Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel

GCSE Psychology (1PS0) Paper 1

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Introduction

The Autumn 1PS0/01 examination was part an exceptional series that was represented by a very small number of students. The performance of these students is summarised below, with advice on how to improve in further series, but may not be representative of a full cohort that would take the usual summer series examination.

Students in this series struggled with the short, factual knowledge based questions. Questions 12b and 16a were indicative of this, where students were mostly unable to recall accurate information from the compulsory studies listed on this specification.

They did show a better performance on questions requiring understanding though. Questions 8 and 21 were examples where the vast majority of students were able to demonstrate accurate understanding of the term given in the question.

Questions that required AO1 knowledge and then AO2 application were in general responded to successfully with most gaining at least one mark of the two available. Questions 5a and 9 were good examples of this question type.

Those questions where a conclusion was required, such as questions 4a and 17, showed a mixed performance with some gaining full marks, whereas others struggled to support their conclusion or gave an inappropriate conclusion.

Questions where an improvement was needed were generally answered well, with most able to offer an appropriate suggestion, with the best responses fully justifying how the suggestion could improve the study or investigation. Questions 4b and 11 were good examples of this question type.

The questions that required strengths and/or weaknesses, such as questions 5b or 14c, showed a mixed performance. Some responses were very good and accessed full marks, but others were left blank or weak attempts were made to identify and then justify an appropriate strength or weakness.

The first essay was one that students generally struggled with as it was related to reductionism which the students in this cohort found difficult to define appropriately. The second essay appeared more accessible with a greater range of responses, with the best offering strengths and weaknesses as well as understanding and application. Students can improve their essays with more AO3 to give a better balance between the assessment objectives being assessed.

The remainder of this Examiner Report will focus on each individual question which can be used to help prepare students for future 1PS0/01 examinations.

Question 2

Students were awarded up to two marks for description of the difference between pre-conventional and conventional morality. The best responses were able to give accurate definitions and appropriately use connectives (e.g. whereas) to describe the difference between the terms. Weaker responses either gave two distinct definitions or gave inaccurate statements.

Question 3

For this question, students were required to demonstrate accurate understanding of Daniel Willingham's learning theory and then exemplify how the theory could be used to explain the novel scenario given. Students entered into this series struggled with this question, with only the very best responses giving an appropriate suggestion to improve social development and also giving knowledge from the theory. Weaker responses offered inappropriate suggestions or did not show knowledge of the theory.

Question 4a

This question offered one mark for an appropriate conclusion from Figure 1, with a second mark for justification of the conclusion through analysis/interpretation. The majority of students were able to gain the first mark for an appropriate conclusion, with the best responses supporting this with relevant evidence from the graph. Weaker responses did not support the conclusion with evidence, or gave an inappropriate conclusion.

Question 4b

Students were given one mark for identification of a relevant improvement of the head teacher's investigation and a second mark for justification of that conclusion for question 4b. The best responses offered an appropriate improvement, usually focussed on the students all doing the same activity, and then developed this by saying how this would improve the study. Weaker responses offered an inappropriate improvement.

Question 5a

For this question, students were awarded one mark for demonstrating accurate understanding of Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, and one mark for exemplification of how the theory could have be used to explain the novel scenario given. Students were frequently able to apply their ideas to the scenario appropriately, gaining one mark, but only the best responses showed separate understanding of Piaget's theory, to achieve the second available mark.

Question 5b

Students were required to identify and then justify a strength and a weakness of Beth's investigation for this question. The majority of students found this question accessible with marks gained for both the strength and weakness commonly. The most common strength was concerning the setting and the most common weakness focussed on generalisability. The best responses fully justified their strength and weakness, to gain all four available marks.

Question 6

This question required students to complete Figure 2 with the missing stage. Students struggled with this question in general, with only a minority able to offer an appropriate response.

Question 7a

Students needed to define the term 'duration' in relation to Toby for this question. The majority of students were able to define the term correctly in relation to the scenario. A minority gave a generic definition.

Question 7b

Students needed to define the term 'capacity' in relation to Toby for this question. Similar to Q7a, the majority were able to offer an applied definition, with some generic responses.

Question 8

For this question, students were awarded one mark for an accurate definition of 'retrograde amnesia'. The vast majority of students were able to show accurate knowledge of the condition, gaining one mark.

Question 9

This question required students to demonstrate accurate understanding of Bartlett (1932) War of the Ghosts for one mark and exemplify how the study could have been used to explain the scenario for one mark. The majority of students were able to apply their ideas of Bartlett's study to the scenario, gaining one mark, but only the best responses also gave some specific understanding of the study to achieve the second available mark.

Question 10a

This question offered students one mark for accurate understanding of Multi-store Model of Memory, and one mark for exemplification of how the theory could have been used to explain the novel scenario. Similar to Q9, the majority were able to apply their ideas of the theory to the scenario, with only the best responses also showing separate understanding of the theory.

Question 10b

For this question, students needed to identify and then justify two weaknesses of using Multi-store Model of Memory in relation to Robin remembering the names of the trees. Students struggled to give appropriate weaknesses in general, with only the best responses offering two weaknesses of the theory in context. Some responses were left blank.

Question 11

Students were required to suggest two relevant improvements and then justify these in relation to Niamh's study for this question. Most students were able to give one appropriate improvement, which usually focussed on the same song given to both groups. Only the best responses were able to offer two appropriate improvements that were fully justified.

Question 12b

Students needed to give an accurate statement of the percentage for this question. Only a minority of students were able to accurately recall the correct percentage from the study. Most appeared to guess incorrectly.

Question 13

This question awarded up to two marks for description of the difference between the terms 'nature' and 'nurture' as they are used in relation to depression. The majority of students were able to define both terms in relation to depression and also use connectives as appropriate. It was rare to see responses that did not show knowledge of both terms.

Question 14a

For this question, students were given one mark for demonstrating accurate understanding of learning theory, and one mark for exemplification of how learning theory could have been used for the scenario about Aliyah's addiction. Only the best responses showed understanding of theory and then applied this, with the majority just applying their ideas where they received one mark.

Question 14b

This question required students to demonstrate accurate understanding of Young (2007) for one mark, and exemplify how Young (2007) could have been used in relation to the scenario about Aliyah for one mark. Only a minority of students were able to show appropriate understanding of the study, with a lot of vague answers which were clearly guessing. As with Q14a, the best responses separately showed understanding and then application to the scenario.

Question 14c

For this question, students needed to identify and then justify a strength and a weakness of using Young (2007) in relation to the treatment of Aliyah's addiction. The majority struggled with this question, with some left blank, and those attempted finding it difficult as it was clear they could not remember the study. The best responses did give an appropriate strength and weakness, with only the very best fully justifying each.

Question 15a

This question offered students one mark for an appropriate conclusion in relation to Table 1, and a second mark for justification of the conclusion through analysis/interpretation. This question really separated students, with a real split on performance, with some at each mark. The best responses gave an appropriate conclusion and then used the information from the table to support their judgement.

Question 15b

One mark for was given for identification of a relevant improvement and a second mark for justification of the improvement for this question. As with Q15a, there was a mixed performance, with some giving a suitable improvement whereas others suggested something inappropriate. The best were also able to justify how their suggestion would improve Jasper's investigation.

Question 16a

Students needed to offer an accurate statement of the number of patients for this question. Only a minority were able to accurately recall the correct number of patients, with lots of students guessing incorrectly.

Question 16b

This question offered students up to two marks for description of what Sperry (1968) found in the task given. The majority of students were able to achieve at least one mark for showing some accurate knowledge of what happened in the task as part of Sperry's (1968) research. The best responses developed their ideas fully to gain the second available mark.

Question 17

For this question, students were awarded one mark for each appropriate conclusion made in relation to Table 2, and then a second mark for justification of each conclusion through analysis/interpretation. Students generally interpreted the scenario effectively and then gave at least one appropriate conclusion relevant to the information provided in Table 2. The best responses always supported their conclusion with appropriate evidence from Table 2 to access the second mark for each conclusion.

Question 18

Students needed to consider the scenario presented and then offer a relevant strength and weakness and then fully justify these in relation to the novel scenario. Some students clearly remembered the study very well and as such were able to give an applied strength and weakness with specific detail from Damasio et al. (1994). Other responses were vague and struggled to recall specific information from the compulsory study which made the question more difficult to access. The best responses always fully justified both their strength and weakness.

Question 19

In this question, students were awarded one mark for accurate understanding of visual agnosia and one mark for exemplification of how the condition could be used to explain the scenario. The vast majority of the responses were able to gain at least one mark, usually for application to the scenario about Carl, with the best responses also separately showing understanding of what visual agnosia is.

Question 20

Students were given one mark for demonstrating accurate understanding of the function of the parietal lobes, and one mark for exemplification of how the function of the parietal lobes can be used to explain the scenario for this question. Where students were able to recall the function of the parietal lobes, they achieved at least one mark, usually for application to the scenario involving Lynne's investigation. The best responses also showed separate understanding of the parietal lobes.

Question 21

For this question, students were given one mark for an accurate definition of conformity, and one mark for a suitable example of conformity. Students found this question very accessible with the vast majority achieving at least one mark with a lot gaining full marks. It was clear they knew what conformity was and had learned examples of this during delivery of the course.

Question 22

In this question, students could achieved up to two marks for description of one way that culture could influence psychology. Most students that achieved some credit focussed on obedience or conformity, with some excellent responses in some cases. Some students struggled to access this question and tended to write some vague, incomplete statements which achieved no credit.

Question 23

Students were able to achieve one mark for identification of each way that blind obedience could be prevented and a second for justification of each way in this question. Weaker responses gave inappropriate or inaccurate suggestions, with no justification of each way. The best responses used research evidence, such as Milgram's research into obedience, and gave two appropriate suggestions that were fully justified.

Question 24a

One mark was given for demonstrating accurate understanding of pro-social behaviour and one mark was given for exemplification of how pro-social behaviour can be used to explain the scenario. There was a mixed performance for this question with some gaining full marks for a suitable definition of pro-social behaviour and then applying this to the scenario as appropriate, whereas other responses focussed on inappropriate suggestions of why Kyle may have helped.

Question 24b

This question offered one mark for demonstrating accurate understanding of Piliavin et al. (1969), and one mark for exemplification of how Piliavin et al. (1969) could have been used to explain the scenario. The best responses used specific detail from Piliavin et al.'s (1969) study and applied this as appropriate to the scenario. Weaker responses gave simplistic statements with vague recall of the study.

Question 24c

For this question, students were awarded one mark for each appropriate conclusion made and a second mark for justification of each conclusion through analysis/interpretation. Most commonly students focussed on the differences in males and females for one conclusion with the best responses supporting their conclusion with evidence from Table 3. Another common conclusion was concerning race, but this was less well done in general. Weaker responses tended to recycle information from Table 3, with no appropriate conclusions made.

Question 25

This question required students to assess how far memory could be considered reductionist, with reference to Lauren's friend's memory of the birthday party. This was an extended open response question with the 'Assess' taxonomy which targets AO1, AO2 and AO3 content. AO1 was looking for knowledge and understanding of nature and nurture, AO2 was for application to the scenario, and AO3 was analysis and evaluation of nature and nurture leading to judgements/conclusions of how useful they would be for the scenario given about Amir. Assessment of this question was through a level-based mark scheme where a 'best-fit' approach was used; deciding which level most closely describes the quality of the answer. Each AO was judged separately and where the components met the requirement for the level fully (and perhaps has elements of the level above), then marks were awarded at the top of the level. Where the components met the level but only just about, they are awarded marks at the bottom end of the level. When a response was imbalanced (i.e. one or more AOs were stronger than another) a compromise was found. Consideration was also given regarding this question requiring balance between the AOs (AO1 3, AO2 3, AO3 3). Students generally struggled with this question, as the vast majority could not accurately or appropriately define reductionism or holism. Where attempts were made to define the terms, most were inaccurate or inappropriate, so this is an area that students can improve for future series. Application to the scenario was generally better than the AO1, but was undermined by the misunderstandings of

reductionism, and then was also let down by a lack of AO3 in the essay. A balance of AO1, AO2, and AO3 content will achieve greater marks than focussing on one in lots of detail, with little or no attempt at the other assessment objectives.

Question 26

This question required was a synoptic essay which required students to assess Carlie's behaviour using two areas of psychology that they had studied. This was an extended open response question with the 'Assess' taxonomy which targets AO1, AO2 and AO3 content. AO1 was looking for knowledge and understanding of psychological content, AO2 was for application to the scenario, and AO3 was analysis and evaluation of the psychological content leading to judgements/conclusions of how useful it would be for the scenario given about Carlie. Assessment of this question was through a level-based mark scheme where a 'best-fit' approach was used; deciding which level most closely describes the quality of the answer. Each AO was judged separately and where the components met the requirement for the level fully (and perhaps has elements of the level above), then marks were awarded at the top of the level. Where the components met the level but only just about, they are awarded marks at the bottom end of the level. When a response was imbalanced (i.e. one or more AOs were stronger than another) a compromise was found. Consideration was also given regarding this question requiring balance between the AOs (AO1 3, AO2 3, AO3 3). Students found this essay more accessible as they could choose what to offer and then apply to the scenario. The most common areas used were social (topic 5) and development (topic 1) but other areas were used accurately and appropriately too. The best responses attempted to give some AO3 material, as well as offering some understanding (AO1), and then applied this to the scenario involving Carlie (AO2). Weaker responses only focussed on a single topic (usually social influence) and made little or no attempt to develop their ideas beyond simplistic statements, with no AO3 offered.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, students should:

- Learn factual information from compulsory content from the specification, such as the studies, which can then be used across a variety of question types.
- Remember to show understanding as well as application when answering a question that requires AO1 and AO2. The most effective method appears to be in separating these in different sentences.
- Offer only relevant and appropriate improvements and conclusions, and always justify these fully.
- Consider appropriate strengths and weaknesses of content listed on the specification, such as studies and theories where this is specified, and then practise applying these to novel scenarios.
- Balance essays with a variety of content that focuses on including AO1, AO2, and AO3 in appropriate and relevant ways to novel scenarios.