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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Subsidiary Level in Psychology (WPS01) Paper 01
Social and Cognitive Psychology

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General Comments

This paper went very smoothly and allowed candidates many opportunities to showcase their psychological skills and knowledge. There were very few blank responses indicating that candidates were able to plan their time efficiently under timed conditions.

Mathematical calculations were completed confidently although candidates are recommended to practise ratios and providing the data in the form requested. They should also practise plotting data on graphs to increase familiarity and accuracy.

Candidates engaged with scenario questions more fully than previous series. This skill still requires practice to attain full marks on this style of question.

Studies in detail were not considered in the depth expected and at times it appeared as if candidates were not certain of the details for these studies. This was particularly evident in the final essay to evaluate Bartlett's study where inaccurate facts were presented. The case study of HM was not reported confidently. Essays on these topics were handled generically with evaluation points often under-developed and few candidates justified evidence clearly or in a way that formed part of a balanced conclusion.

Candidates often experience difficulties with questions involving strengths and weakness. Frequently these responses are generic and do not link to specific details about the study or theory required. In many responses it is not evident why an identified feature is considered as a strength or weakness and so the A03 justification mark is not achieved.

The level of understanding was balanced across the Social and Cognitive topics. Candidates are urged to consider the mark allocation carefully to ensure they are answering in enough depth.

Paper Summary

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

- Candidates should engage with the scenario and use the information in their answers
- Candidates should make sure they know specific details from the classic and contemporary studies
- Candidates should evaluate practical investigations fully
- Candidates should take note of the mark allocation to judge the required depth of response
- Candidates should distinguish clearly between models of memory

The remainder of this report focuses on individual questions and gives specific examples with the aim of highlighting areas of good practice and common errors which can be used to help prepare candidates for future WPS01 examinations.

Section A: Social Psychology

Question 1a

Question Introduction

Moscovici is a classic study in the specification and candidates are expected to know this in detail. There are many aspects of the sample which could be identified. The most common features were American and female. Others recall that Moscovici used social science, law and liberal arts students or used knowledge of the Pollack test to gain marks. The number of students involved was often not accurate. Some candidates managed to confuse the study with that of Asch and suggested it was an all-male sample.

Question 1b

Question Introduction

This question had up to four marks for as accurate description of the procedure of Moscovici's study. Candidates who knew the study well produced detailed responses and made at least four strong points which gained credit. Many candidates were less secure in their knowledge but managed to achieve 1 or 2 marks for facts such as the number of students in each group or the number of slides. There were some inaccuracies around the consistent/inconsistent groups.

Question 2a

Question Introduction

There was one knowledge and understanding mark available for naming one of the social powers. Most candidates were able to name a social power, such as legitimate, accurately. A few candidates did confuse social power with agency theory and named 'authority' as the power. Others chose 'government' which also did not get credit.

Question 2b

Question Introduction

Candidates are reminded to contextualise their answers. This question has two applied marks. Some candidates described a power such as legitimate and then applied it to the scenario, basing the response on the guard's uniform. This gained only one mark. Some candidates also realised the guard had the power to fine to Marc and related this to coercive power achieving both marks. There were some candidates who talked about authority figures and Marc being in an agentic state which does not relate to social power theory.

Examiner tip: Apply knowledge using the information in the scenario

Question 3

Question Introduction

Candidates were asked to explain two strengths of their social practical. The practical is required to be a questionnaire which collects both qualitative and quantitative data. Many candidates returned generic responses to questions about their practical investigations which could apply to any practical, social or otherwise. It is essential that responses refer to the specific practical carried out by the candidate. Often responses talked about the sample chosen or detailed good ethical practice. Very few mentioned the questions they used or the subject of the investigation.

Examiner tip: Candidates should learn evaluate their practical investigations fully.

Question 4a

Question Introduction

This question had one AO1 knowledge and understanding mark for defining the range. Most candidates were able to express the 'biggest minus the smallest' concept and achieved the mark.

Question 4b

Question Introduction

This question had one knowledge and understanding mark for the identification of a strength of standard deviation and one mark for justification/exemplification of why it is a strength. The most popular answers involved adjusting for extreme scores but there was little explanation of why or how this could be a strength. Some candidates recognised that standard deviation used all the scores so was more sophisticated than the range.

Question 5

Question Introduction

There were two application marks for relating Adjoa's behaviour to the scenario. Candidates engaged well with this scenario and there were few completely generic responses. The most popular responses outlined that Adjoa went to the restaurant to be part of the group and fit in with her friends. Some candidates made a passing reference to the idea of private and public views but did not elaborate sufficiently for the second mark. Other candidates who did apply these concepts achieved both marks.

Examiner tip: Look at the mark allocation carefully to judge depth of answer required.

Question 6

Question Introduction

Candidates are asked to demonstrate an equal emphasis between knowledge and understanding marks (AO1) and evaluative marks (AO3) in this essay. Some candidates go straight into the evaluation of the agency theory and do not provide details of what the theory says. Most candidates

made a brief reference to agentic/autonomous state only which limited the band they could reach. Others made some excellent points about moral strain and a few responses contained the idea of socialisation.

Evaluation was often well thought out with Milgram's studies used as a starting point. This could be developed through Hofling's study and several real-life applications. The Holocaust was the main discussion point but My Lai and Abu Ghraib was also discussed knowledgeably. These points focused the essay on agency theory in real life. A few candidates also detailed some of the criticisms of the agency theory such as not taking personality into account. Candidates performed well on this question, often producing balanced and well considered accounts.

Section B: Cognitive Psychology

Question 7a

Question Introduction

There were two knowledge and description marks for describing one store from the MSM. The STM was the most popular choice, and candidates could easily achieve marks by talking about its capacity, duration and encoding. Credit was also given for showing how information moved into and out of that store. Candidates were also confident on LTM but very few described the sensory store well. Some candidates still confuse the MSM with working memory model.

Examiner tip: Make sure you can describe each model of memory

Question 7b

Question Introduction

As always with 'Explain one strength' there was one AO1 knowledge and understanding mark for identifying the strength and one AO3 justification mark for saying why it was a strength. Many candidates missed the point of this question. Some answered with unsupported statements such as 'it is easy to understand' while others used research to illustrate a strength. Glanzer and Cunitz (1966), Peterson & Peterson (1959) or HM were popular choices. Candidates are reminded that these studies do need to be linked back to the model to achieve both marks.

Question 8a

Question Introduction

There are two AO2 application marks available for this question. This scenario required good knowledge of WMM, in particular the Phonological Loop. Most candidates attempted to relate to the scenario but had limited knowledge of the model. There were many unfocused responses suggesting Andrei will be distracted or it is not possible to do two things at once. There was some confusion about whether this is when the same slave system is used or not. Only a few candidates identified that the phonological loop has a limited capacity although overload was mentioned it was not clear exactly where the overload was taking place.

Question 8b

Question Introduction

Most candidates found this question very difficult. It involves applying strengths and weaknesses to an application, so it is important that the responses link back to the scenario. Many responses were generic with no reference to Andreis or revising in silence. Some candidates achieved some marks for weakness by indicating that WMM looked at STM only and Andrei might rely on his LTM. Some candidates did not attempt this question.

Question 9a

Question Introduction

Most candidates were able to calculate the percentage accurately.

Question 9b

Question Introduction

Some candidates struggled with the ratio, especially when they were asked to put in in the lowest form. Others managed to present it the wrong way round.

Question 9c

Question Introduction

This question required the candidates to plot a bar chart of the mean numbers given in the table. One mark is given for the title. This was generally correct, but candidates are reminded that they should give a full title. A second mark is given for the correct labelling of the axes. Condition A and Condition B is not enough to access the mark. Generally, candidates plotted the data correctly to pick up the final mark.

Question 9d

Question Introduction

In this part of the questions candidates could gain three AO2 marks for describing how Katy could get a random sample for her investigation. There were a few generic points but, in many cases, candidates did try to relate their answers to the context. Random was not always used correctly in responses, for example, 'Katy should find random 3-year-olds. Other responses used a volunteer or opportunity sample. Putting names in a hat or using a random number generator were understood to be linked to random samples, allowing these candidates to access one mark.

Question 10

Question Introduction

This essay requires candidates to demonstrate an equal emphasis on knowledge and assessment in their answers. The case study of HM was not known confidently. Candidates had an awareness of his epilepsy and the operation to remove his hippocampus. They mentioned amnesia but the account was often confused with that of Clive Wearing or even KF. Other candidates just concentrated on HM's participation in Schmolck's experiment which led into an evaluation of Schmolck rather than looking at the contribution of HM's study to memory research. Evaluations were generally poor with generic comments about generalisability of case studies. Some accounts recognised that the case study provided evidence to support the concept of STM and LTM being different stores in MSM. A few looked at his contribution to acoustic, visual information being separated in WMM. Overall, many essays disappointingly only reached level 2.

Question 11

Question Introduction

It is an accessible essay, and candidates should have scored highly as it involves a classic study which candidates should know well. There are 6 AO1 description marks and 6 AO3 evaluation marks available with equal emphasis in the answer. Details of the study were vague with many responses reporting that American students were used by Bartlett. His procedure was not recounted accurately and the only finding mentioned frequently was participants changing canoes to boats when recalling the story. Evaluative points were underdeveloped or based on wrong information. Many candidates tried to talk about ecological validity but were not confident in their conclusions. Due to limited knowledge and understanding of key aspects of the research and simplistic evaluation points lower-level marks were often awarded. Conversely, there were a few very well-crafted answers demonstrating that the higher levels could be achieved.

Examiner tip: Make sure you know the details of classic and contemporary studies.

