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# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2025

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 was generally answer every well by candidates with a variety of areas named but Amygdala and pre-frontal cortex most popular.

1b: Candidates responded well to this question in terms of evaluating the concept rather than a study. The best answers were able to identify a strength, often through the use of a pieces of research and then justify/exemplify why this was a strength. Many only gained 1 mark as they failed to add ethe justification/exemplification to their identification of the strength.

2a: The best answers were able to offer a fully operationalised non-directional hypothesis and gained both marks. Some answers failed to fully operationalise the variables within the hypothesis so only gained one mark. There are still some candidates that do not understand the difference between an experimental and correlational hypothesis and so could not gain any credit

2b: Most candidates got at least 2 marks for this question with many gaining full marks.

2c: This question was answered very well by most candidates being able to accurately identify the correct critical value.

2d: Demand characteristics and sample size were the most common weaknesses identified, and some answers were able to explain issues with cause and effect. The best answers were able to accurately identify a weakness in relation to the scenario and then justify/exemplify that weakness. Some answers could identify the weakness but failed to offer any further justification/exemplification. The weakest answers did not apply their weakness to the scenario and so the answer was generic and could not gain any credit.

3a: This question required candidates to describe the procedure of Brendgen et al. (2005) for 4 AO1 marks. The best answers were able to offer four accurate descriptive points and gain all the marks. Some answers named the incorrect city. Weaker answers understood it was investigating physical and social aggression and this was investigated via self-report. Weaker answers lacked precise details about the study or were not accurate in how the classmates photographs were used to measure aggression.

3b: A large sample size and inter-rater reliability were the most popular strengths identified. The best answers were able to accurately identify a strength in relation to details from the study and then justify/exemplify that strength. Some answers could identify the strength but failed to offer any further justification/exemplification. For example stating it is high in reliability but failing to explain what that means. The weakest answers did not apply their strength to the study.

3c: The best answers were able to accurately identify an improvement in relation to details from the study and then justify/exemplify that improvement, with the most common improvements being making the sample more representative in terms of ethnicity or age.

Some answers could identify the improvement but failed to offer any further justification/exemplification about how it would improve the study. A few candidates still gave a weakness rather than an improvement.

4a: The best answers were able to accurately describe how a PET scan is conducted for all three marks. Some answers did not have enough detail for all the marks or were confused about the order of how a PET scan works in terms of the injection of the glucose isotope, then the cognitive task and finally the scan to measure the activity levels in the brain. Weaker answers described a study that had used a PET scan rather than the research method.

4b: The most common weaknesses that were identified were their restriction of use in those who are pregnant or the need to avoid frequent PET scans. The best answers were able to accurately identify a weakness in relation to the scenario and then justify/exemplify that weakness. Some answers could identify the weakness but failed to offer any further justification/exemplification. The weakest answers did not apply their weakness to the scenario and so the answer was generic and could not gain any credit.

5: This essay required candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of hormones in relation to aggression and apply that knowledge and understanding to the context given. The best answers were able to give an accurate and thorough description with a well-developed logical discussion that was sustained throughout. Weaker answers demonstrated mostly accurate knowledge and understanding, with some only stating how high or low levels of hormones affected aggression with no knowledge and understanding of why demonstrated. Fewer answers gave any evaluative comments showing that candidates are better able to understand the requirements of discuss questions.

### Learning theories.

6a: This question produced a mixed response of candidates understanding what vicarious reinforcement was, so gaining the mark, and those that just describe positive reinforcement.

6b: The best answers were able to accurately identify a strength and weakness in relation to the theory and then justify/exemplify that strength and weakness. Some answers could identify the strength and weakness but failed to offer any further justification/exemplification. The most common strengths were in relation to Bandura's studies, and the most common weaknesses focussed on reductionism or ignoring biological processes.

7a: The best answers were able to accurately describe how Anya would conduct a covert observation in relation to the scenario, including how the observation would be made covert. Some answers would say that Anya could sit on a bench but did not describe how she would ensure the observation was covert. Weaker answers often just described their use of a checklist.

7b: The most common strength identified was the lack of demand characteristics. The best answers were able to accurately identify a strength in relation to details from the scenario and then justify/exemplify that strength. Some answers could identify the strength but failed to offer any further justification/exemplification. For example stating it is high in reliability but failing to explain what that means. The weakest answers did not apply their strength to the scenario.

8a: the best answers were able to state a conclusion from their observation, whilst weaker answers gave results rather than a conclusion. Some answers focussed on a practical from another topic rather than their learning theories and developmental practical.

8b: The best answers were able to accurately describe how they had analysed their qualitative data from their observation. Some answers focussed on how they collected their qualitative data rather than how it was analysed. A lot of answers were in relation to collecting their qualitative data from open questions so could not gain credit as the learning theories and developmental practical should be an observation not a questionnaire/interview.

8c: The best answers were able to accurately identify an improvement in relation to details from their observation and then justify/exemplify that improvement, with the most common improvements being making the sample more representative. Some answers could identify the improvement but failed to offer any further justification/exemplification about how it would improve the practical. The weakest answers did not link their improvement to their observation, either giving generic answers or an answer in relation to a different practical. Some answers suggested a change of research method which would create a new study rather than improve the one that was conducted.

9a: This was usually answered correctly.

9b: This was usually answered correctly.

9c: The best answers were able to accurately identify a strength and weakness in relation to the scenario and then justify/exemplify that strength and weakness. Some answers could identify the strength and weakness but failed to offer any further justification/exemplification. The most common strength was that it uses all the data and the most common weakness was that it could be affected by outliers.

9d: The best answers were able to accurately identify an reason in relation to details from the scenario and then justify/exemplify that reason. Some answers could identify the reason but failed to offer any further justification/exemplification about how it would improve the practical. The weakest answers did not link their reason to the scenario so giving generic answers which could not gain any credit.

10: The best answers were able to give accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding about object relations therapy and offer a well-developed, logical evaluation. Weaker answers gave limited knowledge and understanding, often with inaccuracies about

what the object was. Some answers were about systematic desensitisation rather than object relations therapy.

### Section C.

11: there seemed to be an equal number of answers for McDermott (2008) and Hoefelmann et al. (2006). The best answers were able to give accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding about their chosen study and offer a range of well-developed and logical evaluative points. Weaker answers often had some inaccuracies in their knowledge and understanding, or gave generic evaluative points.

Q12: This essay required candidates to demonstrate all the assessment objectives. The best answers were able to offer accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding in relation to both theories, which were supported by sustained application of relevant evidence from the context and give well-developed logical arguments. Weaker answers often did not demonstrate all the assessment objectives, with the AO3 often missing or generic with no reference to the two theories or to aggression/the scenario.

