



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel Advanced Level  
In Physical Education (9PE0)  
Paper 02 Psychological and Social Principles of  
Physical Education

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## **Generic Points**

Many candidates wrote full and comprehensive responses across the paper, reflecting good teaching and thorough exam preparations. It was notable that in some cases the command word demand had not been fulfilled, such as when asked to analyse, only a description was written. Some questions were left unanswered thereby reducing the potential final mark. Candidates are advised to plan their time carefully to complete all responses to the best of their ability. Where candidates were unsure and produced educated guesses, often they were given credit.

- The extended questions once again proved a mixture of highly knowledgeable responses in many cases, while in others, a lack of applied knowledge depth. The key to gaining higher marks is to apply this knowledge to the question-demand based on the command word. It is worth centres spending time with their students exploring the meaning of each command word – this can be found in the specification.
- The extended 15-mark questions comprise 60% of the total marks available and a strategy would be to answer these first when sufficient time is available. Given the structure of the paper, many candidates wrote their best extended response for question 5. Perhaps reflecting its place earlier in the paper and when ‘freshness’ is higher. Responses where candidates fully engaged with the question, provided a plethora of credit-worthy content and written in a coherent and analytical style. These were awarded with the highest two levels of 4 and 5.
- Analytical skills are underused in the extended responses, where the desire to write as much content as possible seems to over-ride the requirements of the AO3 command word. The result is a plethora of marks around the middle two lower levels – level 2 and into level 3.
- The two synoptic questions, Q5 and Q16, allow candidates to include content from the wider specification. Atypical content is contained in the mark scheme. Due to different factors such as time, this opportunity is rarely exercised and candidates who do attempt to include wider content only do so minimally. Without this wider content, the maximum mark can only be a level 4 (10-12 marks).
- The 8-mark level-based question proved to be a good test of candidates’ knowledge of this area. The command word examine continues to be a challenge for some candidates, where once again, only writing beyond the first one or two most obvious or common answers was evident. It is worth noting that the question asks about people with a disability, and the vast majority of answers only referenced wheelchair users.

- For the point-assessed responses, candidates are beginning to focus on, and better understand, the demands of the command words; consequently, candidates seem to be moving on from the “write all you know’ for these responses. Attention should be paid to avoiding writing lists, which is a separate command – particularly in answer to the command word summarise.
- Ensure the spelling and application of technical language is learned as given through the specification glossary - in particular for ‘define’ questions.
- Although the paper was stimulating and challenging, offering a broad reflection of the specification, there were no questions that were globally poorly answered by the majority. Candidates appeared to be versant with Thorndike, aware of the features of the long-term memory, informed about Dr Arnold and au fait with Steiner. This would seem to indicate the specification is well-covered by teachers across the Pearson family.

### **Q01**

This question proved problematic for many students, and while attracting one mark only, the exactness of the information required was often lacking. This was a define command word question whereby the answer requires a statement of translation, not a list or an isolated statement. The key here was to reference a singular skill or practice taking place in a range of conditions. There were a lot of vague responses where responses referred to exercises or multiple skills and retorts that referenced an open environment but made no mention of a skill or a practice.

### **Q02**

The command word outline required a brief account of non-linked points. This can be a brief description or, if appropriate, a short list of statements. The question was simplified through identification of each of Thorndike’s laws. As a result, this question scored well, with most students seemingly aware of the three laws and the differences therein. Many made a solid attempt to link this to the S-R bond, though this could have been in the form of simple statements such as “strengthened” or “weakened the S-R bond.” Though the terms given to Thorndike’s laws (effect, exercise and readiness) are seemingly self-explanatory, students were required to use different vocabulary in their outlines. Some confusions were seen. The best responses outlined effect with reference to reinforcement strengthening or weakening the SR bond, they described exercise as repetition and referred

to the maturity of the mind and body for readiness. Weaker responses tended to be vague or repeat the terms from the laws.

### **Q03**

This question required students to summarise features and as such mere lists of single words were not awarded credit. Answers needed to contain content, albeit brief information about the point being made. There was no need for lengthy elaboration on the key features of capacity, duration and encoding, and statements such as “unlimited capacity” or “lasts a lifetime” were acceptable. Candidates who were knowledgeable about LTM referred to capacity, duration and encoding, as well as adding detail about the working memory and links between STM and LTM. There was occasional confusion with the short-term sensory store, which is part of the STM and not a feature of LTM. Students were credited for retrieval, rehearsal and maintenance, if they were correctly summarised. Most students were able to accumulate marks for this question.

### **Q04**

The demand for this question was for a description, an account of something without reasons, and a relevant example. Many responses elaborated on information processing aspects but contained enough knowledge of closed loop feedback to merit marks. The key for this question was to indicate that feedback takes place during the performance and to provide an adequate example, such as kinaesthetic feedback which was correctly referenced, but another source could also have been direction from a coach, during the skill, to initiate a change in performance. Examples that focussed on an outcome, terminal feedback, were unsuitable, as this is feedback after the performance. Gymnasts performing on a balance beam or correcting when in a handstand, proved popular. Fewer candidates than expected seemed to know this topic and score full marks.

### **Q05**

This question was the first of five level-based extended responses. The first extended question on the paper produced many valid responses. This could be a reflection of its early occurrence on the paper. Candidates must balance the content of writing a response to the command word, in this case analyse – to examine something methodically and in detail, and crucially to typically offer explanations and interpretations. For this question, candidates are also offered the opportunity to reference wider content from the specification.

As a starting point, candidates should identify the key words or phrases contained in the question. Here, these were guidance, practice methods, use of aids and the coach. This provides the structure for their responses. Content style should provide a level of analysis as directed by the command word. Very few candidates attain a level five mark (13-15) while there are some candidates who achieve this level, which is encouraging and a testament to their instruction.

Level descriptors refer to linking theory and practice, this means using examples to illustrate points including using correct technical terminology. Students should then analyse as opposed to describing. 'Sophisticated' analysis goes beyond what is good and bad about something, it brings in other aspects such as what is best for novices or large groups and explains why. Analysis should then lead to a substantiated judgement. This does not just have to be in the form of a conclusion but could occur throughout the text in the form of summative comments on what works best. There was some confusion between practice methods and structures, but structures could still attract some credit as they do retain relevance. It was pleasing to read candidates' responses that brought in learning theories and the transfer of learning, but candidates who successfully used the wider specification were rare. Overall, candidates tended to write in a predominantly descriptive manner with some applied attempts to analyse, some good examples were used, a degree of technical language and some brief judgements made. As a result, marks tended to cluster around the border of level two and three.

#### **Q06**

This question also used the command word outline and, as such, brief responses are acceptable. Many students gained two marks for simply stating innate and enduring, or a similar wording. Trait Theory is a part of Personality Theory and is the work of a number of psychologists, not just Eysenck. Some responses referred to Eysenck's dimensions or Cattell's primary factors, which failed to attract marks as it did not mention features. There was a little repetition, with students stating that personality is genetic, from birth and inherited from parents. As this is the same point, it could only be awarded the single mark. Most candidates performed well on this question.

#### **Q07**

This question also used the command word summarise, expressing the most important facts or ideas about something. Therefore, a simple list was inappropriate. However, the summaries did not have to be extensive to

attract marks. The summaries needed to be about types of goal setting as clearly stated in the specification. This is different from the NCF's SMARTER targets, not types, though one mark could be allocated for realistic goals, if summarised. Many students did realise this distinction and answered well by referring to subjective, objective, aspirational, outcome, process or performance goals. It is important to note here that exam papers are set within the remit of the specification, and mark schemes are written with this in mind.

#### **Q08**

Many candidates produced correct responses, and this proved to be well answered by most candidates, who appeared to know this topic. Errors were made through confusion with social facilitation or not specifically stating a decrease in performance. Some responses were clear guesses with no knowledge of social inhibition. When answered well, candidates detailed the presence of others, co-actors or an audience and a drop or decline in performance levels.

#### **Q09**

This question required candidates to describe the three specific components of the Steiner's model of group productivity. As this was a describe question, a simple illustration of the model would not suffice. Candidates were required to describe both potential and actual productivity, as well as faulty processes. Many candidates knew the model and were able to describe each component accurately and had been well prepared for a question on this topic. However, many candidates failed to gain credit for their response.

#### **Q10**

The second extended writing question was set on a well-established specification topic. Candidates performed reasonably well discussing aggression. Once again, candidates were guided towards the required content in the question as it asked for types, causes and theories. This should provide a logical structure for the response. This was a discussion question and, as such, students are expected to show knowledge of factors that underpin performance while exploring issues, lines of reasoning and situations, articulating different viewpoints. Many candidates covered hostile, channelled, instrumental and reactive aggression well.

Types of aggression were well explained but lacked analytical content or showed misunderstandings. Theories were described quite well and the better answers related theories to types. Very few candidates offered the

causes, such as over-arousal, underdeveloped moral reasoning or bracketed morality. Those that did, and included a degree of analysis, were able to access the higher mark levels. It was pleasing to see candidates identifying a range of causes, such as temperature or injury but often these were not analysed by relating to theories or types. Frustration-aggression and the cue hypothesis proved well known but few were able to reference Bandura and social learning theory. Discussion necessitates a judgement to be made and, to access the higher levels, key issues need to be explored and concluding statements substantiated. Some candidates were able to do this with accuracy of applied knowledge.

### **Q11**

This question focused focussed on the well-established and popular topic of the effects of the Industrial Revolution on sport. This was generally well answered, with candidates clearly having been well taught and prepared in this area. It was important to direct responses towards the impact on sport rather than just list societal changes during the Industrial Revolution, as the question required a summary. Candidates provided accurate detail from the specification content, in referring to industrialisation, education, transport and urbanisation. There was also scoped to bring in content referring to technology advancements, the development of sports laws and rules, and the formation of governing bodies. A reduction in the predominance of blood sports was often linked to a reduction in the level of violence seen. Marks were lost through repetition of points or confusion with popular recreation and in some cases, repetitions were seen.

### **Q12**

Question twelve necessitated the production of four summarised examples of Americanisation in contemporary sport in the UK. This provided unexpected obstacles for many candidates who struggled to attain the full four marks. This was due to a repetition of points and a slight confusion with commercialisation, which is connected but not the same. The mark scheme was set out to attempt to award a range of points from all areas. Some points made, such as entertainment, could attract multiple marks if students referred to half-time shows, hospitality, better camera angles and replays. Americanisation, a process through the late 1980s for nearly two decades, was essentially the way sport was packaged and the move away from traditionally British provisions of sport. The aim of the question was to examine candidates' knowledge through the summary of features of American sport that have been adopted in the UK, for example, team names like Sale Sharks, bright and vibrant kits, merchandising, wider entertainment at fixtures and the concept of franchising. While most

candidates gained marks for this question, there were fewer fully comprehensive responses than expected.

### **Q13**

In question thirteen, the spectre of gamesmanship was raised and an explanation required – how and why with appropriate the meaning. A significant majority of responses showed that candidates knew what gamesmanship was - the bending of the rules to gain an advantage, being the common and correct answer. In most cases, this was supported by an appropriate example and the two marks were justifiably awarded. Consequently, students scored well on this question. Lots of examples were taken from football, common ones being diving or time wasting, which were deemed acceptable even though their simulation can be penalised, as can time wasting particularly by the goalkeeper, thereby breaking and not bending of the rule. Keeping the ball in play while an opponent is injured was not credited, as it is not a rule that the ball must be kicked out of play and the referee has the discretion to stop the game which reflects sportsmanship. It was pleasing to see examples taken from golf, tennis and basketball where candidates mentioned unnecessary coughing while taking a shot, exaggerated grunting and the overuse of toilet and medical breaks.

### **Q14**

Despite, question fourteen being a niche question in many ways, awarded marks were reasonably good with many candidates appearing to be familiar with Dr Arnold and his influence on sport during his stewardship of Rugby School. The question referred to the emergence of sport in England and responses contained some misconceptions. Arnold was not responsible for the Oxbridge melting pot, the emergence of governing bodies or the diffusion of sport across the Empire. His role was to encourage games, especially team games, promote morals through muscular Christianity and in the promotion of the cult of athleticism and the implementation of inter-house competitions. These were the most common successful responses alongside the role of Sixth Formers, the development of prefects to shape sporting contests, and the use of sport as a form of social control. This question was a good test of knowledge and those who knew the topic well scored highly.

### **Q15**

As is ever the case, candidates struggled to score in the top level of this eight-mark question. However, there were many who accessed band two. The phrasing of the question neatly led candidates to examining, using analysis or evaluation, the barriers to participation for the disabled.

Candidates used the data to describe issues relating to provision, opportunity, access and esteem. Where these were presented as isolated statements, students were unable to access above level one, but most candidates tried to present a line of reasoning and a range of ideas. Some candidates simply rewrote the data from the table without any examination.

Better responses included a more detailed examination of the mainstream barriers and added ideas pertinent to the disabled such as cost, stereotypes, media coverage and facilities. There was, however, an over-reliance on references to wheelchair users as if they were the only people with disabilities. Unlike previous years, there were some good answers for this eight-mark question, and many scored in the upper end of level two with 4 or 5 marks.

### **Q16**

Question sixteen was prescriptive in its demands and intended direction. There was an overt reference to the relationship between sport and the media directed through analysis of the positive and negative aspects of the relationship. Responses tended to be overly descriptive, with candidates spending an inordinate amount of time illustrating various pieces of evidence to support points made. While links between theory and practice are required, there are only five marks awarded here for content in the form of AO2. The over-reliance on describing examples resulted in a loss of time, that could have been spent on analysing points made. The question allowed candidates to cover content related to the positive and negatives of TV, press, radio and social media. Although an \* marked question, there was little evidence of the use of the wider specification.

However, there was sufficient content in many responses to support scores of a high level two into a level three. Positive points included the generation of sports income, developing role models and the promotion of sport popularity, whereas the negatives mentioned the pressure to perform, invasion of performer privacy, increased scrutiny and impact on less popular sports. This showed a level of understanding and often was accompanied by suitable examples but very few ventured into the realms of exploring key issues. This was an easily accessible question where most candidates' responses merited marks but again very few were able to access the top two bands.

## **Q17**

Question seventeen was the weakest of the extended writing responses. Often this is the case for the final question on the paper. There were a lot of short answers, several blanks and several very vague responses. The impression was that very few knew the detail of talent identification and development in the UK. This was a two-part question asking for provision and influences. Many spent too long on elucidating the merits of the Australian and East German models but failed to clearly make links to the current UK structures.

The primary focus for many was the pathway taken through schools to the regional and national level, including academies. This provided for a limited response which was the norm for many answers. Too few responses included identification schemes or talent development programmes; there was scant information on development centres such as Loughborough or Bath and only rare referrals to UKSI and World Class Programmes. Many candidates failed to cover the role of professional sports and their contribution to talent identification and provision. The lack of precise and specific knowledge limited most responses, resulting in a poor performance for this question.

### **Key points for future examinations:**

- Plan the extended responses with a neat introduction which is not overly long, write using shorter discrete paragraphs which make a point and where appropriate, include a sporting example. Always include a conclusion which conforms to the command word which should be longer than the introduction.
- Use the acronym PEEL – make a point, give an example, develop and explore in context to the command word and finally link this to the next paragraph.
- Do not guess facts which are then proved to be incorrect as this gives the impression of a lack of knowledge.
- Where lower points assessed questions have one to four marks, use a new line for each point being made as this promotes a structure to the response and a clearer identification of content worthy of credit.
- A strategy for completing the paper could be to answer the two extended questions in Section A first, then attempt the points-based questions and repeat this for Section B.
- Ensure candidates write with clarity, as many papers were difficult to read and interpretations of content can be generated, which can lead to misunderstandings.

- Do not use bullet points for extended responses as these require comprehension and continuous prose. A few sub-headings would be acceptable. The element of written communication is assessed.

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