

A level Psychology

18OAY02

Pearson Edexcel A level
Psychology: Strategies
for extended writing
questions





Your online environment

- Technical difficulties and support
- Recording
- Communication in an online environment
- Asking questions
- Using polls
- Downloading documents



Aims and objectives

- Consider strategies for students to use when approaching extended-writing questions.
- Look at how different command words indicate the type of response required from students.
- Discuss the construction of mark schemes for these questions.
- Consider how mark schemes are applied to student responses.
- Address common issues and FAQs.

Session agenda

Time	Item
1.30 – 1.35	Welcome and housekeeping (inset online)
1.35 – 1.45	Aims and objectives, agenda and introductions and polls
1.45 – 2.10	Part 1: Taxonomy (command words)
2.10 – 2.20	Part 2: Strategies for extended responses
2.20 – 2.25	Part 3: Mark scheme construction
2.25 – 2.30	Break
2.30 – 3.20	Part 4: Mark scheme application
3.20 – 3.30	Support and information. Final questions and queries



Polls to get to know the delegates

Part 1

Taxonomy
(command words)





Taxonomy (command words)

There is a specified list of command words that can be used in the exam papers (see Appendix 6).

Some command words will only be used for extended open response questions.

The AOs **are** linked to the command word for the extended open questions (8–20 marks).



Command words for extended questions only

Evaluate the ethical considerations of research within social psychology. (8)

Discuss the diagnosis of mental disorders in terms of deviance and dysfunction. You must make reference to the context in your answer. (8)

Assess the extent to which psychology could be considered a science. (20)

‘Of all biological factors, hormones play the most important role in explaining human aggression, however they have little role to play in social learning theory explanations’.

To what extent do you agree with this statement? (12)



Extended open command words and AOs

‘Evaluate’, ‘Assess’, ‘To what extent’ will either be AO1 and AO3 (with no scenario/context), or AO1, AO2, AO3 (with a scenario/context).

‘Discuss’ will only ever be AO1 and AO2 and 8 marks.

AO2 application will only ever be 4 of the available marks in an extended open question (8–20 marks).

Extended open questions (8–20 marks) are marked using levels and are not points based.



Extended open command words and AO examples

Taxonomy (command word)	Assessment objective (AO) being assessed	Example question
<p>Evaluate</p> <p>(8 or 12 marks at AS level), (8–20 marks at A level)</p>	<p>AO1 and AO3 (some for each) when there is no stimulus/stem to refer to</p> <p>8 marks = 4 AO1, 4 AO3</p> <p>12 marks = 6 AO1, 6 AO3</p> <p>16 marks = 6 AO1, 10 AO3</p> <p>20 marks = 8 AO1, 12 AO3</p>	<p>A level SAMs, Paper 1, Q3 (page 13)</p>



Evaluate

Level	Mark	Descriptor
AO1 (4 marks), AO3 (4 marks) Candidates must demonstrate an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding vs evaluation/conclusion in their answer.		
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–2 marks	Demonstrates isolated elements of knowledge and understanding. (AO1) A conclusion may be presented, but will be generic and the supporting evidence will be limited . Limited attempt to address the question. (AO3)
Level 2	3–4 marks	Demonstrates mostly accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Candidates will produce statements with some development in the form of mostly accurate and relevant factual material , leading to a superficial conclusion being made. (AO3)
Level 3	5–6 marks	Demonstrates accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Arguments developed using mostly coherent chains of reasoning leading to a conclusion being presented. Candidates will demonstrate a grasp of competing arguments but evaluation may be imbalanced. (AO3)
Level 4	7–8 marks	Demonstrates accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Displays a well-developed and logical evaluation, containing logical chains of reasoning throughout. Demonstrates an awareness of competing arguments , presenting a balanced conclusion. (AO3)



Example

Student **A**

Question: **Q4**

Document name: **9PS0/03**

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Assess

Level	Mark	Descriptor
AO1 (4 marks), AO3 (4 marks) Candidates must demonstrate an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding vs assessment/conclusion in their answer.		
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–2 marks	Demonstrates isolated elements of knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Generic assertions may be presented. Limited attempt to address the question. (AO3)
Level 2	3–4 marks	Demonstrates mostly accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Candidates will produce statements with some development in the form of mostly accurate and relevant factual material, leading to a generic or superficial assessment being presented. (AO3)
Level 3	5–6 marks	Demonstrates accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Arguments developed using mostly coherent chains of reasoning leading to an assessment being presented which considers a range of factors . Candidates will demonstrate understanding of competing arguments/factors but unlikely to grasp their significance . The assessment leads to a judgement but this may be imbalanced. (AO3)
Level 4	7–8 marks	Demonstrates accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Displays a well-developed and logical assessment , containing logical chains of reasoning throughout. Demonstrates an awareness of the significance of competing arguments/factors leading to a balanced judgement being presented. (AO3)



Example

Student **B**

Question: **6**

Document name: **9PS0/03**

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Evaluate vs Assess

- AO1 is the same on the level descriptors.
- ‘Evaluate’ is looking for strengths and weaknesses, leading to conclusions.
- ‘Assess’ is looking for arguments for and against, leading to judgements.
- Example responses and indicative content in SAMs and mark schemes can help to show the subtle differences.



Discuss

Level	Mark	Descriptor
AO1 (4 marks), AO2 (4 marks) Candidates must demonstrate an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding vs application in their answer.		
	0	No rewardable material
Level 1	1–2 marks	Demonstrates isolated elements of knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Provides little or no reference to relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures). (AO2)
Level 2	3–4 marks	Demonstrates mostly accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Discussion is partially developed , but is imbalanced or superficial occasionally supported through the application of relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures). (AO2)
Level 3	5–6 marks	Demonstrates accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Arguments developed using mostly coherent chains of reasoning. Candidates will demonstrate a grasp of competing arguments but discussion may be imbalanced or contain superficial material supported by applying relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures). (AO2)
Level 4	7–8 marks	Demonstrates accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Displays a well-developed and logical balanced discussion, containing logical chains of reasoning. Demonstrates a thorough awareness of competing arguments supported throughout by sustained application of relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques or procedures). (AO2)



Example

Student **C**

Question: **9**

Document name: **9PS0/02**

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To what extent

Level	Mark	Descriptor
AO1 (6 marks), AO3 (6 marks) Candidates must demonstrate an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding vs judgement/conclusion in their answer.		
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3 marks	Demonstrates isolated elements of knowledge and understanding. (AO1) A judgement/decision may be presented, but will be generic and the supporting evidence will be limited. Limited attempt to address the question. (AO3)
Level 2	4–6 marks	Demonstrates mostly accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Candidates will produce statements with some development in the form of mostly accurate and relevant factual material leading to a judgement/decision being presented. Candidates will demonstrate a grasp of competing arguments but response may be imbalanced. (AO3)
Level 3	7–9 marks	Demonstrates accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Displays a mostly developed and logical argument, containing mostly coherent chains of reasoning. Demonstrates an awareness of competing arguments, presenting a judgement/decision which may be imbalanced. (AO3)
Level 4	10–12 marks	Demonstrates accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Displays a well-developed and logical argument, containing logical chains of reasoning throughout. Demonstrates an awareness of competing arguments and presents a balanced response , leading to an effective nuanced and balanced judgement/decision. (AO3)



Example

Student **D**

Question: **15**

Document name: **9PS0/01**

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Command word top tips

- ✓ 'Define' questions can include suitable examples if they show appropriate knowledge of the concept being defined.
- ✓ 'Describe' questions do not require justification but some development is required (i.e. it is more than just a brief definition).
- ✓ 'Explain' questions do require some form of justification/exemplification/reasoning.
- ✓ 'Assess', 'Evaluate', 'To what extent' all require judgements/conclusions whereas 'Discuss' does not.



Command word advice

- Students should know the definitions of the taxonomy (command words) in 'Appendix 6'.
- Students should know that application is required when a scenario/context is used in a question, regardless of the command word being used.
- For 8–20 mark questions, students should know what each command word is assessing (e.g. 'Discuss' is always AO1 and AO2).
- Students should try to use an appropriate amount of material for the command word being used.



Activity 1

Level descriptors





Delegate feedback



Part 2

Strategies for extended writing



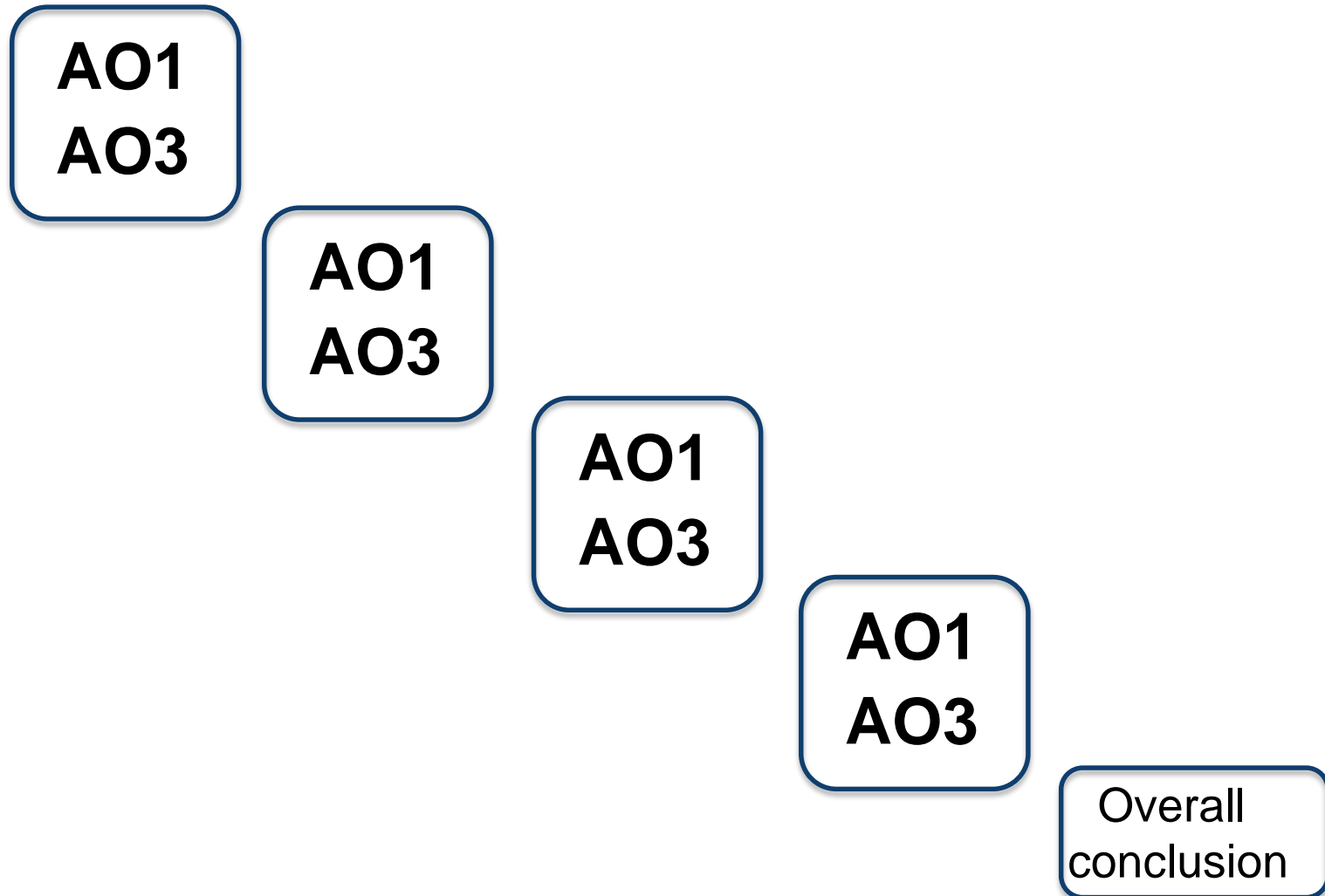


Integrated approach

- AO1 and AO3 integrated, rather than separate blocks of content.
- Point – elaborate – evaluate (or equivalent) – interim conclusion/comment or judgement/comment.
- May be more effective for studies.
- Enables logical chains of reasoning and balance of content.
- May not be as effective for theories or treatments though.



Structure of essay





Example

Point

Sherif's study took place in a natural setting for the boys.

Elaborate

The Eagles and the Rattlers competed in baseball and other tasks in Robber's cave state park in Oklahoma with a campsite, camp counsellors and a normal setting for a summer camp.

Evaluate

The natural setting of the state park and activities like baseball mean that the 11 year old boys would have acted normally for a competitive situation leading to prejudice meaning that the study had high ecological validity.

Interim conclusion/comment

Sherif's study could be considered a good explanation of how prejudice may occur in the real world due to the normal setting in which it was carried out.



Separated approach

- AO1 and AO3 separated, rather than weaved together.
- Block of AO1, followed by a block of AO3 content.
- May be more effective for theories or treatments.
- Can be more logical in terms of chains of reasoning and balance of content for different content.
- May not be as effective for studies though.



Structure of essay

AO1

AO1

AO1

AO1

AO3

AO3

AO3

AO3

Overall
conclusion



Activity 2

Integrated vs separated approaches





Delegate feedback



Part 3

Mark scheme construction





Creating a mark scheme

When commuting to college Sam notices that whichever form of public transport he uses strangers rarely communicate with each other. He notices that people tend to sit alone where possible and avoid eye contact with other commuters whilst listening to music or reading a newspaper.

One morning there is an incident on the bus when he is going to college. Following the event, Sam notices everyone is communicating and making eye contact. Later, when Sam discussed this change in behaviour with his friend, she argued that communication is a learned behaviour and that people are not born to communicate.

Evaluate the extent to which human behaviour such as communication can be explained by learning theories.

You must make reference to the context in your answer.

(12)



Question Number	Indicative content	Mark
5	<p>A01 (4 marks), A02 (4 marks), A03 (4 marks)</p> <p>A01</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social learning is about behaviour being observed and then imitated.• Social learning theory suggests we learn by observing and modelling those who are similar to us, such as same gender.• Operant conditioning proposes positive reinforcement which is when behaviour that is rewarded is more likely to be continued in future• Classical conditioning is when a neutral stimulus (NS) becomes associated with a response after repeated pairings with an unconditioned stimulus (UCS). <p>A02</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• People may have observed significant others avoiding eye contact with others on public transport so imitated this.• Sam may have noticed a male of a similar age who had a trait he wanted like being handsome communicate with others so began talking to others to model them.• Communication after an incident on public transport may be reassuring and act as a positive reinforcer.• People may have learned not to communicate on the bus as they had experienced repeated harassment (UCS) when communicating with others on public transport (NS) leading to fear (UCR/CR). <p>A03</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bandura (1961, 1963) showed behaviour can be learned through modelling with children copying adult role models to perform aggressive or non-aggressive acts, so this may also be the case with communication.• Skinner (1948) found pigeons learnt superstitious behaviour through food pellets which was reinforcing, so communication may serve as positively reinforcement so is continued.• However, studies such as Skinner (1948) used animals which may lack generalisability so this may not be helpful to explain the behaviour of humans on Sam's bus.• Caspi et al. (2002) found individuals possessing the MAOA-L gene showed greater antisocial behaviour when they experienced severe childhood maltreatment, which shows the influence of both internal and external factors on human behaviour and could be the same with communication. <p>Look for other reasonable marking points.</p>	(12)

Content is indicative, not required – other appropriate content can gain credit.

Number of points determined by the mark allocation, and was limited to a maximum of the mark allocation by Ofqual.

Point 1 of AO1 links to AO2 and AO3 to show possible logical chain of reasoning.

Consideration is given to the taxonomy (command word) used.

Balance of AO3 with strengths and weaknesses or for and against.

Part 4

Mark scheme application





Levels based mark schemes

Level	Mark	Descriptor
AO1 (4 marks), AO2 (4 marks), AO3 (4 marks) Candidates must demonstrate an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding vs application vs evaluation/conclusion in their answer		
Level 0	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3 marks	Demonstrates isolated elements of knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Provides little or no reference to relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques & procedures). (AO2) A conclusion may be presented, but will be generic and the supporting evidence will be limited. Limited attempt to address the question. (AO3)
Level 2	4–6 marks	Demonstrates mostly accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Line(s) of argument occasionally supported through the application of relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques & procedures). (AO2) Candidates will produce statements with some development in the form of mostly accurate and relevant factual material, leading to a superficial conclusion being made. (AO3)
Level 3	7–9 marks	Demonstrates accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Line(s) of argument supported by applying relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques & procedures). Might demonstrate the ability to integrate and synthesise relevant knowledge. (AO2) Arguments developed using mostly coherent chains of reasoning. Leading to a conclusion being presented. Candidates will demonstrate a grasp of competing arguments but evaluation may be imbalanced. (AO3)
Level 4	10–12 marks	Demonstrates accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Line(s) of argument supported throughout by sustained application of relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques or procedures). Demonstrates the ability to integrate and synthesise relevant knowledge. (AO2) Displays a well-developed and logical evaluation, containing logical chains of reasoning throughout. Demonstrates an awareness of competing arguments, presenting a balanced conclusion. (AO3)



How to award marks when Level descriptors are used

1. Finding the right level

The first stage is to decide into which level the answer should be placed. To do this, use a 'best-fit' approach, deciding which level most closely describes the features of the answer.

Example A: Balanced responses

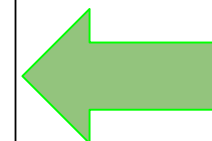
Level	Mark	Descriptor
AO1 (4 marks), AO2 (4 marks), AO3 (4 marks) Candidates must demonstrate an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding vs application vs evaluation/conclusion in their answer.		
Level 1	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3 marks	Demonstrates isolated elements of knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Provides little or no reference to relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques & procedures). (AO2) A conclusion may be presented, but will be generic and the supporting evidence will be limited. Limited attempt to address the question. (AO3)
Level 2	4–6 marks	Demonstrates mostly accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Line(s) of argument occasionally supported through the application of relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques & procedures). (AO2) Candidates will produce statements with some development in the form of mostly accurate and relevant factual material, leading to a superficial conclusion being made. (AO3)
Level 3	7–9 marks	Demonstrates accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Line(s) of argument supported by applying relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques & procedures). Might demonstrate the ability to integrate and synthesise relevant knowledge. (AO2) Arguments developed using mostly coherent chains of reasoning leading to a conclusion being presented. Candidates will demonstrate a grasp of competing arguments but evaluation may be imbalanced. (AO3)
Level 4	10–12 marks	Demonstrates accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Line(s) of argument supported throughout by sustained application of relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques or procedures). Demonstrates the ability to integrate and synthesise relevant knowledge. (AO2) Displays a well-developed and logical evaluation, containing logical chains of reasoning throughout. Demonstrates an awareness of competing arguments, presenting a balanced conclusion. (AO3)

This candidate has demonstrated equal AO1, AO2 and AO3 in their response, with their answer matching all the Level 2 descriptors evenly. The response would therefore be placed in **Level 2**.



Imbalanced responses

Level	Mark	Descriptor
AO1 (4 marks), AO2 (4 marks), AO3 (4 marks) Candidates must demonstrate an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding vs application vs evaluation/conclusion in their answer		
Level 0	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3 marks	Demonstrates isolated elements of knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Provides little or no reference to relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques & procedures). (AO2) A conclusion may be presented, but will be generic and the supporting evidence will be limited. Limited attempt to address the question. (AO3)
Level 2	4–6 marks	Demonstrates mostly accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Line(s) of argument occasionally supported through the application of relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques & procedures). (AO2) Candidates will produce statements with some development in the form of mostly accurate and relevant factual material, leading to a superficial conclusion being made. (AO3)
Level 3	7–9 marks	Demonstrates accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Line(s) of argument supported by applying relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques & procedures). Might demonstrate the ability to integrate and synthesise relevant knowledge. (AO2) Arguments developed using mostly coherent chains of reasoning. Leading to a conclusion being presented. Candidates will demonstrate a grasp of competing arguments but evaluation may be imbalanced. (AO3)
Level 4	10–12 marks	Demonstrates accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Line(s) of argument supported throughout by sustained application of relevant evidence from the context (scientific ideas, processes, techniques or procedures). Demonstrates the ability to integrate and synthesise relevant knowledge. (AO2) Displays a well-developed and logical evaluation, containing logical chains of reasoning throughout. Demonstrates an awareness of competing arguments, presenting a balanced conclusion. (AO3)





The first two examples above consider an *evenly* weighted levels based mark scheme in terms of AOs, i.e. AO1 (4 marks), AO2 (4 marks) and AO3 (4 marks).

In cases of *unevenly* weighted mark schemes, the same principles need apply; however, attention should be paid to the balance in the mark allocation of the different AOs.

Example C: Unevenly weighted mark scheme

Level	Mark	Descriptor
AO1 (6 marks), AO3 (10 marks)		
Candidates must demonstrate a greater emphasis on evaluation/conclusion vs knowledge and understanding in their answer. Knowledge & understanding is capped at maximum 6 marks.		
Level 0	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–4 marks	Demonstrates isolated elements of knowledge and understanding. (AO1) A conclusion may be presented, but will be generic and the supporting evidence will be limited. Limited attempt to address the question. (AO3)
Level 2	5–8 marks	Demonstrates mostly accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Candidates will produce statements with some development in the form of mostly accurate and relevant factual material, leading to a superficial conclusion being made. (AO3)
Level 3	9–12 marks	Demonstrates accurate knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Arguments developed using mostly coherent chains of reasoning, leading to a conclusion being presented. Candidates will demonstrate a grasp of competing arguments but evaluation may be imbalanced. (AO3)
Level 4	13–16 marks	Demonstrates accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding. (AO1) Displays a well-developed and logical evaluation, containing logical chains of reasoning throughout. Demonstrates an awareness of competing arguments, presenting a balanced conclusion. (AO3)





2. Finding a mark within a level

After a level has been decided on, the next stage is to decide on the mark within the level. The instructions below tell you how to reward responses within a level. However, where a level has specific guidance about how to place an answer within a level, always follow that guidance.

Levels containing 2 marks only

Start with the presumption that the work will be at the top of the level. Move down to the lower mark if the work only just meets the requirements of the level.

Levels containing 3 or more marks

Markers should be prepared to use the full range of marks available in a level and not restrict marks to the middle. Markers should start at the middle of the level (or the upper-middle mark if there is an even number of marks) and then move the mark up or down to find the best mark. To do this, they should take into account how far the answer meets the requirements of the level:

- If it meets the requirements fully and perhaps shows some characteristics of the level above, markers should be prepared to award full marks within the level. The top mark in the level is used for answers that are as good as can realistically be expected within that level.
- If it only just meets the requirements of the level, markers should award marks at the bottom of the level. The bottom mark in the level is used for answers that are the weakest that can be expected within that level.
- The middle marks of the level are used for answers that have a reasonable match to the descriptor. This might represent a balance between some characteristics of the level that are fully met and others that are only barely met.



Example

Student **E**

Question: **5**

Document ID: **QC0444003134408**

Document name: **9PS0/03**

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Example

Student **F**

Question: **5**

Document ID: **QC0444003134406**

Document name: **9PS0/03**

[Inset online: Student's response to appear here]



Activity 4

Marking a response





Marking activity A – 12 mark, with scenario

Student response 1,2

Question: 5

Document ID: Response 1 – QC0444003182866

Response 2 – QC0444003133171

Document name: 9PS0/03

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Marking activity B – 8 mark, no scenario

Student response 3,4

Question: 5

Document ID: Response 3 – QC0444002387501

Response 4 – QC0444002406921

Document name: 9PS0/02

[Inset online: Marking activity B to appear here]



Delegate feedback





General top tips

- ✓ Use the SAMs and past papers for examples of assessment.
- ✓ Use the Examiner Reports and attend the feedback events where possible.
- ✓ Use the 'Ask the Expert' service if you are ever unsure.
- ✓ Do not rely on social media or text books – always use the primary sources and use the specification and information on Pearson's website as the definitive source for the qualification.



Considering delivery strategies and sharing best practice

1. Teaching strategies
2. Resources
3. Technology



Support

Subject Advisors: **Irine Muhiuddin and Stephen Nugus**

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Twitter: @EdexcelScience

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/psychology-2015.html>



Other useful links

[Grade Boundaries](#)

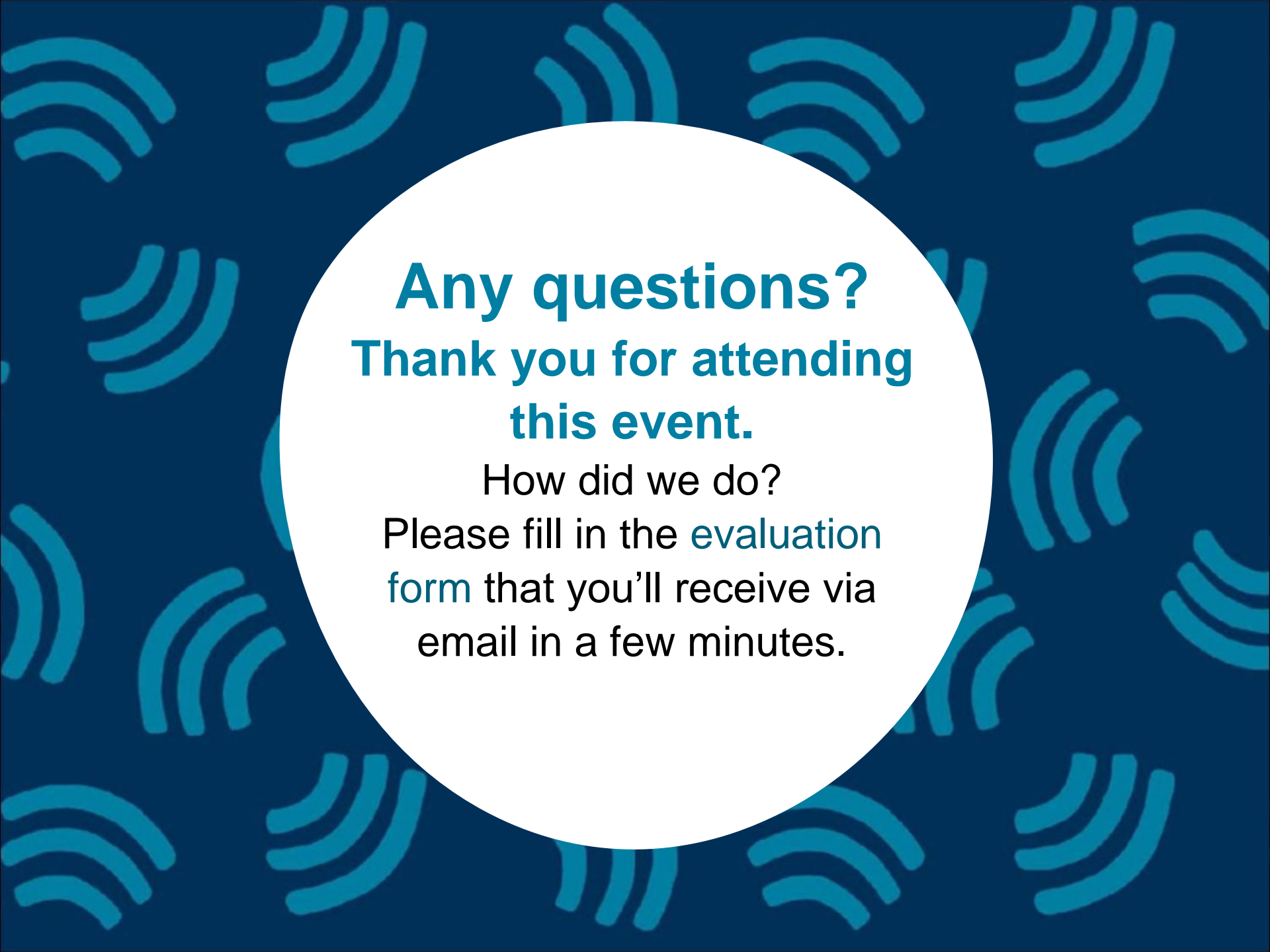
This page shows the minimum marks needed to achieve a certain grade for all UK and international examinations. Also refer to the examiners report which is available for download with other documents.

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- See your students' scores for every exam question.
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this event.

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form that you'll receive via
email in a few minutes.

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