strength of Rutter's study of Romanian orphans is there ~~was~~ was a high number of orphans studied. For example, all 165 Romanians intellectual ~~and~~, emotional and behavioural development was compared also to a control group of ~~an~~ British children. This is a strength as the high number of orphans studied means more population validity ~~and~~ as the results can be generalised to a wider 'target' population. The study also used a control group meaning a difference and cause and effect can be distinguished between the Romanian orphans and control group of British children.

One weakness of Rutter's study of Romanian orphans is it fails to show long term effects of institutionalisation. For example, the orphans were only studied into their mid-teens rather than into their future adult lives. This is a weakness as it is unclear whether certain orphans eventually made full recovery from intellectual underdevelopment or disinhibited attachment. This means the study may become invalidated as it doesn't represent the full long-term effects of institutionalisation.

Another strength of Rutter's ~~research~~ study of Romanian orphans is there's practical applications. For example, research has allowed specific changes to institutions and orphans by allocating ~~specific~~ key workers to specific children. This is a strength as it is built on the belief that disinhibited attachment occurs from too many workers on the orphans with no specific key worker. Thus, providing better experiences for orphans and institutions as the research has been used for real life applications to better life for some.

However, Rutter's study is based only on the lives of Romanian orphans in 1990's.

Extra space

For example, due to political events, ~~orphan~~ the number of orphans dramatically increased ~~meaning~~ in Romania, creating particularly bad conditions. This is a weakness as the orphans studied had particularly bad experiences compared to other orphans in ^{other} ~~these~~ countries. ~~near~~ Therefore, ~~meaning~~ this means the study may lack external validity ^{as the} ~~effect~~ of institutionalisation cannot be generalised from this study to other cultures and countries.

The student's response contains a wealth of thorough and effective 'discussion' that includes specific details that relate well to the question. The 'knowledge' commentary is accurate and well-focused, yet not as effective as the 'discussion' in this essay. However, this essay scored well overall.

Questions where students performed less well

Question 9

Discuss the effect of post-event discussion on the accuracy of eyewitness testimony. Refer to the information above in your answer. (8 marks)

This short essay question, which incorporated an element of application of knowledge was difficult for some students. Some appeared to only have a limited amount to say on this topic. More effective answers largely revolved around Gabbert's research, source monitoring and memory conformity. When students outlined these concepts, they tended to score well in this question. In addition, unfortunately many answers contained very little psychological content and scored poorly. As such, less than thirty-five percent of students gained level 3 or 4 marks.

Student A

Question B9 - Discuss the effect of post-event discussion on the accuracy of eyewitness testimony. Refer to the information above in your answer. (8 marks)

Post event discussion can affect eyewitness testimony accuracy due to memory contamination and memory conformity. Memory contamination is when the person's memory is ~~at~~ changed by the discussion, ~~and from~~ ^{and} what they picked up from it. They may believe it to be their own. Memory conformity occurs when a person is unsure of their testimony and what they saw and look to the testimony of others around them.

The eyewitness was convinced ^{of what} ~~what~~ she saw ~~as~~ but then realised that she may have picked it up from the other witnesses. This is a form of memory ~~conformity~~ contamination as she believed what others saw to be her own testimony. The police are not able to use this as its accuracy decreases, the other witnesses may have been lying.

This is supported by Gabbert. Gabbert conducted a study on pairs. Each pair was shown videos of the same crime but one person was shown it from a different perspective and so saw something ~~so~~ the pair did not see. When they were put together to discuss, 71% of the participants said they saw something that was not in the video clip shown to them. This was compared to by the control group with no discussion and found 0%. This shows that ~~eyewitness~~ post event discussion lowers the accuracy of testimonies and supports the idea that the police should not use her statement.

This response managed to attempt all assessment objective skills and include some specialist terminology. However, to have been awarded more marks, the student needed to develop some of the evident 'knowledge' ideas and add to the 'discussion' element of the response.

Student B

Question B9 - Discuss the effect of post-event discussion on the accuracy of eyewitness testimony. Refer to the information above in your answer. (8 marks)

Post-event discussion can ~~use~~ cause people's memory to become tainted with misinformation. If the witness had had a post-event discussion, then their statement would become unusable because of the inaccuracy ^{and uncertainty} of the testimony.

One strength into the effect of post-event discussion would be that it has practical applications. For example, with the ~~cognitive interview~~ police officers asking questions at a crime scene or arriving at a crime scene. They will mitigate as much discussion between witnesses as possible to maintain an accurate account from each individual. They also ask questions like 'What did you see happen' asking what this individual saw themselves. However, it can be expensive to teach a police officer how to do this.

In contrast to the response from student A, this was a typical response that was seen from a surprisingly large minority of students. The 'knowledge' and 'application' are very limited, yet the 'discussion' contains some creditworthy material. This type of response scored very little compared with the former.

Question 16

Discuss the cognitive approach to explaining depression (16 marks)

Although this question overlapped with content from last year's exam students struggled with this 16 marks essay, with an average of 46% being scored for the question. Although students would typically cite relevant content, it was often brief, without elaboration. This often entailed lists of factors that both Beck and Ellis claimed were involved with the onset of depression, without any further development e.g. simply listing the parts of the negative triad without any further elaboration. In addition, with Ellis's ABC model

students would be well advised to over-emphasise the causal factor of ‘irrational beliefs’ as opposed to the activating event. Unusually, the ‘discussion’ element of the question saw more detailed and perhaps well-rehearsed points, that included reference to evidence, the practical application of CBT and Ellis’s approach being more suited to explain reactive as opposed to endogenous depression. Overall, less than nine percent of students managed to access top level marks for this question.

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