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# PSYCHOLOGY

7181/1 Introductory Topics in Psychology  
Report on the Examination

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## **General**

The overall performance indicated that many students had prepared well for this examination. A few scripts had unanswered questions and there was some evidence that a few students had run out of time. Questions that tended to differentiate best were questions 1, 3, 6, 10 and 11. Performance on these questions suggested that many students should work to improve the higher order skills of application and evaluation/discussion. For the latter, it is important to stress the need to present contextualised arguments rather than generic points which do not constitute effective discussion.

Students should take time to read the specific demands of each question carefully. This was particularly the case for Questions 5.1 and 9, where some answers suffered because students did not pay close attention to the question.

The majority of students wrote their responses to questions clearly and in the appropriate space provided. However, as mentioned in the examination report for the previous series, it is important to remind students of the need to ensure that they do not write outside the spaces provided in the answer booklet, nor should they write answers to one question in the space belonging to another. They should ask for additional sheets if necessary. If they do so, they must indicate clearly that their answer continues on an additional sheet and also write the question number clearly on the additional sheet. Many students simply stopped in mid-sentence and all too often it was unclear exactly whether or not their answer continued elsewhere in the answer booklet, or on an additional sheet.

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 this year made some responses very challenging to read.

## **Section A Social Influence**

### **Question 01**

While most students were able to describe some features of the authoritarian personality, many did not outline how it could explain obedience/obedient behaviour. This demonstrates the importance of reading the question carefully. Of those students who did use the theory to explain obedience, very few identified that it was a dispositional/internal explanation of obedience, which was required for full marks. Some of the weaker answers were based mainly around the F-scale, although it was not always clear that this was used to measure the authoritarian personality.

### **Question 02**

This question seemed to be one of the more challenging questions on the paper, even though it was a short answer question worth 2 marks. It required students to 'briefly explain' one limitation, which involves more than just identifying a limitation. Although some students wrote detailed answers worth full marks, there were also many who failed to gain any marks. From the range of answers seen, and the number of students who left this question blank, many students were not prepared for this question. Some students gave a limitation of the F-scale but did not explain why this was a problem for the authoritarian personality explanation of obedience. Some students gained credit for answers describing how other situational factors had been shown to have a greater influence on obedience. Better answers identified a specific situational factor and explained what effect it had, for example, closer proximity increases obedience.

### **Question 03**

This was a challenging question which discriminated well. There were some excellent answers, with detailed knowledge of how both consistency and commitment might contribute to minority influence and extremely effective evaluation, including use of research to support the role of consistency. Lengthy descriptions of Moscovici's research were of little relevance and did not add much to the answer. At the other end were those students with muddled knowledge of consistency and commitment. Some students were able to achieve effective evaluation by explaining how other factors, such as flexibility, were also important. However, some students appeared to have prepared for a different question, focussing just on flexibility rather than using it in discussion of consistency and/or commitment. Again, this question also demonstrated the importance of reading the question carefully. While knowledge was often well detailed, the discussion was not as effective for most students. Weaker answers used only real-life examples such as the suffragettes, without explaining how they illustrated the role of consistency and/or commitment.

### **Question 04.1**

Students were required to operationalise the independent variable and dependent variable in order to score full marks. The most challenging element of this appeared to be correctly operationalising the dependent variable. In this question the operationalised dependent variable was 'number of people who conformed'. However, many students wrote either 'conformity rate' or 'conformity was more likely', both of which were an incorrect operationalisation. This resulted in few answers achieving full marks. Many answers received no credit because they either wrote a correlational hypothesis, a non-directional hypothesis or an aim.

### **Question 04.2**

Students were still confused about the term 'experimental design', often thinking it referred to conducting a field or laboratory experiment. Some students only answered the first part of the question, and many of those that did give an advantage of the design were unable to link this advantage to the stem of the question. Students often chose to use 'reduced order effects' or 'fewer demand characteristics' as their advantage but the explanation given did not make it clear why this would have been an advantage in this study. This question was left blank by more students than any other question on the paper.

### **Question 04.3 and 04.4**

The majority of students answered both questions accurately.

### **Question 04.5**

There were excellent responses from some students who provided a clear understanding of different reasons for conformity applied to the stem. Good answers explained that in the more difficult condition informational social influence/increased ambiguity/lack of confidence led to greater conformity than in the easy condition, where those that did conform did so because of normative social influence/to fit in. Students who did not achieve full marks tended to explain what caused conformity in one of the conditions without comparing it to the other condition.

## **Section B Memory**

### **Question 05.1**

Although most students found this question straightforward, some failed to read the stem carefully and found it difficult to write an answer that was worth full marks. It was insufficient to identify the 'context reinstatement' technique as 'mental re-instatement'. Students were required to suggest that the context was being mentally re-instated. Where students chose to write about mental re-instatement of the context, they needed to remember that they should refer to the context of watching a video of a robbery. Many focussed on creating mental context within the video rather than of watching the video. Students who chose 're-instate the context' sometimes muddled their instructions to give instructions to 'recall everything'. Generally, those who focused on 'recall from a changed perspective', or 'recall in reverse order' found it easier to write instructions for the participants. Some students showed knowledge of the cognitive interview but did not apply it to the stem of the question. A few students did not write instructions in direct speech and were limited to a maximum of one mark for the instructions. There was some evidence that a few a students had not read the question carefully and chose 'report everything', when the question had identified this as one technique used in the cognitive interview but asked for one other technique.

### **Question 05.2**

There were some excellent answers to this question, often giving one or more detailed reasons why random sampling would be an improvement on the study. However, some students did not fully address the question, only explaining how a random sample would be created, not how it would be an improvement. Such answers were limited to a maximum of one mark. Differentiation of answers was seen in the level of detail given and the extent to which answers had been applied to the study.

### **Question 05.3**

Although the majority of students achieved full marks on this question, a number made one of several common errors. Some students miscalculated the mean, with a few dividing their total by 9 instead of 10. Some students did not attempt to round their answer. Some misunderstood two significant figures and gave their answer to two decimal places.

### **Question 05.4**

While some students were able to provide accurate answers showing good understanding, others struggled with this question. Many failed to achieve marks because they merely stated that the cognitive interview was time-consuming rather than explaining why this was a limitation. 'Time-consuming' needs to be qualified to get credit: it requires specialist training and police forces do not have enough time to invest in training the officers to use it. Good answers used evidence to show that not all aspects of the cognitive interview are as useful as others, or that it also increased the amount of inaccurate information gathered. Some students had a good understanding that not all techniques were appropriate for use with some groups of people, for example, change perspective is not possible with young children.

**Question 06**

This was a challenging question, which discriminated well. The studies by Johnson and Scott and Yuille and Cutshall were the most common studies used, with some students showing accurate and detailed knowledge of the results. At the other end were those students who focused on lengthy descriptions of procedures rather than what these studies had shown about the effects of anxiety on eye witness testimony. Other studies were also used effectively either as knowledge or in discussion. These included research by Loftus and Burns and Christianson and Hubinette, among others. While knowledge was often well detailed, the discussion was not as effective. Better answers discussed the contradictory nature of research, with some using the Yerkes-Dodson law to explain them. Methodological issues with the research were not always used effectively and students needed to explain how these issues affect the conclusions about the effects of anxiety in eye witness testimony. Some students made effective use of research by Pickel to illustrate how changes in accuracy may be explained by surprise rather than anxiety. Occasionally students neglected to refer to the conversation, although most made at least some attempt to engage with the conversation.

## Section C Attachment

### Question 07

This question was generally answered well with most students able to discuss at least one of the father's roles in attachment. Better answers were able to link each father to a precise finding from research. For example, Brian's role was for play and to complement the role of the mother linked to Grossman's research showing that quality of adolescent attachment to father is related to father's play with infants. Mikhail's role was as a nurturing primary caregiver, supported by Field's research which showed that fathers can be the primary attachment figure. Weaker answers were able to correctly identify the role of each father but did not discuss what research has shown. If the student assumed that Mikhail was female, credit was given for parts of the answer that referred to the role of the father.

### Question 08

The majority of students found this question easy. However, a few appeared to have mis-read the question and wrote about types of attachment rather than the behaviours measured in order to classify attachment type.

### Question 09

Most students were able to identify an appropriate limitation of the use of the Strange Situation as a measure of attachment. Cultural differences and lack of ecological validity were popular points. Where students chose to write about cultural differences and did not know the findings of a cross-cultural study very well, their responses could be quite muddled. Some students offered ethical issues, despite the question stating 'apart from ethical issues...'. There were some good answers which showed an understanding of the methodology used. Better marks were achieved by students who could develop an evaluation point. Students who suggested, 'it does not work if children go to day care' needed to explain this statement. Some students gave a limitation of the strange situation study by Ainsworth rather than a limitation of this way of measuring attachment. This highlights the need for students to tailor their response carefully to the question that is set.

### Question 10

This question discriminated well. Some students demonstrated detailed knowledge of what research with Romanian orphans had shown about the effects of institutionalisation. Most popular answers described the effects on IQ and attachment. Good answers included accurate IQ scores, and clearly explained disinhibited attachments and the effects of being adopted at different ages. Some students focused too much on describing the procedures of the research, rather than the findings and conclusions. Level 3 answers included detailed findings. Weaker answers gave generic findings, such as it reduces IQ, with some students showing no clear link to findings from research with Romanian orphans. A few students described Bowlby's 44 thieves study which was not relevant to the question. Some students left this question blank and had either not prepared for this part of the specification, or had not managed their time effectively across the exam paper.



### **Question 11**

Considering the straightforward nature of this question, it was not well answered overall. Generally, the outline of Bowlby's monotropic theory was stronger than the evaluation. Some students confused attachment and maternal deprivation. Evaluation of Bowlby's explanation was often muddled. Reporting of Hazen & Shaver's, Lorenz's and Harlow's work was often poor, relying too heavily on description of the studies, rather than whether these studies supported Bowlby's theory or not. Schaffer and Emerson's study was often cited but the implications for Bowlby's theory were not accurately explained. The number of short or absent answers for this straightforward question suggested a failure of time management across the exam paper.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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