

## PSYCHOLOGY

### Overall grade boundaries

#### Higher level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 8	9 – 18	19 – 27	28 – 39	40 – 52	53 – 64	65 – 100

#### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 8	9 – 20	21 – 32	33 – 45	46 – 57	58 – 71	72 – 100

### Higher level internal assessment

#### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 2	3 – 5	6 – 8	9 – 11	12 – 15	16 – 18	19 – 25

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

A range of topics were investigated for the internal assessment component for HL psychology. The most popular topics came from cognitive psychology topics as they generally lend themselves well to experimental investigation. A few correlational studies were submitted as well as some quasi-experiments investigating non-manipulated variables (such as gender); both of these types of studies do not meet the requirements for IB psychology internal assessment.

Procedural aspects of the projects were generally well done, however justification and explanation were weaker. Additionally, the selection and analysis of relevant background studies posed a problem for many candidates. These background studies help to develop the theoretical framework upon which the aim and hypothesis are formulated.

Once again this year there were many candidates who submitted research studies that do not adhere to the ethical guidelines that have been produced for IB psychology. Candidates in this course have not had sufficient training to appropriately handle topics that may be socially sensitive, overly deceptive, raise anxiety in the participant or that may reinforce negative stereotypical behaviour (especially with respect to gender, race or culture). Replications of Asch's conformity studies should not be undertaken as part of this course. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that all candidates adhere to ethical guidelines and they should seek assistance from their IB Coordinator or the Online Curriculum Centre ([online.ibo.org](http://online.ibo.org)) if they have any questions. This approval should happen very early in the planning process – before data collection begins. The Teacher Support Material has some suggestions for how teachers might handle choice of topics and approval processes.

## **Candidate performance against each criterion**

### **Criterion A – Introduction**

While the sources from which background studies were cited were generally appropriate, most candidates only offered a basic description of the research. Additionally, the studies cited were not always directly relevant to the research question. For example, if a candidate is investigating the effect of category headings on recall citing a study on the serial position effect would not be relevant if the candidate does not address this issue. All past research studies cited should be directly relevant to the topic under investigation and should be used to justify the prediction made in the research hypothesis.

Many candidates had difficulty in formulating an appropriate operationalised research hypothesis, which should explicitly state what is going to be measured, the units of measurement, the conditions and a prediction. For example, “The mean number of words correctly recalled using free recall will be significantly less than the mean number of words correctly recalled for a group using recall cues.” A typical, imprecise and non-operationalised hypothesis would be, “Free recall participants will do worse than cued recall participants” or “the more cues used during recall the better memory will be.” An appropriately formulated, operationalised hypothesis also helps candidates in their results section as they know exactly what results to calculate and graph (e.g., the mean number of words correctly recalled).

### **Criterion B – Method: Design**

Some candidates did not demonstrate an understanding of research design as opposed to research methods; whereby they only discussed and justified using an experimental method rather than addressing different participant designs (e.g., repeated measures, independent samples, etc.). Justification should be based on the particular strengths of a design and how that best fits the hypothesis.

Ethical considerations that the candidate has accounted for need to be specifically addressed in the design section. Informed consent is an important aspect of ethical procedures and must be accounted for and documented. Some candidates did not show understanding of the difference between consent and informed consent. The Teacher Support Material published for IB Psychology has a sample informed consent statement that could be considered for use and modified. Candidates not including a blank copy of the informed consent statement did not follow ethical guidelines and were thus awarded no credit for this criterion.

### **Criterion C – Method: Participants**

Not all candidates identified an appropriate target population from which they selected their sample. The target population could be narrowly defined (e.g., 15 – 18 year old secondary school students in a rural school setting). Most candidates neglected to define their target population.

Some candidates had quite large samples in their study; it is recommended that 15 – 20 participants is an adequate size. While large sample sizes are used in development of theory smaller numbers are appropriate for the IB psychology internal assessment. The purpose of this coursework is for candidates to get experience in experimental design, not to generate new theory or challenge existing theory. Additionally with large samples further statistical calculations are needed (such as calculating z-scores) which is beyond the scope of IB psychology.

### **Criterion D – Method: Procedure**

Most Procedure sections were adequately handled. It should be noted that some designs require specific procedural controls, such as the use of counterbalancing in a repeated measures/within subjects design.

### **Criterion E – Results**

The majority of candidates included descriptive statistics in their results section, however these were only briefly addressed and not always appropriately used. Candidates gathering data at the nominal level quite often reported their results only as percentages rather than frequencies and failed to discuss the mode for each condition. Measures of central tendency were more often appropriately calculated and discussed than were measures of dispersion. For example, candidates might find two drastically different standard deviations for the groups and this could form an important part of the findings yet the reasons for this difference were not discussed.

Most candidates are using computers to generate the graphs for their results section. While the use of computer generated graphs is acceptable many candidates seem to have difficulty in deciding which type of graph to use and which data to display. Many candidates include graphs that are irrelevant to the research hypothesis and are not properly labelled. Generally speaking a simple two bar graph is all that is necessary. Computers allow a multitude of graph styles to be created and candidates need to be taught how to select an appropriate one. An appropriately formulated research hypothesis leads directly to the type of graph that should be used (see the example above). Graphing of results from individual participants is not necessary and only summary data should be graphed (e.g. the mean under the two conditions).

Candidates also need to fully and accurately justify use of an appropriate inferential statistical test. Justification can come from the conditions of use for each that are outlined in many research methods texts.

### **Criterion F – Discussion**

The quality of the discussion section is partially related to the quality of the introduction section as candidates are to relate their findings to the studies discussed in the introduction. Studies not directly relevant to the research cannot be easily integrated nor appropriate in this section. Additionally new studies that were not included in the Introduction should not be introduced in the discussion section.

Many candidates overlooked possible confounding variables that might have affected their study. Procedural aspects, ethical considerations or theoretical framework might be considered. Some of the remarks offered as weaknesses were unsubstantiated and candidates did not always address the strengths of their studies.

### **Criterion G – Presentation**

Presentation was generally well done by most candidates. Some candidates had difficulty remaining within the word limits with several being over the maximum. The most common issue for this criterion was use of a consistent referencing system – both in the body of the paper and in the references section. Additionally, the papers do not need to be in plastic bindings, covers or plastic protectors. A simple staple or treasury tag is sufficient for holding the papers together and reduces the weight and bulk of the package sent via courier.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should be made fully aware of the contents of the IB psychology guide and all Internal Assessment requirements and ethical guidelines.

As this is probably the first major experimental psychological research candidates have done, teacher support is an important part of the learning process. Teachers should not only address research methodology with their candidates but also report writing. Concise and accurate writing styles are important in communicating the research to the reader.

Teachers are reminded that they may write on samples sent in for moderation. The purpose of moderation is to try and confirm the marks awarded by the teacher. Written comments, summaries, notes or documentation are helpful to moderators as they allow the moderators to see how marks were awarded.

3/IA forms should be filled out completely (both front and back sides) for each candidate. This form has important information for the moderator.

## Higher level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0–5	6–10	11–13	14–19	20–25	26–31	32–52

### General comments

Pleasingly, numbers of psychology candidates continue to increase, by 15% at SL and also by 15% at HL, in comparison with May 03 figures. In this session candidates generally were better prepared for the demands of both the short answer questions in Section A and the extended response questions in Section B. This was reflected in the improvement in numbers of candidates achieving marks in the top bands and in the reduction in numbers failing to achieve the required standard for this Paper. The following consideration of candidate performance may be useful in identifying aspects of examination performance and understanding of syllabus content which could be improved to facilitate an increase in numbers achieving higher grades.

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Quality of response to questions varied enormously but of particular concern was the apparent lack of candidate confidence in dealing with material from both the Biological and the Cognitive perspectives. Many candidates did not appear to have developed a clear understanding of the basic assumptions on which each approach is premised, with consequent implications for their ability to address the requirements of dedicated questions.

As relevant material for the Cognitive perspective, extraordinarily large numbers of candidates offered a superficial description of the Bandura research resulting in the formation of the Social Learning theory, yet failed to explicitly identify the cognitive elements involved in observational learning. Although this material *can* be made relevant, it is not the best example illustrating the Cognitive perspective if candidates are to fully appreciate its key assumptions, concepts and theories as distinct from those of alternative approaches. (The same may be said for the over- and often inappropriate use of Kohler's ape study.) A large number of candidates appeared to assume that

purely genetic explanations represent the Biological perspective's understanding of human behaviour, apparently unaware of physiological correlates, or of the interactionist debate and the need to consider individual differences in any psychological explanation of human behaviour.

As identified in previous Reports, the Learning Perspective as preferred question choice in Section B suggests a lack of confidence in knowledge and understanding of alternative perspectives, particularly the Humanistic. However, a major difficulty for many candidates appeared to be in addressing the exact requirements of the question as set. Candidates frequently omitted evaluation despite command terms such as 'discuss', 'compare', 'to what extent' and 'examine' requiring such treatment of relevant material, and 'compare' questions rarely included similarities.

## **The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared**

Those candidates who were equally well prepared for all the perspectives were able to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge and understanding in sound responses to all the compulsory Section A short answer questions. This examination session saw more candidates producing an appropriate amount of writing for the short answer questions. In some centres, candidates addressing questions on the Humanistic perspective produced very well argued and knowledgeable responses. As ever, candidates from some centres demonstrated in-depth knowledge and understanding of relevant material in a logically constructed answer focusing on the requirements of the question, indicating thorough preparation for the demands of this paper.

## **The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions**

### **Section A**

**Question 1**    a)    *Outline what is meant by the reductionist approach.*    [2 marks]

Reductionism was often only superficially explained, despite being one of the Learning Outcomes for the biological perspective. Many candidates appeared not to understand this important issue and how it impacts on the usefulness of psychological explanations of human behaviour.

(Example of lack of content understanding)

b)    *Explain how one theory or empirical study from the biological perspective demonstrates a reductionist approach.*    [6 marks]

Few candidates followed the question instruction to focus on *one* empirical study *or* theory, offering instead a general account including reference to both. Where a sound understanding of reductionism was apparent in part a), candidates were generally able to link study to definition, although generally only briefly.

(Example of question not being answered.)

**Question 2**    a)    *Describe one cognitive explanation of human behaviour, making reference to one empirical study.*    [4 marks]

There was often little evidence to demonstrate understanding of cognition as concerning the mental processes between stimulus and response, therefore very few candidates chose an empirical study which was central to the concept of cognition. Candidates frequently described a study but failed to describe the cognitive explanation required in the question. There was over-use of Bandura's research using Bobo dolls, usually ineffectually in terms of

the question requirements but which was able to be made to fit by some, more astute candidates.

(Example of question not being answered.)

- b) *Describe one strength and one limitation of this explanation of human behaviour.* [4 marks]

Candidates had not read the question as many of the strengths and limitations offered related only to the methodology of the study rather than to the required explanation of human behaviour.

(Example of question not being answered.)

**Question 3** *“An assumption can be defined as a belief or idea that psychologists studying behaviour from a particular perspective hold in common.”*

- a) *Outline one assumption from the learning perspective.* [3 marks]

Candidates had a wide range of assumptions from which to choose but better responses were those where the selected empirical study in part b) could be explicitly linked to the chosen assumption. Thus candidates simply stating that ‘all behaviour is learned’ had a difficult task in part b) since learning had not been precisely defined in part a).

- b) *Explain how one empirical study from the learning perspective illustrates the assumption you have identified in part a).* [5 marks]

Again there was over-use of Bandura’s Bobo doll studies, although the Watson and Rayner “Little Albert” study was also very popular, often with many inaccuracies both in the methodology of the study and in its analysis. Confusion between negative reinforcement and punishment was frequently seen, as was a tendency to avoid the use of appropriate terminology. The Overmier and Seligman (1967) learned helplessness study (of dogs) was frequently misunderstood and inappropriately analysed.

(Example of lack of content understanding)

**Question 4** a) *In the context of human behaviour, outline one theory from the humanistic perspective.* [4 marks]

Where Maslow’s work was described, candidates tended to omit reference to motivation as the impetus for change in behaviour. Outlines of Roger’s Self theory were often sketchy and lacking in the use of appropriate terminology.

- b) *Explain one way in which methodological or cultural considerations have an impact on the theory outlined in part a).* [4 marks]

Many candidates produced methodological criticism, rather than demonstrating understanding of the ways in which methodological considerations could be argued to undermine the acceptability of the humanistic perspective as an explanation of human behaviour. Comparisons of the applicability of humanistic theories to individualistic and collectivist societies were generally more successful.

(Example of question not being answered.)

**Section B**

**Question 5**     *Discuss how ethical and methodological considerations affect the interpretation of behaviour from a biological perspective.*     [20 marks]

Not a popular question but one producing several sound responses clearly linking methodological and ethical considerations. However, many responses were unbalanced as candidates tended to reject the biological approach as too simplistic, mechanistic and reductionist, demonstrating little or no awareness of the ‘cause or effect’ issue surrounding biochemical activity and psychological behaviour. In particular, a lack of balance was evident in the consideration of biological interventions for individuals with dysfunctional behaviours, for example, there being no apparent understanding that drug treatment for depression can save lives in situations where time and money are not available for less invasive treatments. There was often little understanding of the trade-off between therapeutic benefits on the one hand and risks/side-effects on the other, of both biochemical and psychological interventions. Examiners also noted with regret the frequency of answers indicting a lack of understanding of psycho-surgery. Many candidates erroneously claimed entire frontal lobes are removed in pre-frontal lobotomies/leucotomies, and that this is still a widespread practice, despite current use of the phenothiazine drugs and the development of specialist behavioural treatments replacing surgical intervention.

(Example of lack of content understanding)

**Question 6**     a)     *Explain one psychological or social question (for example, aggression, or gender differences) from the cognitive perspective.*     [10 marks]

This was a popular question although not one for which many responses attracted marks in the top bands. Aggression was the most frequently chosen topic, though this was rarely well explained from a cognitive perspective. Again, Bandura’s Bobo doll studies were over-used, ostensibly to support a Social Learning explanation of aggression, although some candidates failed to make explicit the links with acquisition of aggressive behaviours. This question offered candidates the opportunity to consider gender acquisition, referring to the work of, for example, Bem or Kohlberg in addition to SLT explanations but such research was very rarely mentioned.

b)     *Compare the cognitive explanation of the question selected in part a) with the explanation offered by one other perspective you have studied for this paper.*     [10 marks]

Comparisons between perspectives were often very superficial and descriptive, usually offering an account of one perspective’s explanation followed by the other, with little critical evaluation or understanding that the two perspectives could be complementary rather than antagonistic. As in other ‘comparison’ questions, such concentration on differences to the exclusion of similarities had important implications for mark allocation. Comparison tended to be restricted to description of theory although empirical research, cultural applicability, and key assumptions, could all have been appropriately addressed.

### Question 7

Although popular, responses to this question were disappointing.

- a) *Outline one explanation of learning from the traditional behaviourist approach.* [6 marks]

Most candidates were able to offer some level of explanation of either classical or operant conditioning but many accounts lacked the detailed understanding demonstrated in the use of appropriate terminology. In particular operant conditioning accounts lacked reference to important aspects such as shaping, types and schedules of reinforcement, negative reinforcement, etc., merely describing reinforcement in very general terms.

- b) *The learning perspective still offers explanations of behavioural change.*

*To what extent have cognitive or biological factors extended traditional explanations of behaviour within the learning perspective?* [14 marks]

Many candidates described research from the biological or from the cognitive perspectives rather than discussing the extent to which learning theory explanations have been extended to acknowledge the role of biological or cognitive factors in explanations of human behaviour. They tended to give cognitive explanations for learning, for example memory, rather than focus on the cognitive extension of traditional explanations of behaviour, for example, observation and imitation in social learning theory, cognitive maps in latent learning, internal mental schemata influencing attention to environmental stimuli and therefore what was learned. Few candidates attempted to consider the extent to which biological factors have extended traditional learning explanations of behaviour.  
(Example of question not being answered.)

- Question 8** *Examine the contribution of the humanistic perspective as an alternative approach to the psychological study of human behaviour.* [20 marks]

Candidates attempting this question frequently ignored the focus, *i.e.* ‘an alternative approach to the psychological study of human behaviour’, instead describing ‘all I can recall about the humanistic perspective’. Marking such responses is often a sad experience as candidates do seem to have appropriate knowledge but do not seem to have developed the skills necessary to demonstrate the use of such information in addressing the specific demands of a question.

Many students did not appear to understand the specific requirements of this question instead producing a critique of the perspective. Consequently, there was too little emphasis on the ways in which humanistic psychology has contributed to the development of the discipline, for example in redressing the balance after the deterministic approaches of the biological, behavioural and psychodynamic schools. Discussion of problems of methodology and objectiveness within the perspective frequently referred to Q-sorts but made no mention of personal constructs/repertory grids as a way of displaying the influences of incongruence between Self and Ideal-Self, or for the measuring/monitoring of shifts in attitude/constructs/schemata during therapy.  
(Example of question not being answered.)

However, there were some extremely good responses to this particular question.



## **Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates**

From the above comments, it would appear that the performance of many candidates would be improved with more explicit practise in ‘unpacking’ and then writing appropriate responses to examination questions, throughout the delivery of the course. (See all questions identified as ‘Example of question not being answered’.) Preparation purely in terms of relevant content is insufficient if candidates are to be successful in this Paper.

Candidates should understand the meaning and the requirements of command terms as listed on pages 67 to 69 of the psychology syllabus. This may be achieved initially as a group exercise, then with candidates working in pairs and finally individually, in writing essay plans which focus on addressing the requirements of a question as set.

Parted questions allowing choice in theory or study in one section require particular attention. Candidates are advised to carefully read both sections of the question before choosing material, to ensure the best examples are selected in order to service the needs of both parts.

Equal amounts of time should be spent on all the perspectives during course delivery. (Refer to all examples of ‘Example of lack of content understanding’.) Teachers are advised to consult the strategies and resources recommended in the psychology section of the OCC, in addition to the estimated teaching hours guide in the syllabus when planning course delivery.

## **Higher level paper two**

### **Component grade boundaries**

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 4	5 – 9	10 – 12	13 – 18	19 – 24	25 – 30	31 – 40

### **General Comments**

The Psychology of Dysfunctional Behaviour, Psychodynamic Psychology and Social Psychology were the most popular options on Higher Level Paper 2 again this year. The vast majority of candidates responded to these options, with only a few candidates responding to questions from Lifespan Psychology, Health Psychology, Cultural Psychology and Comparative Psychology.

Candidates seemed to be more familiar with the paper format, terminology and question structure during this exam session than in the previous May session. The vast majority of candidates seemed to have had no trouble managing their time and were able to adequately respond to two questions. There were a few candidates who did not follow the instructions and did not answer two questions with each one coming from a different option.

### **The areas of the programme and examination that appeared difficult for the candidates**

Essays submitted for this session continued to show slight improvement in the ability to provide evaluative commentary for each question. Many candidates included some sort of evaluation; however it was not always focused and relevant. The top essays included evaluation that was directly linked to the question and helped to develop a line of argument as required from the question. Most candidates, however, provided fragmentary or general evaluative comments that were not always directly related to the question.

Many candidates continue to provide rather superficial essays that either lack depth or attempt to include a wide range of content that may be only tangentially related to the demands of the question. It was apparent from most essays that candidates had been exposed to a range of psychological topics, theories and studies, however many lacked the ability to use this content knowledge in formulating a coherent, relevant response to the question. Additionally, many essays were unbalanced. For example, when asked to compare, candidates should address both similarities and differences. It was most commonly found that only differences were addressed which limited the scope of the responses.

Questions that are written in a parted format posed a challenge to some candidates. The two most common problems were including relevant material/discussion in the appropriate part as outlined in the question, and time management. Each part of a parted question has a mark allocation noted beside it. These mark allocations should be used as a guide to the amount of time that should be spent on each part. Candidates who had not thoroughly read or planned their responses before answering quite often repeated themselves in part b) of a parted question as they had not remained focused for the first part of the question.

### **The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated**

Well-prepared candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge of psychological theories and studies along with the ability to formulate coherent arguments relevant to each question. While most candidates showed some understanding of basic concepts, few were able to weave this knowledge together into a focused response.

There were a large number of candidates that provided naïve or superficial responses which lacked psychological knowledge and understanding. Some responses included anecdotal examples rather than psychological theories or studies; this led to basic misconceptions of psychological knowledge or stereotypical discussions of behaviour rather than demonstration of detailed understanding of the scientific study of behaviour.

### **The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions**

#### **Comparative psychology**

**Question 1**     *Describe and evaluate one evolutionary explanation of behaviour. [20 marks]*

This question was attempted by only a few candidates.

**Question 2**     *Use research findings to discuss the nature of altruism in animals. [20 marks]*

This question was attempted by only a few candidates. Those candidates who had prepared for this question gave relatively strong responses by focusing on the behaviour of various animal species – most commonly vampire bats and apparent altruism.

**Question 3**     *Discuss how ethical and methodological considerations affect the interpretation of behaviour in comparative psychology. [20 marks]*

This question was attempted by only a few candidates.

### Cultural psychology

- Question 4**     *Use empirical research from within the study of cultural psychology to assess the extent to which human behaviour is affected by cultural context and schemas.* [20 marks]

This question was attempted by only a few candidates.

- Question 5**     a)     *Define the term **ethnocentricity**.* [4 marks]
- b)     *With reference to psychological research assess the extent to which ethnocentricity may affect the interpretation of human behaviour within cultural psychology.* [16 marks]

This question was attempted by only a few candidates. Most responses were rather anecdotal in nature and lacked understanding of psychological research into ethnocentricity within the field of cultural psychology.

- Question 6**     a)     *Identify and explain one behaviour that has been found to be universal across more than one culture.* [4 marks]
- b)     *Identify and explain one behaviour that has been found to be culturally specific to one culture.* [4 marks]
- c)     *Examine ways in which findings from the study of universal and culturally specific explanations of human behaviour affect communication across cultures.* [12 marks]

This question was attempted by only a few candidates. This question attracted candidates who were not prepared to discuss etic and emic behaviour within cultural psychology.

### The psychology of dysfunctional behaviour

- Question 7**     a)     *Describe one dysfunctional behaviour (disorder).* [6 marks]
- b)     *Evaluate the use of one therapy or treatment for the dysfunctional behaviour (disorder) described in part a).* [14 marks]

This question was the most popular attracting the greatest number of responses. Most candidates did rather well on part a) and were able to describe a dysfunctional behaviour by addressing its definition, symptoms, possible etiology, diagnosis, classification or models. There was a tendency for some candidates to go into too much detail on part a), thus reducing the time available to address part b) which was worth a greater number of marks. Schizophrenia, depression and phobias were the most commonly addressed disorders. Many candidates did a good job at discussing the negative points of a particular therapy or treatment in part b), however they did not always provide a balanced evaluation by neglecting to include the relative strengths of the chosen treatment/therapy. Candidates evaluated in many different, yet acceptable, ways including discussion of effectiveness or by comparison to another possible treatment/therapy.

**Question 8** *To what extent are concepts of “normality” and “abnormality” affected by cultural considerations?* [20 marks]

While this question was somewhat popular, most candidates did not focus on how cultural considerations may impact the concepts of normality and abnormality beyond basic identification that there are cultural differences. Most commonly the essays gave various definitions of these two concepts (e.g. deviation from social norms, failure to function adequately, mental health, etc.) without specific consideration of cultural factors.

**Question 9** a) *Explain how dysfunctional behaviour is diagnosed and classified.* [10 marks]  
b) *Discuss ethical considerations related to the diagnosis of dysfunctional behaviour.* [10 marks]

This was the least popular question from this option with only a few candidates addressing both diagnosis and classification. Candidates were challenged by this distinction and often did not show a complete understanding of the differences between the two. Ethical considerations in part b) were generally adequate and some candidates cited highly relevant research into the challenges of diagnosis.

### Health psychology

**Question 10** *Examine how cultural considerations may affect the interpretation of behaviour in health psychology.* [20 marks]

This question was attempted by only a few candidates.

**Question 11** a) *Explain two ways of coping with stress in humans.* [10 marks]  
b) *Evaluate the effectiveness of each of these two coping strategies.* [10 marks]

This question was attempted by only a few candidates. While the focus of the question is on coping techniques/mechanisms, many candidates wrote more generally about stress theories.

**Question 12** *Describe and evaluate two methodologies that are applied in health psychology.* [20 marks]

This question was attempted by only a few candidates. Some of those who did answer this question did quite well, demonstrating knowledge of both quantitative and qualitative methods used by health psychologists. Weaker responses did not focus on the demands of the question.

### Lifespan psychology

**Question 13** *Examine controversies related to concepts of adolescence.* [20 marks]

While relatively few candidates answered this question, there were some exceptionally strong responses that adequately addressed concepts of adolescence. These focused on cultural differences in the concept of adolescence, differences in theoretical explanations and adolescence as a social construction.

- Question 14** a) *Define the term gender identity.* [4 marks]  
b) *Describe and evaluate one research study exploring gender identity.* [16 marks]

This question was attempted by only a few candidates. There were some weak responses giving irrelevant and stereotypical responses focusing on sexual orientation and behaviour rather than gender identity.

- Question 15** *Describe and evaluate one explanation of how social development continues throughout the lifespan.* [20 marks]

Most responses addressed Erikson's theory of development with slight lean towards personality development rather than social development.

### **Psychodynamic psychology**

- Question 16** *“Psychodynamic theories emphasize the importance of childhood experience in the development of adult personality.”*

*To what extent does psychodynamic psychology provide a satisfactory explanation of the development of personality?* [20 marks]

The majority of essays were highly descriptive accounts of Freudian psychosexual development theory with little reference to personality within this framework. Where other explanations were included the most popular ones were object relations theory or theories developed by Adler and Horney. Some candidates addressed Jungian theory but were of a more general nature rather than focused on personality development. Many responses did not include discussion of the omissions of psychodynamic explanations of personality development (e.g. the role of modelling). A relatively small number of candidates adequately addressed and justified the 'extent to which' aspect of this question.

- Question 17** *To what extent does empirical research provide support for the assertions made by psychodynamic theorists?* [20 marks]

This question was attempted by only a few candidates. Most of these responses showed misunderstanding of the phrase 'empirical research' and did not focus on experimental validation of psychodynamic theories.

- Question 18** a) *Outline one or more techniques used for research in psychodynamic psychology.* [6 marks]  
b) *Evaluate the technique(s) outlined in part a).* [14 marks]

The case study method was most commonly addressed in this question. Other candidates attempted to include discussion of therapeutic methods, such as psychoanalysis, dream interpretation and hypnosis. These discussions, however, were not always linked to their methodological use in research or theory development. Most candidates did well in describing the negative aspects of the case study method, but few argued as to the relevance of alternate methods to psychodynamic psychology.

## Social psychology

- Question 19**
- a) *Distinguish between obedience and independent behaviour.* [4 marks]
  - b) *Describe the research findings of one study of either obedience or independent behaviour.* [6 marks]
  - c) *Evaluate applications of the research findings described in part (b).* [10 marks]

Milgram & Zimbardo were the two most commonly cited researchers in part b). Only a handful of candidates described research findings of independent behaviour as opposed to obedience. Part b) was usually very descriptive of the methods and procedure with very little focus on the actual findings of the research. Additionally, some candidates confused obedience with conformity. How the findings were applied in part c) was generally not well addressed. Many candidates evaluated the study itself rather than how the findings have been applied in areas, such as education, parenting, and the workplace.

- Question 20** *Discuss how cultural and methodological considerations affect the interpretation of conformity research.* [20 marks]

There was little reference to relevant topics such as experimenter bias and artificiality in experimental research in social psychology in responses to this question. General commentary about Asch's conformity research with little discussion of these two specific types of consideration was quite common.

- Question 21** *Assess the impact of collective behaviour on the individual.* [20 marks]

While many candidates discussed relevant topics in collective behaviour, most did not address the impact on the individual. This was the least popular question from this option.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

With this session's cohort it was apparent that most psychology teachers are including relevant psychological topics in their courses. While the overall quality of the material being studied has been steadily improving over the past few years, candidates need to further develop their communication skills in writing essays and taking exams. Candidates seem to be familiar with a wide range of psychological knowledge, but cannot always communicate that knowledge and understanding effectively. Candidates should be aware of the requirements of the program and be given copies of relevant sections of the psychology guide. This would include developing an understanding of how questions are formulated and the directive terms/command terms used. Time allocation must be practiced by setting exam questions and time constraints similar to those of the exam session. In some responses it was seen that candidates had not read the question carefully and may have only partially answered the question.

When writing essays candidates should avoid use of personal experiences in developing their responses. Empirical and/or theoretical support is required in all responses. Additionally teachers should help candidates develop the skill of providing balanced responses (e.g. addressing both positive and negative aspects or both strengths and weaknesses). Examiners have also reported that candidates often have trouble writing focused responses (i.e. candidates should not provide all details, but rather all relevant details to the question). This will help candidates formulate coherent and logical arguments and include relevant evaluative commentary.

Teachers should seek to develop student sensitivity to cultural issues outside the home country. This helps to provide a more balanced account of psychological knowledge and gives the candidates a much more rounded view of the discipline. Candidates should also avoid stereotypical responses especially when addressing similarities and differences between individualist and collectivist cultures.

## Higher level paper three

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 1	2 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 11	12 – 14	15 – 30

### The areas of the programme and examination that appeared difficult for the candidates.

The post-modern method of transcribing interviews and its subsequent evaluation were not well known by several candidates. Although the concept is relatively straightforward to understand once it is explained, it appeared from comments written by candidates that they were unfamiliar with the term ‘post modern’ in this context. Similarly content analysis presented problems for many candidates, despite its popularity as a research method that is used in qualitative research.

### The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated

It was clear from candidates’ answers that few had experienced practical application of qualitative methods included in the programme. Given the time constraints imposed by various curriculum demands this is hardly surprising, but it does mean that without this application that theories and concepts involved in research are harder for candidates to understand. Without this initial grasp of qualitative methods it is most difficult to use evaluation in any meaningful way since strengths and weaknesses will not be appreciated.

Each research method has its own advantages and disadvantages and candidates should become aware of these in their learning process. It was not sufficient for candidates to treat the substance of a specific method as its strength, nor should restatement of a method be regarded as justification for its validity or reliability. Although there is a necessary subtlety in some approaches used in qualitative methods, this is well within the grasp of candidates at this level of psychology. For example the concepts of validity and reliability have a different meaning in qualitative compared to quantitative research.

### The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

- Question 1**
- a) *Describe what is meant by the post-modern method of transcribing interviews.* [5 marks]
- b) *Evaluate the use of the post-modern method of transcribing interviews.* [5 marks]

Question 1 required a description of the post-modern method of transcribing interviews. Whilst several candidates provided creative ideas about the use of cutting edge technology for this purpose, the answer was more prosaic. Where traditional transcription is based solely upon the words spoken in an interview, the post modern approach uses psychological insights

by using the body language conveyed by the interviewee, the nuances of the voice, the ‘um’ mms’ and ‘ah’s’ or the silences, laughter or tears that may occur. Interpretation of these additional means of communication calls for experience on the part of the researcher and an awareness that mistakes in interpretation may occur. Evaluation of the post research method was well reported by some candidates who realised, for example, that some researchers may not recognise that different cultures can have radically different ways of conveying their emotions in the body language that they present. For example nodding of the head up and down may carry the same meaning in one culture as the movement of the head from side to side in another culture.

Answers to this question tended to polarise the marks that were obtained – candidates either knew the meaning of ‘post-modern’ in this context or they did not. It was not possible for candidates to think on their feet for this question, although several commendable efforts were made.

- Question 2**
- a) *When using observation as a research method, account for each of the following:*
- (i) *participant expectancies*  
(ii) *researcher expectancies.* [4 marks]
- b) *Evaluate how each of the **two** expectancies mentioned above may affect the validity of the research findings.* [6 marks]

Question 2 was the best answered question, since a high proportion of candidates were familiar with the concepts of participant and researcher expectancies. Descriptions and evaluations were often good and sometimes excellent. However there was a tendency on the part of some to describe the whole process of an investigation that used observation, and some candidates offered information on placebos, and double blind techniques. Such knowledge was not required in this particular question.

However candidates were certainly aware of the how both participant and researcher expectancies might affect the validity of research findings. The presence of an audience for the behaviour of those being observed was well explained and the subsequent effect on validity was very commendably explored.

- Question 3** *Explain the process of content analysis as it is applied to printed material (e.g. psychological case studies or data from interviews).* [10 marks]

Question 3 called for an explanation of the process of content analysis as applied to printed material. (e.g. from an interview or case study). Given the centrality of content analysis to many aspects of qualitative research this question provided fewer responses that demonstrated knowledge and understanding than expected. Some candidates rightly suggested that content analysis may be investigated by using a quantitative or a qualitative approach, or a combination of the two. Any of these approaches could have gained maximum marks provided that the explanation was clear and coherent. Unfortunately this was not often the case. Counting the number of times a word or phrase occurs in a printed passage, suggested by some candidates, would be insufficient as a means of content analysis. The process of analysis needs a more coherent approach. It may for, example, include an inductive or deductive approach. The researcher needs to interpret the meanings that the interviewee is trying to convey, and to undertake this task in a way that is organised and is transparent to the reader of the investigation.



This question did not call for evaluation, although this was given credit if it formed part of an explanation. Some candidates were able to offer impressive explanations, but this was not always the case.

## **Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates**

Experiential learning for candidates would be of very substantial benefit to candidates engaged in learning methods of qualitative research. Although contact time between teacher and learner is restricted by curriculum demands, much would be gained by setting candidates the relatively straightforward task, for example, of conducting a carefully planned formal interview of say 15 minutes in length. This would involve the construction of questions that could be worded for use in a semi-structured interview. With the interviewee's permission, and using a post modern approach, an audio-tape recording of the interview could be made and subsequently transcribed on to hard copy. Content analysis using a thematic approach could then be employed on the transcript.

In this one experiential task a number of qualitative methods are used that would increase the understanding of candidates. They would know the advantages and limitations of these methods at first hand and would be likely to discover information of surprising interest, providing that an appropriate investigative task was employed.

Qualitative research is an exciting process and candidates do need to experience practical application. It is a method that acknowledges the individual perceptions of people in a way that alternative methods do not. It does need to engage the researcher at first hand and to use interpretation of data in a way that engages the candidate's empathy and imagination.

Candidates need have more knowledge of the concepts and theories related to that part of the programme concerned with qualitative research. Although this knowledge is unlikely to be found in any **one** text that is currently available there is much information on internet sources, although this does have to be treated with care. Attendance at teacher workshops, where qualitative methods form an integral part of the programme, would be most useful for teachers in order to expand their knowledge and understanding of this aspect of psychology.

## **Standard level internal assessment**

### **Component grade boundaries**

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 2	3 – 5	6 – 8	9 – 10	11 – 12	13 – 14	15 – 20

### **The range and suitability of the work submitted**

A substantial majority of reports were satisfactory. The selected experiments for replication were appropriate at this level and it was interesting to note that many of these were based on cognitive related aspects of psychology (e.g. the Stroop effect, Craik and Tulving's experiment or Loftus's experiment). There was a tendency for some candidates to use multiple hypotheses and to employ more than one IV or DV. The added complexities that these approaches involve detracted from the main task of performing an experiment in a clear and precise way. Such attempts frequently led to lack of precision and consequently lower marks were awarded.

Some candidates presented reports that were not experiments, and in other examples there was no attempt to replicate an experiment. Most frequently this resulted in an inadequate introduction where no key studies were mentioned. The knock-on effect meant that candidates were unable to make satisfactory links between their own studies and those of previous researchers in the area. There were also occasions when unethical work was presented despite the clear guidelines provided by the IBO. It was good to note these were fewer in number than in some earlier years, but continued vigilance is needed to guard against any future infringements of the required ethical standards.

## **Candidate performance against each criterion**

### **Criterion A – Introduction**

While many candidates presented the key study to be replicated in a clear fashion, and related this to the aim of the study, others did not. They made up their own experiments based on one or two experiments mentioned in their discussion. This often resulted in weak design and a misinterpretation of data. The introduction needed to be written in a rigorous manner where the main study certainly took priority but where there was some support from other relevant material. A function of the introduction was to explain the rationale for the replicated study. This material should have been chosen carefully so that candidates have in mind the word count imposed on IA reports. Any study mentioned in the report needed to be explicitly referenced, but not all candidates did so.

### **Criterion B – Design**

Many candidates scored low marks in this section because they simply indicated the design they intended to use but presented no justification for their choice. Justification for a specific design might well have overcome an error in design choice and the ramifications that followed.

Incorrect use of the IV and the DV occurred in several reports. There were candidates who insisted, inappropriately, on using ethnicity or gender as an IV, or they offered multiple IVs. In other instances the DV had no measurable outcome and was not suitable for statistical treatment.

Ethical issues should have been addressed under this heading but in some cases this aspect was omitted. Wherever participants are required to participate in an experiment an appropriate consent form should have been used. Ethical procedures are not an optional extra that candidates can treat in a casual manner. A general consent form is not usually relevant for school children, so that a specific form should be created that does make sense for them, according to their age and level of understanding. Most investigations with children need to have consent from both the headteacher and parent, but this was sometimes not obtained.

### **Criterion C – Participants**

Many candidates failed to identify the parent population from which their sample was chosen. There were also claims that random sampling was employed when this clearly was not the case. Opportunity or purposive sampling is a reasonable method but it does need to be justified. There should also have been a brief description of the participants according to nature of the experiment. This is particularly important where the participants were markedly different in the replicated study compared to the original sample used.

### **Criterion D – Procedure**

This section was frequently of better quality than other sections. There were exceptions when two conditions were used and candidates forgot to mention the differences between the two conditions. Occasionally standardised instructions or, more frequently, debriefing letters or talks were omitted.

### **Criterion E – Results**

The results section varied considerably in quality of presentation and the information that could be obtained. At their best they were both clear and informative, but there were occasions when the results were omitted or gave such a paucity of information that they were hardly worth presenting. Tables and graphs needed to be clearer so that the data was readily understood by the reader. Where appropriate, graphs should have a label, legend and a label for each axis. The use of nominal data, often produced as a result of not using a replicated study, meant that the data did not easily lend itself to descriptive statistics except at a rather superficial level.

### **Criterion F – Discussion**

This was a most important section where candidates should have considered their own results and compared them to prior studies identified in the introduction. Whilst the strengths and limitations of methodology were often discussed, the reasons for disagreement or agreement of candidates' results with previous work was often ignored. Suggestions for future research were offered but these were sometimes of a superficial nature, such as the need for more time, more participants or more money. These factors could be needed for every investigation and candidates need to produce more thoughtful, in-depth ideas for future research. These ideas might emerge from the reaction of participants to the experiment, or consideration of the methodology employed or the operational definitions that were used.

### **Criterion G – General presentation**

Acceptable referencing was problematic for many candidates and maximum marks could not be obtained where this occurred. Correct methods of referencing are indicated in material published by IBO, by the American Psychological Association and by the British Psychological Society. Most of the information is obtainable on the web sites or by email. Some candidates used cited material in the body of their reports but failed to include this in their reference section.

Some candidates exceeded the word limit by a considerable margin and in doing so they failed to maximise their marks.

## **Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates**

Despite the weaknesses indicated above, many candidates produced competent reports. Much of this is due to the conscientious way that they have conducted and written their experiments. Teachers are urged to encourage their students to continue and improve this work. In particular students should become familiar with the designs that they consider and to understand the implications of the studies that they attempt to replicate. Exact replication will be impossible and the differences that become apparent in such factors as different samples, different cultures or different environments should be made clear by candidates.

Teachers should become even more sensitive to any ethical issues that could arise from the investigations that are to be conducted by their students, and to monitor the progress of each on-going research study. In particular they must ensure that students obtain written and signed appropriate permission from each participant, and where necessary, from parent and headteacher.

The evidence from this year's reports confirms that those candidates who base their work on actual studies, or very close adaptations of such experiments tend to do considerably better than those who create their own work from scratch. The main reason for this is the lack of previous research and appropriate methodology that is associated with the latter. Teachers should ensure that their students are keenly aware of this information before they embark on their own experimental work.

Encouragement from workshops and peer group discussion and using relevant published experiments from reliable sources should help.

## Standard level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 4	5 – 9	10 – 13	14 – 19	20 – 24	25 – 30	31 – 44

### The areas of the programme and examination that appeared difficult for the candidates

Although the allocation of marks to each section is clearly laid out at the end of each question, some candidates tended to give just as much time and effort to part of a question that had a maximum of 4 marks as they did for a part that had a maximum of 10 marks. This approach meant that several potential marks were missed by candidates.

Examiners also identified confusion in the minds of some candidates who did not appear to know which specific perspective they should be discussing. For example candidates discussed the cognitive perspective instead of the learning perspective or vice versa. Other answers started with a theory from one perspective but gave examples from a different perspective. In particular the cognitive perspective, and the choice of appropriate examples from this section, seemed to present difficulties.

### The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated

In nearly all of the questions on this paper part b) was an extension of part a). The link between the two parts was not always clear in some answers. A theory or empirical study might be outlined in part a) but the explanation in part b) had no connection to part a). There was a tendency to state a theory or study but fail to link it in any meaningful way to the evaluative element of the question.

Evaluation as a technique was not well undertaken by most candidates. It was insufficient to list the benefits or disadvantages of a theory or study and leave the examiner to make inferences about what the candidates intended as criticism. The candidate's task was to make evaluation explicit to the particular study or theory that was under consideration. For example it was often superficial to claim that because an investigation was conducted on a small number of cases, it could never be applied more generally. Asserting such a claim needed to be expressed in a more considered way. Most applications for general acceptance are first investigated by using small numbers of participants, and only subsequently applied to greater numbers.

Many candidates limited the learning perspective to the traditional behaviourist approach; in consequence they were constrained from using other equally justified approaches from this perspective.

There were also a large number of candidates who used the names of animals in a disconcerting manner. Star animals such as Sultan (the banana seeking chimpanzee who led Kohler to make his claims about insight) made a guest appearance in other investigations. Sultan also apparently learned human language by using a computer, helped to wash potatoes in Japan and was capable of using cognitive maps. In a similarly confused way, Little Albert was conditioned by Watson using a variety of white furry animals, in which rabbits and kittens featured, each of which might be as scared as Albert by the use of gongs, bells or metronomes. These errors are not of themselves necessarily

serious, but they do serve to illustrate how often confusion about different studies arise in the minds of some candidates.

## **The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Biological Perspective**

- Question 1**
- a) *Outline what is meant by the reductionist approach.* [2 marks]
  - b) *Explain how **one** theory **or** empirical study from the biological perspective demonstrates a reductionist approach.* [6 marks]

Many candidates misunderstood the meaning of the word ‘reductionist’ and in some cases it was not possible to award any marks to the answer. Sometimes the term was taken to indicate the tapering off of a medication dosage advised by medical doctors.

The majority of candidates who did know the correct meaning of the term did well in their responses to this question. For example they gave a clear outline of the reductionist approach and explained how the James-Lange theory of emotion, Penfield’s study or Sperry’s study of the split brain illustrated reductionism.

#### **Cognitive Perspective**

- Question 2**
- a) *Describe **one** cognitive explanation of human behaviour, making reference to **one** empirical study.* [4 marks]
  - b) *Describe **one** strength and **one** limitation of this explanation of human behaviour.* [4 marks]

Although this question called specifically for a cognitive explanation of human behaviour, many answers used animal studies such as those provided by Tolman or Kohler, but failed to make a link to human cognitive processes. Even where Piaget’s or Bandura’s studies were used the explanation was not always clearly described. Some candidates also provided more than one strength or more than one limitation of this explanation. Only one of each example could be awarded credit and often the first of a multiple number of examples was rather superficial and earned few marks. Better answers were often those associated with specific human behaviour involving memory, problem solving or cognitive dissonance. Few candidates offered a clear evaluation of the explanation and some presented a superficial understanding of the cognitive approach in general.

### Learning Perspective

**Question 3**     *“An assumption can be defined as a belief or idea that psychologists studying behaviour from a particular perspective hold in common.”*

- a)     *Outline **one** assumption from the learning perspective.     [3 marks]*
- b)     *Explain how **one** empirical study from the learning perspective illustrates the assumption you have identified in part a).     [5 marks]*

Many candidates were unable to identify a relevant assumption from the learning perspective; they often referred to a specific type of learning such as classical or operant conditioning rather than an assumption. Others provided a relevant assumption but the outline was limited. In part b) empirical studies were usually relevant but not always linked to the assumption presented in part a). Candidates did not always know the difference between an explanation and a description; a simple outline of classical or operant conditioning usually did not include an explanation. When candidates identified an incorrect assumption in part a) it was difficult for them to give an appropriate answer in part b).

### Section B

**Question 4**     *Discuss how ethical **and** methodological considerations affect the interpretation of behaviour from a biological perspective.     [20 marks]*

Several candidates responded to this question by discussing points about ethical and methodological points in general, but they did not show how these affected the interpretation of behaviour from a biological perspective. Few empirical studies were used. In other instances candidates discussed ethical issues associated with mental disorders but omitted to mention how these were related to the biological perspective. However there were many answers that did demonstrate a clear understanding of methodological and ethical issues in their discussion of examples such as invasive techniques, post-mortem studies, animal studies and case studies.

- Question 5**
- a)     *Explain **one** psychological **or** social question (e.g. aggression or gender differences) from the cognitive perspective.     [10 marks]*
  - b)     *Compare the cognitive explanation of the question selected in part a) with the explanation offered by **one** other perspective you have studied for this paper.     [10 marks]*

Candidates sometimes invalidated their responses by choosing an incorrect perspective rather than the cognitive approach that was required. Humanistic and psychodynamic theories were difficult to make appropriate in answers to this question. If an incorrect choice was made for part a) it impacted on the answer for part b). Where candidates used the learning perspective as a comparison there were several examples that indicated muddled thinking between the two perspectives. Some astute candidates used the examples of gender or aggression in an imaginative way to illustrate explanations from the cognitive perspective and provided considerable insights into a sophisticated area of psychology.

- Question 6**
- a) *Outline **one** explanation of learning from the traditional behaviourist approach.* [6 marks]
- b) *The learning perspective still offers explanations of behavioural change.*
- To what extent have cognitive **or** biological factors extended traditional explanations of behaviour within the learning perspective?* [14 marks]

Many answers to this question were exceptionally strong and used a relevant explanation in a most commendable way. But simply because candidates were on more familiar territory they often devoted more time and energy to part a) than to part b) which carried more than twice as many marks. This strategy was regrettable since it resulted in lower marks than the potential shown by individual candidates. Some candidates conveyed the impression that the learning perspective had been overthrown by either the biological or cognitive perspectives, whilst others were firmly of the opinion that no part of the learning perspective had been touched by biological or cognitive concepts and theories. This tendency to polarise positions was not particularly helpful to candidates when a more balanced and informed discussion would have been to their benefit.

### **Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates**

Candidates should be able to answer questions directly and precisely by employing theoretical and empirical support. They need to practise writing essays by constructing well organised answers that indicate knowledge and understanding of the concepts used in the programme. They need to marshal their ideas for each question by planning their answers before they embark on the actual answer. By using this strategy in practice essays a greater coherence in answers would evolve.

There is a clear need, identified by several examiners, that the key words used in questions should be clearly understood by candidates in their preparation for this examination. For example words such as describe, outline, evaluate, explain or assumption should not cause a candidate alarm when seen on the examination paper, since they should have been incorporated into previous practice in writing answers.

The skills of critical analysis and evaluation need to be developed along with an improvement in coherent and logical argument. Some of this skill could well be obtained by small peer groups working together on different psychological topics. They should be encouraged to move beyond the regurgitation of facts or the mere presentation of descriptions. Evaluation should be encouraged to embrace both strengths and weaknesses. Candidates should also ensure that they pay close attention to the differing mark values on parts of questions. Their limited time and effort in an examination should be commensurate with the proportion of marks allocated for each part of the question.

## **Standard level paper two**

### **Component grade boundaries**

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 1	2 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 12	13 – 15	16 – 20

### **General comments**

Answers showed a wide variance in quality. Some candidates produced answers which asserted their opinions and personal experience with minimal signs of knowledge and understanding of the option. Stronger candidates produced answers, which were largely descriptive, and too often the essays didn't provide a direct answer to the question but rather presented knowledge about a similar topic they had some knowledge of.

In most cases, only minimal appropriate reference was made to cultural, ethical, gender or methodological considerations.

### **The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared**

The level of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated seem to have remained the same as in previous sessions. Many candidates demonstrated good descriptive knowledge of psychological theories and research while some attempted general evaluation in their answers. Some candidates seemed to have been well prepared to respond to questions coming from the "Psychodynamic psychology" option.

### **The areas of the programme and examination that appeared difficult for the candidates**

The same comments made in the subject report about paper two for many sessions must be repeated. Too many answers were descriptive, general or lacking exact focus. Many candidates failed to provide an answer which clearly addressed the question asked.

Although popular choices "The psychology of dysfunctional behaviour" and "Psychodynamic psychology" these questions appeared to present difficulties for some candidates. The Psychodynamic option was often limited simply to Freud's theory and research. A weakness observed in many responses was students' difficulty in writing a balanced evaluation. Evaluation, when present, was often skewed towards negative comments.

### **The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions**

Very few candidates answered a question from the Comparative psychology, Cultural psychology or Health psychology options and those who did seemed to have selected it because they did not feel comfortable with the option the majority of the candidates from their school wrote on.



### Comparative psychology

**Question 1** *Describe and evaluate **one** evolutionary explanation of behaviour.* [20 marks]

Question 1 was the most frequently answered question. Usually general knowledge of Darwin's theory of evolution was presented.

**Question 2** *Use research findings to discuss the nature of altruism in animals.* [20 marks]

**Question 3** *Discuss how ethical **and** methodological considerations affect the interpretation of behaviour in comparative psychology.* [20 marks]

Question 2 and 3 – very few answers offered but mostly all well informed.

### Cultural psychology

**Question 4** *Use empirical research from within the study of cultural psychology to assess the extent to which human behaviour is affected by cultural context and schemas.* [20 marks]

**Question 5** a) *Define the term ethnocentricity.* [4 marks]

b) *With reference to psychological research assess the extent to which ethnocentricity may affect the interpretation of human behaviour within cultural psychology.* [16 marks]

**Question 6** a) *Identify and explain **one** behaviour that has been found to be universal across more than **one** culture.* [4 marks]

b) *Identify and explain **one** behaviour that has been found to be culturally specific to **one** culture.* [4 marks]

c) *Examine ways in which findings from the study of universal and culturally specific explanations of human behaviour affect communication across cultures.* [12 marks]

Questions 4, 5, 6 were very rarely addressed.

### The psychology of dysfunctional behaviour

A significant number of candidates were sadly unprepared for this option. There was almost no empirical evidence given to support claims, and too often examiners received personal tales of dealing with anorexia or ADHD.

**Question 7** a) *Describe **one** dysfunctional behaviour (disorder).* [6 marks]

This question was answered by many students.

Most candidates provided a general description of the chosen dysfunctional behaviour. A small percentage of answers presented clear detailed descriptions. The best answers were those referring to schizophrenia.

- b) *Evaluate the use of **one** therapy **or** treatment for the dysfunctional behaviour (disorder) described in part a).* [14 marks]

Part b) presented a challenge since many candidates provided answers that lacked analysis. Cultural, ethical, gender and methodological considerations were rarely presented in a clear form and were often not made relevant to the question.

- Question 8** *To what extent are concepts of “normality” and “abnormality” affected by cultural considerations?* [20 marks]

Question 8 was quite poorly answered as candidates often focused on the terms “normal” and “abnormal” without looking at cultural considerations and their effect. It seems that in a number of cases this answer was written by candidates who had not been prepared for the option. Generalities based on personal understanding and experiences were unfortunately too often the general mode in attempting to answer this question.

- Question 9** a) *Explain how dysfunctional behaviour is diagnosed and classified.* [10 marks]  
b) *Discuss ethical considerations related to the diagnosis of dysfunctional behaviour.* [10 marks]

Question 9 was found difficult – not many candidates made an attempt to answer this question.

### Health Psychology

- Question 10** *Examine how cultural considerations may affect the interpretation of behaviour in health psychology.* [20 marks]
- Question 11** a) *Explain **two** ways of coping with stress in humans.* [10 marks]  
b) *Evaluate the effectiveness of **each** of these two coping strategies.* [10 marks]
- Question 12** *Describe and evaluate **two** methodologies that are applied in health psychology.* [20 marks]

Not many candidates attempted to answer questions from this option. There were many disappointing answers – especially to questions 10 and 11. Responses to questions on Health psychology had very little psychological content and often the information offered, seemed to be from magazine articles and common sense.

### Lifespan Psychology

- Question 13** *Examine controversies related to concepts of adolescence.* [20 marks]

Question 13 was a rather popular question for centres that chose the Life span option. However few candidates were in a position to actually move from a purely descriptive account of Erikson’s stages in order to refer to controversies and include research findings. Weaker answers only attempted a common sense approach, not being able to give detailed, relevant information.

- Question 14** a) *Define the term gender identity.* [4 marks]  
b) *Describe and evaluate **one** research study exploring gender identity.* [16 marks]

Very few answers but mostly very well presented and with considerable information.

- Question 15** *Describe and evaluate **one** explanation of how social development continues throughout the lifespan.* [20 marks]

Question 15 was not a very popular choice. Candidates rarely managed to break through a purely mechanistic descriptive account of Erikson's stages to actually focus on the social forces that urge such changes to occur.

### Psychodynamic Psychology

- Question 16** *“Psychodynamic theories emphasize the importance of childhood experience in the development of adult personality.”*

*To what extent does psychodynamic psychology provide a satisfactory explanation of the development of personality?* [20 marks]

This was probably the most popular question on the paper. Unfortunately some candidates provided answers which reflected too much emphasis on the explanation provided by Sigmund Freud. Answers achieving high marks for this question should be supported by arguments based on at least two theories developed by psychodynamic theorists.

In most cases candidates presented well informed and predominantly descriptive answers based particularly on Freud's and Erikson's explanations of development of personality.

Many answers lacked balance between description and discussion. Answers would be enhanced by more concrete evaluation – internal (methodological, cultural, ethical or gender considerations) and in context (comparison to other theories). Unfortunately, some candidates provided lay critique without showing understanding of psychodynamic theory and research.

- Question 17** *To what extent does empirical research provide support for the assertions made by psychodynamic theorists?* [20 marks]

Not many candidates chose this question. Still, some very good answers were presented. In many cases candidates presented their views clearly, offered a balanced argument and supported their answer with relevant empirical evidence. In some cases, candidates presented an unbalanced argument by only presenting empirical evidence to refute psychodynamic theories. Some responses lacked clear focus on the question – in these answers it seemed that the term empirical evidence was confused with theoretical explanation. Dictionary of Psychology (Penguin, 1976) defines empirical as: »Relying on, or derived from, systematic experiment and observation; Guided by practical experience and not theory«.

**Question 18** a) *Outline one or more techniques used for research in psychodynamic psychology.* [6 marks]

Not many candidates chose this rather straight forward question but those who did generally did fine.

Usually most answers to part a) were good. Many candidates created long lists of techniques and methods – earning six marks because of the incredible amount of detail presented, but then losing many marks on part b) because of an apparent lack of time.

b) *Evaluate the technique(s) outlined in part a).* [14 marks]

Lack of specific evaluation. The majority of candidates only addressed limitations of the methods.

### Social Psychology

**Question 19** a) *Distinguish between obedience and independent behaviour.* [4 marks]

Question 19 was a very popular question.

This three-parted question was quite demanding for many candidates:

Most answers failed to make the difference between obedience and independent behaviour explicit and instead showed general knowledge of each term.

b) *Describe the research findings of **one** study of **either** obedience **or** independent behaviour.* [6 marks]

Part b) was usually well answered. Many candidates described a study (most often Milgram's) in detail. However, some candidates tended to give clear descriptions of procedure with minimal inclusion of findings.

c) *Evaluate applications of the research findings described in part b).* [10 marks]

Answers to part c) reflected that many candidates failed to focus on the question. Instead of evaluating the application they usually presented a discussion on whether or to what extent people obey.

**Question 20** *Discuss how cultural **and** methodological considerations affect the interpretation of conformity research.* [20 marks]

Unfortunately most answers failed to go beyond the mere description of either some of the methodological problems in research or description of some relevant cross-cultural research. Usually these answers were much too general.

**Question 21** *Assess the impact of collective behaviour on the individual.* [20 marks]

Very few answers were given. Superficial knowledge and misunderstanding of collective behaviour characterized most answers.

## **Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates**

- For many candidates description continues to be easier than analysis and evaluation. Many answers reflect that candidates have done a good job in memorizing relevant information but they are not confident enough to critically discuss this information.
- Candidates should be encouraged to acquire a more detailed and specific base of knowledge of the option from which they select their essays.
- Candidates should thoroughly study and review cultural, ethical, gender and methodological considerations related to their option before the examination.
- Candidates should make more use of their reading time during the exam – teachers should remind their candidates that they have 3 questions within the option and it is in their best interest to choose the question which allows them to clearly present their knowledge of the option within a logical structure. Sometimes, the question chosen at first glance is not the best solution.
- Candidates must learn to read questions thoroughly, chose the most appropriate question and answer it directly and fully. Omission of part of the question or lack of understanding of command terms has serious consequences in the assessment of the answer.