



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

October 2019

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Subsidiary In Psychology (WPS03)
Paper 1: Applications of Psychology

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General Comments

Knowledge and understanding was demonstrated by many of the candidates. There were few blank pages, although many of the candidates attempted to answer all questions.

From the two option units, Option A was the preferred choice for majority of the candidates. Candidates demonstrated their knowledge and understanding in respect of many aspects of criminological psychology which was evident. Candidates who had chosen Option B, demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of personality traits.

Candidates would benefit from an improved understanding of stratified sampling as when this was applied to the scenario, generic answers were given on the whole that could apply to any of the sampling techniques stated in the specification. Further improvement is also required in respect of language development theories as often the responses were vague and did not fully explain the age appropriate expectations.

It was pleasing to see the level of knowledge and understanding in respect of weapon focus when applied to eyewitness testimony. The candidates were able to not only describe the process in detail but also apply it in terms of witness inaccuracy.

The longer response questions requiring AO3 appeared to challenge students at the lower end of the grade boundaries. It is important for candidates to understand the requirements of the questions in terms of the taxonomy. When a question requires an assessment to be made, candidates must make a judgement. It is also important to apply the judgement accurately, therefore, as in assessing whether a study can be considered scientific, general evaluation points should not be given.

Paper Summary

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

- Candidates need to review their understanding and application of theories of language development.
- Candidates need to understand that when describing and evaluating stratified sampling that the features should be specific to that particular sampling method.
- Candidates would benefit from revisiting the requirements of the questions by reviewing the taxonomies and working through how to apply these, particularly in respect of AO3.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 01a

Question Introduction

This question required a conclusion and not a description of the results. Some candidates were able to suggest that positive parenting styles improved in the intervention group.

Question 01b

Question Introduction

Many candidates were unable to identify or justify a strength that could be made to O'Connor's study, giving a generic suggestion that was not creditworthy.

Examiner Tip

When the question asks for a strength of a particular study, the identification and justification points must be in respect of the study in question and not a generic suggestion in order to be creditworthy.

Question 01c

Question Introduction

This was a question that required candidates to suggest an improvement to O'Connor's study. Many candidates did not demonstrate accurate knowledge of the study and were therefore unable to suggest a relative improvement.

Examiner Tip

When the question relates to a named study in detail, candidates need to be able to discuss and evaluate the aim, method, results, conclusions and strengths and weaknesses of the study.

Question 02a

Question Introduction

This question was answered well by many candidates where they were able to use data from a table and calculate Spearman's rank to two decimal places.

Examiner Tip

It is important in a three stage question to show calculations as these are creditworthy if the final calculation is incorrect.

Question 02b

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to describe two ethical issues Sophie should have taken into account. Few candidates achieved the full two marks as whilst they were able to identify an ethical issue this was not fully described using information from the scenario.

Question 02c

Question Introduction

This question required candidates to describe a weakness of Sophie's study in respect of correlational data. Many candidates gave generic weaknesses relating to correlational studies but did not apply it to the scenario.

Question 03a

Question Introduction

Few candidates were able to describe how Tsai could carry out an ethnographic study into children's play. Some candidates were able to describe how he could record his data and achieve one mark.

Examiner Tip

Candidates need to be aware of the processes required to carry out studies using an ethnographic methodology.

Question 03b

Question Introduction

Few candidates were able to give a strength of Tsai using an ethnographic study. Candidates explained the observational method in the main and not the factors of ethnographic research.

Question 04

Question Introduction

Some candidates were able to discuss the stages of language development by describing the stage and also by applying this to the scenario. Many candidates were able to describe stages of development but not link these with language development and did not therefore address the question as to how the stages of language development could be applied to the children in the scenario.

As a level based question it is important to note that an A01/A02 response was required which needed to show an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding and application to the scenario. Those candidates who scored

highly on both skills were able to demonstrate accurate and thorough knowledge of the stages of language development and apply these accurately to the age stages of the children detailed in the scenario.

Question 05

Question Introduction

Some candidates were able to assess whether Erikson's psychosocial stages of development were scientific by giving a description of the stages and then accurately assessing whether the research could be considered scientific. Many candidates were able to describe stages psychosocial development but assess whether it was scientific, giving an assessment that was more general in description.

As a level based question requiring an assessment to be made, it is important to address the requirement of the question as in this case where it had to be considered whether the stages could be considered scientific. Giving an assessment of real life application for example did not address the question and therefore responses would be limited to the lower mark bands.

Question 06a

Question Introduction

Candidates demonstrated a good understanding of weapon focus and many were able to describe how it could influence the identification of offenders.

Question 06b

Question Introduction

This question was answered well by many candidates as they had a good working knowledge of weapon focus. They were able to use the concept and justify it in terms of making eye-witness testimony unreliable.

Question 07a

Question Introduction

Candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of how a stratified sample could be obtained in general terms. Many candidates were not able to apply this accurately, describing it in terms of the scenario.

Question 07b

Question Introduction

Candidates were required to identify a strength and a weakness of Dimitri using stratified sampling in his experiment. Many candidates could identify a generic strength or a weakness but not link this to the methodology of a stratified sampling method.

Question 08

Question Introduction

The weakness of the sampling method was answered well by many candidates as they were able to identify and justify a weakness of pre-trial publicity in respect of the scenario. Many candidates could identify a strength but were unable to link this to a fair trial.

Question 09

Question Introduction

Valentine and Mesout (2009) was answered well by the majority of candidates that had been taught this contemporary study. They had a good working knowledge of the procedure of the study and were able to evaluate and conclude accurately and were able to achieve level three.

Question 10

Question Introduction

Many candidates did not have a detailed knowledge and understanding of a psychological case formulation. Descriptions were given but these did not always apply specifically to the processes of case formulation as used in criminology. Responses were therefore limited to level two as the question was not on the whole fully addressed.

Some candidates were able to describe psychological case formulation and support with appropriate evidence and were able to access level three. It is important in an 'assess' level based marked question to not only describe the features of psychological (case) formulation but to make a judgement whether it helps understanding. Both elements of the question need to be addressed in order to meet the criterion for the higher level mark bands.