Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In Psychology (WPS02/01)
PAPER 02: Biological Psychology, Learning
Theories and Development

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Biological psychology.

1a. Most candidates were able to correctly identify an area of the brain. Pre-frontal cortex and the amygdala were the most popular answers.

1b. The most common weakness was that it ignores other factors with a variety of other factors named. The best answers were then able to further explain this to gain both marks for one weakness, though most answers did not offer the explanation required for the AO3 mark. Many answers repeated the same weakness for the second time. The very best answers were able to offer another weakness, often about the use of animals to support the theory.

2a. Most candidates understood what a volunteer sample was and were able to gain at least one mark by applying their knowledge to the scenario. A lot of answers failed to go beyond mentioning putting a poster up in the health centre so did not give the detail needed for the second mark. Some failed to apply their answer to the scenario so gave a generic response. A small minority of answers confused volunteer sampling with opportunity sampling.

2b. The best answers were able to identify a weakness and link their answer to the scenario. The most common weaknesses were about demand characteristics and generalisability. A large number of the answers were not applied to the scenario so were generic.

2c. Most answers were correct.

2d. Those candidates who knew how to calculate the standard deviation often got all four marks. Some did not read the question a d failed to give their answers to two decimal places. Some answers were incorrect on the first part of the calculation.

3a. Most answers showed good knowledge of the aims of the study, with the most popular answers being the influence of genetics or the environment on aggression. Weaker answers referred to the aim as looking for aggressive differences in the twins rather than looking at the impact of environmental and non-environmental influences on the aggression. Some answers were for a different study.

3b. The strength seemed to be answered better than the weakness, with answers being able to gain both marks for the strength. The most popular strength was focussed on the sample size and generalisability. There were several generic responses to this question that showed no knowledge of this particular study. Some answers did not focus on the sample used as asked in the question.

4a. The best answers were able to explain how external zeitgebers could help and link their knowledge to details from the scenario. However, a lot of answers did not apply their answer to details from the scenario so did not gain the AO2 marks.

4b. Only the very best answers were able to gain credit for this question by identifying a strength and applying their answer to the scenario. A lot of the answers were generic or just mentioned the name with no further application.

Some answers gave a description of the effect of external zeitgebers rather than a strength.

5. The best answers were able to show accurate knowledge and understanding of how infradian rhythms affected human behaviour in terms of both the menstrual cycle and seasonal affective disorder. The AO3 tended to be weaker with it not being justified in terms of the effects on human behaviour. Weaker answers tended to describe the menstrual cycle without reference to its effect on human behaviour.

Learning theories.

6a. This was generally well answered although some candidates got the NS and UCS muddled up and said that the smell of the bread was the NS. Many got the mark for identifying Grandma as the NS but then did not link to why Rose salivated when she saw Grandma.

6b. The best answers were able to gain both marks, most often for using supporting research such as Pavlov or Watson and Rayner. Some answers confused evidence supporting classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Weaker answers tended to describe aspects of classical conditioning rather than explain a strength.

7a. The most common answer was gaining informed consent from the parents/teachers with the best answers being able to gain both marks. However, a lot of answers failed to describe the issue in enough detail to gain both marks. Many answers criticised the study on ethical grounds rather than describe an issue he would have considered.

7b. Most answers were correct.

7c. Only the very best answers were able to explain a strength of covert observations and apply their answer to the scenario to gain both marks. The most common answer was lack of demand characteristics. A lot of answers were generic.

7d. The best answers were able to accurately identify an improvement that was applied to the scenario and then explain how this would improve the study. Some answers could identify the improvement but failed to justify why this would improve the study or wrote about a weakness of the study. The weaker answers did not make it clear what the improvement would be or failed to apply the answer to the scenario.

7e. Most of the answers were generic so failed to gain credit. Only a very few answers were able to accurately a strength and weakness of qualitative data in relation to the scenario.

8a. Bastian was the most popular choice of study. The best answers were able to accurately describe the results of the study, with the very best gaining all three marks. Weaker answers tended to be brief so did not have enough detail tog ain all the marks. Some answers confused their chosen study with other studies and wrote the incorrect results. There were a lot of blank answers for this question.

8b. Those who knew the study were able to accurately identify two strengths with the very best going on to justify why they were strengths. A lot of answers were generic with no link to details from the chosen study.

9. The best answers were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the case study research method and apply their knowledge and understanding to details from the scenario. Many answers did not appear to have read the question carefully. Many answers were focused on describing how to carry out psychoanalysis without linking the scenario or directly explaining what is involved in carrying out a case study.

10. The most popular answer was the use of SSRIs or CBT. The best answers were able to show accurate knowledge and understanding of how the alternative therapy could be used for seasonal affective disorder and offer developed evaluation points. Some answers started by describing seasonal affective disorder which was not a requirement of the question. Weaker answers were unable to evaluate the treatment in terms of its effectiveness in treating seasonal affective disorder. Some candidates did not read the question and wrote an essay on light therapy.

11. Many answers were able to show knowledge and understanding of how hormones and operant conditioning could be used to explain aggression. The best answers were accurate in their AO1, thought a lot of answers were either limited or mostly accurate. Most of the answers were able to apply details from the scenario for the AO3 marks. The AO3 was weaker, with only the best being able to display the analysis skills needed to answer the question 'to what extent…' The weakest answers offered little if any AO3.