Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Subsidiary Level in Psychology (WPS02) Paper 01 Biological Psychology, Learning Theories and Development

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Biological Psychology.

1a.
This AO1 question required candidates to state a conclusion from Raine et al's. study. The best answers were able to accurately state a conclusion and gain the mark.

1b.
This question required candidates to identify a weakness and then justify or exemplify the weakness. The most common weaknesses had to do with the sample used. The best answers were able to do both parts of the demand for this question. Some answers only accessed one mark as they identified the weakness but then failed to justify or exemplify their answer. The weakest answers were generic and could have applied to a variety of studies, without any specific details from Raine et al.

2a.
Most candidates were able to accurately identify the independent variable and so achieved this mark. Some candidates identified the dependent variable rather than the independent variable. Some answers were too vague, just putting down the bright light without any indication that it was the timing of the bright light.

2b.
Those candidates who gave an accurate title, accurately labelled the axes and accurately plotted the data gained all 3 marks. A lot of answers misread the question and plotted all the data from the table rather than the data from the mice exposed to bright light between 7am and 7pm.

2c.
This question required candidates to explain a conclusion from the data given. The best answers were able to give an accurate conclusion and then use the data to justify that conclusion. Most candidates were able to give an accurate conclusion but did not use the data to get the second mark. The weakest answers just repeated the data from the table and did not give a conclusion.

2d.
There were a variety of reasons given for why Sienna choose not to use humans, the most popular ones were ethical reasons and control of extraneous variables. The best answers were able to identify a reason and they justify or exemplify that reason and gain both marks. Most answers could identify a reason but failed to justify or exemplify that reason. Some answers did not link to the scenario so gave generic answers.

3a.
This was a describe question which requires candidates to give statements that are developed. The best answers were able to do this and gain all three marks, using a variety of hormones with the most popular being testosterone and cortisol. The weakest answers did not develop their statements often not going beyond saying whether the hormone would be higher or lower in those with aggression.

3b.

This question asked for a strength and a weakness of hormones as an explanation of aggression, with candidates being required to identify the strength and weakness and then justify or exemplify them. The most common strength involved research to support the explanation, and the most common weakness was reductionism or it was not the only explanation. The best answers were able to do this. A lot of answers were able to identify the strength and weakness but failed to justify/exemplify their strength or weakness.

4a.

Candidates needed to describe light therapy for this question, and the best candidates were able to give four descriptive points about light therapy and how it worked, often relating it to the effects on melatonin and/or serotonin. A majority of answers wrote about what seasonal affective disorder was and had little about the actual therapy so limiting the marks they could get as they were not answering the question that was asked.

4b.

Candidates had to identify a weakness of light therapy and then justify/exemplify that weakness, which the best answers were able to do, so gaining both marks. Again, a lot of answers were able to identify a weakness but failed to justify/exemplify that weakness. The most common answers were that it was not a long-term solution, it could not be used by certain people and there were other therapies that may be more effective.

4c.

For this question candidates had to identify a reason why light therapy may be more effective than another therapy and then justify exemplify this reason. The most common reasons included the fact that other therapies may need more motivation and side effects.
The best answers were able to achieve both marks by completing both aspects of the explain question. Some answers gained the identification mark but failed to justify or exemplify their reason. Some answer made inaccurate statements, such as light therapy has no side effects when it can have side effects.

5.

This essay asked candidates to show assess brain functioning as an explanation of human behaviour. The best answers were able to show accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of brain functioning, including a variety of brain areas with the pre-frontal cortex and the amygdala being the most popular. They were also able to offer well-developed logical assessments with a judgement being presented. The very best answers offered judgements throughout their essay.
Weaker answers offered mostly accurate knowledge and understanding and had some statements with some development of form. There was a superficial judgement but the AO3 was often written as an evaluate question rather than assess.

Learning theories and development.

6a
The best answers were accurately able to define what an unconditioned stimulus was and use an example, with the most common example being related to Pavlov's studies on dogs.

Weaker answers often failed to include the example. Some answers confused the unconditioned stimulus with the neutral stimulus.

6b.
The best answers were able to accurately define a conditioned stimulus and give an example often using Pavlov's studies on dogs. Some answers confused it with the unconditioned stimulus or the conditioned response.

6c.
Candidates had to identify a strength of classical conditioning and then justify/exemplify that strength. The most common answers included the use of Pavlov's studies with dogs, Watson and Raynor or the use of classical conditioning in therapies. The best answers were able to identify the strength and then justify or exemplify that strength. Other answers could identify a strength but failed to justify or exemplify it. The weakest answers often just gave a description of the theory.

7a.
Most answers were describing a random sample and applied their answer to the scenario to gain the AO2 marks. Some answers were not applied to the scenario so were generic, and some answers were about the incorrect sampling method.

7bi.
Those candidates who could do the correct calculations and read the instruction about one decimal place were able to get all 4 marks.

7bii.
The candidates who gave the correct identification of significance and an accurate justification/exemplification using the critical and calculated values were able to achieve both marks. Some answers did not give the justification/exemplification so limited the marks they could gain.

7c.
This question required candidates to suggest two improvements to the given study. The best answers were able to give two relevant improvements and they justify/exemplify those improvements. The most common answers were in relation to going to other schools, doing a covert observation, or using another observer as well as Reece. Weaker answers often gave two improvements but failed to justify or exemplify this. A lot of them often wrote about a weakness of the study rather than explaining the improvement.

8a.
Most candidates could correctly identify two of the stages and gained both marks.

8b.
The best answers were able to offer an accurate description of the phallic stage of development and link it to the scenario throughout their answer. Weaker answers did not link to Patti and her behaviour so became generic.

8c.

Candidates had to identify a weakness of Freud's theory in relation to the scenario and then justify/exemplify this weakness, which the best answers were able to do. Some answers were able to identify a weakness and link it to the scenario but failed to justify or exemplify this. The weakest answers did not link to the scenario so were generic.

9.

This was an 8-mark discuss essay where candidates had to show knowledge and understanding of ethics when using animals in research and then apply the scenario to their answer. The best answers were able to show accurate knowledge and understanding of ethics when using animals and offer sustained application using relevant evidence from the context throughout their essay. Weaker answers offered limited knowledge and understanding of the ethics and had little or no reference to the context. The weakest answers often just copied out the context with no knowledge or understanding of the ethics demonstrated.

Section C

10.

This 12-mark essay required knowledge and understanding of social learning theory, which was applied to the context and evaluated. The best answers showed accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding which had sustained application and the evaluation was well-developed and logical with a balanced conclusion. Weaker answers often showed limited knowledge and understanding, often using the terms form social learning theory but not showing they had knowledge and understanding of what those terms meant. They also had limited evaluation, often just using one of Bandura's studies as an evaluative point.

11.

This 16-mark essay required candidates to evaluate Brendgen and Watson and Rayner in terms of ethics and reliability. There is more emphasis on the AO3 compared to the AO1 in this question. The best answers were able to give accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of both studies and evaluate both studies in terms of ethics and reliability. The evaluation was well-developed, logical and offered a balanced conclusion. Weaker answers often wrote a general evaluation of the two studies rather than focussing on ethics and reliability. The weakest answers often had limited knowledge and understanding of the two studies, often with errors in their answer, and the evaluative comments were limited or generic.