



Pearson

Examiner's Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel International GCE
Advanced Level in Social and Cognitive
Psychology (WPS01)

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General Comments

Overall the majority of candidates attempted all of the questions on this paper.

Candidates struggled most in answering questions 2e, 3, and 5c. Candidate responses for the rest of the paper was largely determined by their strengths in terms of subject knowledge. Again as in previous series knowledge and understanding of both cognitive and social was evidenced equally in candidates' answers.

Candidates coverage of studies and research evidence within this examination paper was generally sound. There was some confusion in terms of Milgram's Experiment 10 as some candidates did not know accurately the procedural knowledge and at times were not able to differentiate this with his original research. In terms of areas on the specification which identify different studies candidates would benefit from having accurate knowledge of the differences between them.

The majority of candidates were able to fully grasp the different theoretical areas assessed on this paper. Candidates were able to apply their knowledge of these well; however this did seem to be stronger within the cognitive side of the paper.

Candidate's use of the scenarios in their answers again caused problems for some, especially in the smaller questions. When the scenario was embedded within answers candidates fulfilled the requirements of the question and accessed full marks. Quite a few candidates did provide generic answers which limited the marks that they could gain, especially in the smaller questions. Candidates would have benefitted from applying their answers clearly to the scenario provided in the question stimulus.

For some candidates there does seem to still be an issue with strengths and weaknesses. For the most part these have been getting stronger throughout the examination series, however candidates would still benefit from leaning theses accurately. At times generic answers were provided which did not incorporate enough accurate knowledge about the study to clearly know which study they were providing a strength and weakness for.

Use of conclusive statements within longer questions did show some clear understanding of the taxonomy of the paper. If included within candidate answers they were generally concise and accurate.

Based on their performance on this paper candidates are offered the following advice:

- Candidates need to know all of their studies accurately in terms of content.
- Coverage of all areas within the specification especially key theories needs to be fully incorporated into candidates learning.
- Candidates need to pay careful attention to not only the taxonomy within a question but the question requirements. For example, if the question asks for reference to a scenario then candidates need to include this within their answer to access the marks.
- Some candidates provided answers in terms of the levels based questions that showed an awareness of the necessary skills. Candidates need to continue to develop this in terms of balance/judgement/ conclusions and reasoned chains or arguments that may be required from a question.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1(a)

Question Introduction

Most candidates attempted this question demonstrating an understanding of Milgram's procedure for Experiment 10. The majority of candidate focused on providing answers which overlapped with Milgram's original laboratory experiment, usually after providing contextual knowledge of his experiment 10.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would have benefitted from knowing the differences between Experiment 10 and Milgram's original laboratory experiment - referencing Bridgeport or other key material that indicated they knew the procedural elements of the study.

Question (1b)

Question Introduction

Lots of candidates attempted this question demonstrating an understanding of the requirements of strengths of Milgram's Experiment 10. Candidates were at times able to identify a strength(s) of Milgram's Experiment 10 and justify their strength(s) for a second mark. Some candidates provided answers that did not focus on Experiment 10, instead providing strengths of Milgram's laboratory study - specifically in terms of it being carried out in a laboratory.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from ensuring that their answers are focused in terms of identification marks to the correct study being asked about.

Question 2(a)

Question Introduction

Where candidates used the scenario appropriately, they were able to achieve both marks for this question. Some candidates did not accurately state both the independent and dependent variables within their answers. A few candidates did not understand what a non-direction hypothesis was.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to focus on the direction of the hypothesis asked for in addition to providing an accurate dependent and independent variable within their answers.

Question 2(b)

Question Introduction

The majority of candidates were able to calculate the correct mean for the data in the scenario. A minority of candidates did provide an answer for the median and not the mean. A few candidates did show calculations of the mean which were worked out inaccurately.

Examiner Tip

Candidates must ensure they check their calculations carefully to avoid losing marks. In addition candidates would benefit from knowing clear differences between their measures of central tendency.

Question 2(c)

Question Introduction

Lots of candidates provided an accurate definition of the mode. At times a few candidates did struggle to provide a definition which was specific to the mode. Some candidates provided answers for other measures of central tendency, mainly the median. A few candidates did clarify their answers with examples which was not necessary for this 1 mark question - however did add clarity to some of their responses.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to make sure that they know accurate definitions for key terminology covered in the specification.

Question 2(d)

Question Introduction

Candidates answered this question well; there was sufficient evidence of candidates being able to interpret the information to produce an accurate and correctly labelled graph. Not all candidates drew a bar chart as the question instructed. For 3 marks candidates had to provide an appropriate title, the accuracy of which did vary across answers provided. A second mark was awarded for labelling the axes correctly, this like the title varied in accuracy across candidates

responses. The final mark was for the correct plotting of the data; most candidates did this well.

Candidates generally made good use of the graph paper which made answers easier to plot. Very few candidates did not attempt at least part of this question; some candidates provided histograms which were not credible.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from focusing on labelling the axes of their graphs accurately.

Question 2(e)

Question Introduction

Most candidates attempted this question with some success in terms of the skill requirements. The question asked for two controls that the researcher needed to consider during planning - one mark for each control was awarded for identification of the control in relation to the scenario and a second mark per control for justification of their choice. Some candidates identified controls already in place from the scenario which limited the marks they were awarded. There was evidence of an understanding of controls in the experiment which demonstrated an awareness of standardising procedures for the scenario however justifications of these controls were not always evident or clear. A few candidates provided generic answers not focused on any element of the scenario which was necessary for the question requirements.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to make sure they focus their answers on the scenario in terms of identification and justification of their answers.

Question 3

Question Introduction

Some candidates produced accurate and well developed answers focusing on evaluating social power theory as an explanation of obedience. These answers provided understanding of social power theory referencing reward power, expert power amongst others. These answers at times displayed a well-developed and logical evaluation incorporating comparisons with other theories, supporting and contradicting evidence, amongst other statements. Some candidates did not always show an awareness of competing arguments which resulted in an imbalanced argument. The question specifically asked for an evaluation of social power theory as an

explanation of obedience which was not always clear within some candidate's answers.

Some candidates focused on describing the Social Power Theory but without reference to any evaluative element, which was necessary for this question. There were for some inaccuracies in social power theory which resulted in only a few candidates achieving Level 4. In a minority of cases candidates provided answers for agency theory, social impact theory and conformity. Conclusions for some were not always evidenced or clear which again limited what candidates could achieve.

As a level based question it is important to note that an A01/A03 response was required which needed to show an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding versus assessment and conclusion. Those candidates who scored highly on both skills were able to demonstrate accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of social power theory. This A01 knowledge was displayed in a well-developed assessment containing logical chains of reasoning throughout the candidates answer, not just in the second part. This therefore allowed these candidates to demonstrate an awareness of the significance of competing arguments throughout their answer, allowing them to provide a balanced judgement.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from a clear understanding of social power theory in terms of obedience. This would then allow candidates to apply both skill elements with accuracy and development. Conclusions for some would also support answers in providing a balanced conclusion.

Question 4

Question Introduction

Candidates answered this question well showing a good understanding of the requirements of the question and scenario. Candidates who were awarded higher marks provided answers with appropriate description of a procedure in relation to the scenario; making clear links to interference tasks. These interference tasks were often well explained with examples provided to clarify candidate answers. Answers which did not meet full question requirements did not provide an interference task or did not mention baseline measurements for example. A few candidates provided answers which did not reference any links to the scenario, as an A02 question this is a requirement that needed to be embedded within candidate answers.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to ensure that they write in enough depth for a 4 mark answer. In terms of this question clear reference to the scenario was needed for successful answers.

Question 5(a)

Question Introduction

The majority of candidates were able to calculate the correct mean for the data in the scenario. A minority of candidates did provide an answer for the median and not the mean. A few candidates did show calculations of the mean which were worked out inaccurately.

Examiner Tip

Candidates must ensure they check their calculations for mistakes and ensure that correct in order to ensure marks are awarded.

Question 5(b)

Question Introduction

The majority of candidates were able to calculate the correct ratio for the data in the scenario. A minority of candidates did not provide an answer that was in a ratio format. A minority of candidates did not attempt to answer this question.

Examiner Tip

Candidates must ensure they are aware of all the mathematical requirements of the specification.

Question 5(c)

Successful candidates were able to identify a strength/weakness of volunteer sampling technique used by Shiya in her research. These candidates went onto justify their answers in terms of the question requirements for additional marks. Candidate answers for the strength often focused for example on volunteer participants choosing to take part in studying the features of a building which they went onto justify for a second mark. For some candidates their answers were generic and did not mention any elements of Shiya's study in their answers. A few candidates did not focus on the volunteer sampling technique within their strengths and weaknesses - selecting other evaluative sampling or methodological points.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to make sure they focus their answers on the scenario when asked to do so by the question

Question 6(a)

Question Introduction

Candidates attempted this question in terms of Bartlett's (1932) War of the Ghosts study, focusing on procedural elements. Answers focused on many areas of the study with the most popular including serial reproduction, repetition of the story after several days, weeks, months and years and the actual story. Some candidates provided accurate answers which allowed them to access all 4 marks. A few candidates provided aims, results, and conclusions within their answers which were not credible. Were candidates struggled was in terms of the accuracy of some of their points and providing procedural descriptions which were not part of Bartlett's study. A minority of candidates confused this classic study with other studies on the course.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to focus on learning classic studies accurately to ensure that they have access to all marks within a question.

Question 6(b)

Question Introduction

Most candidates attempted this question producing good answers in terms of both skill requirements. Some candidates were able to access A01 marks showing an understanding of strengths and weakness of Bartlett's (1932) War of the Ghost study. Answers focused on many elements of the study including application, lack of standardised controls and replication issues. Weaknesses were generally answered better than strengths. A few candidates did not provide enough clarity for A01 marks in terms of providing knowledge from Bartlett's (1932) War of the Ghost study to then go onto justify their answer; however in most cases candidates could still access their A03 mark if relevant. There were inaccuracies carried across from 6a within the A01 part of candidate responses which did limit the quality of their answers. A few candidates provided generic strengths and weaknesses which were not credible.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to ensure that their strengths and weaknesses have clear identification A01 within them to allow for accurate justification of their answers.

Question 7

Question Introduction

Many candidates produced accurate and well developed answers focusing on evaluating Atkinson and Shiffrin's (1968) multi-store model of memory. The stronger answers provided an understanding of the multi-store model in terms of STM, LTM and sensory store - providing accurate knowledge and understanding of each area. These answers sometimes displayed a well-developed and logical evaluation incorporating supporting evidence from both laboratory and case studies, alternative explanations of memory and applications. For stronger answers these were shown through logical chains of reasoning through the candidates work. Some candidates did not always show an awareness of competing arguments which resulted in an imbalanced argument. The question specifically asked for an evaluation of Atkinson and Shiffrin's (1968) multi-store model of memory and in doing so candidates did at times provide an awareness of competing arguments within their answers, resulting in a balanced conclusion.

Conclusions within many candidate answers showed an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the model - often taking this further through presenting this in a balanced way. A few candidates focused solely on describing Atkinson and Shiffrin's (1968) multi-store model of memory or describing an alternative memory model. In addition some candidates did provide logical chains of reasoning within their answers through the use of strength and weaknesses throughout - however A01 knowledge and understanding did lapse in some answers.

As a level based question it is important to note that an A01/A03 response was required which needed to show an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding versus assessment and conclusion. Those candidates who scored highly on both skills were able to demonstrate accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of Atkinson and Shiffrin's (1968) multi-store model of memory. This A01 knowledge and understanding was displayed in a well-developed assessment containing logical chains of reasoning throughout the candidates answer, not just in the second part. This therefore allowed these candidates to demonstrate an awareness of the significance of competing arguments incorporating both skill elements throughout their answer, enabling them to provide a balanced conclusion.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from providing accurate knowledge and understanding of the models of memory which incorporate coherent chains of reasoning throughout their answers and not just in the

second half. This would allow candidates to easily demonstrate an awareness of competing arguments and provide a balanced conclusion.

Question 8

Question Introduction

Many candidates began their answer with a brief overview of what the question focused on, setting the scene for their essays in terms of minority influence being a means for the shop owners to change the behaviour of people dropping food waste. Lots of candidates embedded within their answers minority influence knowledge and understanding in terms of consistency, flexibility, amongst others. These were often used in terms of the scenario - although not always developed for some; this did show at times clear integration for most. Several candidates made no reference to the scenario in their answer, providing an evaluation of minority influence. A minority of candidates did not attempt this question.

Candidates were at times successful in linking their knowledge of minority influence to the context in terms of knowledge and understanding of many areas. Clearer answers provided linked elements of the scenario within their answers although there was a lack of explicit use of knowledge of some key social influence terms within scenario application.

A few candidates were able to provide in their answers mostly coherent chains of reasoning leading to a conclusion being presented of whether minority influence could or could not change the behaviour of the people. For a minority this grasp of competing arguments was shown in them challenging social influence as a way of changing the behaviour - for these candidates if conclusions were balanced higher level bands were awarded.

As a level based question it is important to note that an A01/A02/A03 response was required which needed to demonstrate an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding versus application, evaluation and conclusions within their answers. Those candidates who scored highly on all three skills were able to demonstrate accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of the social influence. This knowledge was then supported through sustained application of relevant evidence from the context of the shop owners. This allowed candidates to demonstrate the ability to integrate and synthesise relevant knowledge. These candidates were able to display a well developed and logical evaluation, containing logical chains of reasoning through their answer which demonstrated an awareness of competing argument. This therefore allowed for a balanced conclusion and level 4 marks.

Examiner Tip

Candidates would benefit from clearly referencing in the scenario in addition to providing clear knowledge and understanding of minority influence. Candidates need to focus more on A03 within their answers in these 12 mark questions in terms of providing balance - evidence, alternative theories amongst other areas which are credible if applied correctly.

