

## PSYCHOLOGY

### Overall grade boundaries

#### Higher level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 9	10 – 19	20 – 30	31 – 42	43 – 54	55 – 66	67 – 100

#### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 10	11 – 20	21 – 31	32 – 44	45 – 57	58 – 70	71 – 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

#### General comments

Candidate performance on this session's internal assessment was, overall, rather strong considering it is the first November session that follows the revised guidelines. Most candidates and centres seemed to be informed of the changes in the requirements.

The strongest work came when candidates investigated a topic that generally lends itself well to experimental study. These were usually studies of observable human behaviour and came from a variety of disciplines within psychology. There were a number of candidates that attempted to investigate attitudinal behaviour and these were generally more challenging and did not fit the requirements of the internal assessment as outlined in the psychology guide. In addition to the challenge of operationalising some attitudinal variables, they can also pose ethical challenges that most IB psychology candidates have not been trained to deal with appropriately. Teachers must monitor and carefully advise students to ensure that they are meeting the IA requirements.

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

One of the notable areas of difficulty for many candidates during this session was the construction of operationalised hypotheses. In the best projects, candidates made very clear what their independent and dependent variables were by ensuring that they were phrased in measurable and precise terms. The formulation of an operationalised hypothesis is seen as critical to success in the IA because it will then lead the candidates into what data to report in the results section.

Additionally, some candidates did not conduct true experimental studies. A number of candidates used questionnaires that they had developed in order to attempt to investigate their topics of study. Usually these questionnaires had not been validated and their use made it unclear whether or not the study was truly experimental, with manipulation of an independent variable and measurement of a dependent variable. While the number of observational studies decreased in this session, the use of questionnaires seemingly increased.

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

The introduction section of the IA seemed to have been constructed generally better than in past sessions. Candidates seemed much better able to focus their introductions to help them justify the claims made in the aim and the prediction of the research hypothesis.

This session also saw an increased awareness and documentation of ethical considerations during the research process. Many candidates appropriately included a blank copy of the informed consent statement that was used during the study. In most cases, candidates also took care to protect the rights of the participants. It should be noted, however, that some candidates did not demonstrate an understanding of the difference between consent and informed consent. Participants must be informed about as much detail about the study as possible, without compromising the research process, so that they may make an *informed* decision on whether or not to participate. Many candidates just asked if the participants would take part, without giving proper detail to make the decision informed.

### **Strengths and weaknesses in the treatment of assessment criteria**

#### **Criterion A: Introduction**

As previously stated, the introduction section of many projects submitted was of a higher quality than in past sessions. Candidates earned highest marks by specifically stating an appropriate, justified and operationalised set of hypotheses. Lower marks were generally characterised by introduction sections that did not completely and thoroughly justify the predictions made in the hypotheses. In cases such as this, candidates quite often discussed research studies that were tenuously related to their aims, but they did not make the appropriate relationships clear. Most often candidates included basic descriptions of past research without adding their own discussion of how this research helps them to justify the aims of their study.

#### **Criterion B: Method: Design**

While candidates did a better job of adhering to ethical guidelines, there were still some studies submitted in violation of ethical practices and human rights. While there were only a small number of such situations, some were quite disturbing. Teachers are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that all studies submitted as IB psychology Internal Assessment rigorously adhere to the published ethical guidelines. The online curriculum centre (OCC) should be used for teacher support in questionable matters before candidates carry out their studies.

Candidates must clearly and precisely state their independent and dependent variables in this section of the IA. Some candidates did not earn marks in this section because of a lack of identification of these variables and quite commonly the variables were not operationalised.

**Criterion C: Method: Participants**

The use and identification of methods of random selection was done rather well during this session. An area that should be a focus for teachers, however, is justification of the choice of participants and the sampling method. Stronger papers also included identification of participant characteristics that were relevant to the study.

**Criterion D: Method: Procedure**

The procedure sections did not pose a major problem to many candidates. Most provided relevant discussion of the procedures used, however some papers only included a brief and incomplete listing of steps which hampered the ability to replicate the study as it was written.

**Criterion E: Results**

The appropriate use of descriptive statistics was a general characteristic of this session. Mean, median and mode were usually applied and calculated appropriately. One common omission was discussion or elaboration of what differences in these measurements may mean. Often candidates may have calculated differences in standard deviation, for example, but did not go on to discuss what these differences could be due to or what they could imply in the discussion section.

The use of inferential statistical tests was also a difficulty in some situations. Candidates need to be sure to select an appropriate test and to justify its use. While parametric tests are not on the syllabus, some candidates attempted to use them in their analysis.

**Criterion F: Discussion**

Most candidates did an adequate job of discussing the relative strengths and weaknesses of their study by reflecting on methodological considerations. Some of the better discussion on these topics was apparent when candidates demonstrated their knowledge of experimental research designs, participant variables, researcher bias and other confounding variables. Simplistic accounts most often focused on sample size or time constraints. Candidates should also be reminded that the discussion section should also be used to draw linkages between the results of their study and the studies mentioned in the introduction section. Quite often these references were omitted or only cursory.

**Criterion G: Presentation**

A number of candidates had difficulty maintaining their word count below the upper threshold as outlined in the psychology guide. In some cases this was not taken into account in the awarding of marks. Reports must be within the word limits, which may require them to write in a more focused and purposeful style. Additionally, care must be taken when composing the references section. All studies/theories mentioned within the paper must be cited in the references section and vice versa. Referencing formats posed a challenge to many candidates.

**Recommendations and guidance 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.
- Teachers should work with candidates on developing precise skills of using accurate terminology. For example, many candidates discussed some background studies as being ‘experiments’ when they were not. Additionally, the use of the word ‘prove’ should be discouraged as psychological research rarely ‘proves’ hypotheses, but rather ‘supports’ them.
- Candidates must be given adequate guidance in choosing a topic to investigate and design a method that is ethically acceptable for students at this level. There were still

a number of unethical studies submitted during this session. Teachers should refer to the online curriculum centre (OCC) for guidance as well as to documentation sent out by IBCA. A poster of ethical guidelines has been sent to all centres and students should be familiar with it. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure all studies are ethically sound.

- When considering topics to study, candidates should evaluate whether or not their topic can be studied using a clearly experimental method. This includes being able to manipulate one independent variable and operationally define one dependent variable. While it is acceptable to study more than one type of variable in a study, doing so will not generally increase the candidate's performance against the internal assessment criteria. In fact, having a study that is too broad makes it more difficult to stay within the word limits. It should be noted that the purpose of internal assessment is to learn about, design, and report on an experiment – investigating the effect on multiple variables is not required.
- Candidates should demonstrate their understanding of experimental research methodology through their internal assessment report. Accuracy and thoroughness are required when composing the report. Quite often candidates leave important discussions to be worked out by the reader. It is better for candidates to be more explicit in order for teachers and moderators to assess their understanding.

## 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

### General comments

Schools are complimented on the manner in which they have adapted to the revised guidelines and the subsequent changes.

The choice of subject for investigation still seems to present problems for some candidates. Since this was likely to have been the first experience of psychological research for many candidates it would have been beneficial to have chosen a relatively 'safe' area of psychology, based upon a published investigation. This choice should also have been made with regard to the substantial demands of time and opportunity imposed upon candidates by the IB assessment and examinations schedule. Investigations that involve emotional experience should not be undertaken lightly. This type of research often causes ethical problems that are not easily resolved or are not obvious to the candidate.

Several candidates submitted work that contained experiments which used inferential statistical tests. The syllabus indicates that inferential statistics are not needed at standard level and moderators were unable to give credit for their use. Comments from some moderators indicated that the time spent on teaching inferential statistics might have been more beneficial to students had it been used for other parts of the programme.

## **The areas of the programme which proved difficult for candidates**

A general area that candidates found difficult was the method section. The way in which the psychological investigation was conducted should be made explicit. The test for this is to see if the investigation could be replicated by using the information supplied in the method section. Several pieces of work submitted for IA did not meet this expectation. One reason is that the sampling method was inadequately described or that no description of the participants was given. If neither of these key items were provided it would be impossible to replicate the investigation.

Some candidates used questionnaires or observations in such a way that their investigations could not be construed as experimental studies. The essential nature of experiments is that an independent variable is manipulated to measure its effect upon the dependent variable. Unless these two key elements of the investigation are made explicit then the investigation cannot be acknowledged as an experiment.

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

The quality of work varied considerably, from excellent to weak. The Guide for IA psychology provides a great deal of relevant information that is illustrated by assessed exemplars of candidates' work, together with moderator comments. Candidates who were familiar with this publication often gained sufficient knowledge, understanding and skill to perform well. For example the need for the aim, identification and explanation of the study being replicated showed at several points during the candidate's research. Relevant explanation would not only have informed the candidate for this section, but also have provided source material in methods, results and discussion sections. The investigation should be perceived not as a series of discrete steps, but as a whole entity, with each section of the report dependent upon the preceding sections. The IA should be regarded as an example of the gestalt approach where the whole report is greater than the sum of its parts.

Although the general approach to ethical issues has been much improved by recent revisions to the programme and its assessment there are still areas that need to be addressed. Where potential participants are approached to take part in an investigation, it is very important that their consent is obtained in an informed manner. Participants need to know about the nature of the investigation and the fact that their identity will not be revealed. Some research studies came complete with the names of participants and their schools.

## **Strengths and weaknesses in the treatment of assessment criteria**

### **Criterion A: Introduction**

Most candidates were able to identify the study that was being replicated, but the details of the original work were not always provided (e.g. the names of the experimenters). Sometimes the aim was not always the same as the original experiment and occasionally the aim was worded in a slightly confused way. It was then not easy to understand where the experiment was heading. If the expected explanation was also difficult to follow then the resulting mark was low.

### **Criterion B: Method: Design**

Despite the fact that a replication of an experiment was intended there were occasions when neither the independent nor the dependent variable could be identified. This happened specifically when an observation or when questionnaires were used in an inappropriate way. There was a notable decrease in the frequency of unethical experiments being conducted, although there was no room for complacency here. There were examples where insufficient notice was taken of the ethical guidelines for psychology that have been provided by the IBO. It cannot be stressed too highly that candidates should be sensitive to the needs of their participants. Participants should be regarded as having equal status to the experimenter and they should not be demeaned in any way. Teachers should not allow

their students to proceed if there is the slightest doubt related to ethical issues. To be concerned after the event is often too late.

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

Sometimes the use of random sampling was appropriate, but there were times when this method of sampling was claimed when it clearly did not happen. Where large numbers in the parent population are involved, say over 1,000 people, it is not easy or even desirable, to obtain their names. In some circumstances a different sampling technique may have to be used and a smaller parent population used. This is perfectly acceptable providing that this sampling technique is made apparent and the results only applied to that population. A relevant and brief description of the participants should be given.

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

While most candidates found the descriptive element of the procedure relatively straightforward there were occasions when insufficient information was provided, or when the individual steps of the experiment were not given in the correct sequence.

#### **Criterion E: Results**

Candidates generally presented clear results, most frequently by using computer-generated graphics. Some candidates did not know when it was appropriate to use a bar chart or a histogram. In some instances there was no title to a table or graph, or there was no indication if a calculated figure referred to a mean or a standard deviation or variance.

Just as there was no point in mentioning a background reference if it was not relevant to the present investigation, so there was no point in calculating standard deviations or variances unless these were used in the subsequent discussion. Similarly inferential statistical tests, (and these are not required by the SL syllabus) were neither justified nor accurately used in many cases where they were employed.

#### **Criterion F: Discussion**

The discussion section should require the most intellectual effort to write since it should take account of background references, relate the present findings to those background studies, consider the use of the methodologies employed and their effect upon the interpretation of the results, and also present an indication for the direction of future associated research. This is a demanding task but one which several candidates fulfilled with some distinction. There were others who treated the section in a superficial manner and either failed to identify or failed to get to grips with the problems that were presented by the research. Sometimes the comments were quite cursory by suggesting, as the only evaluative point that "...it would be useful to have had more participants in my study". While this point may be reasonably valid, it could not be the only shortcoming of the experiment. It is also a comment that could be applied to practically all experiments. The discussion carries the highest scoring tariff of marks for the various criteria used in psychology IA. It deserves more effort, more thinking to make the points.

#### **Criterion G: Presentation**

Presentation continues to improve and several submissions demonstrated work of high calibre that was impressively presented and scored full marks for this section. There are still candidates who exceed the maximum number of words permitted, or who write an inappropriate reference section, or who write no references at all.

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

Psychology students should either be given access to the IB internal assessment requirements or to the psychology guide. Preferably they should see both, and also act on the advice presented. Teachers should ensure that their students implement the requirements and recommendations and remind their students of these at various key points of their course.

The use of ethical guidelines supplied by the IBO should be observed and overseen by the teacher. Where there is a doubt about whether a particular piece of research has an ethical implication then other teachers could be consulted. The use of the online curriculum centre could be useful in this respect. It should not be accepted that simply because a piece of research has been published in the past it is still acceptable now. Not only is Milgram's obedience study not acceptable, but replications that offer less harsh apparent punishment should not be conducted by students for IA purposes.

The precise nature of what is meant by an experiment should be examined by teachers and its correct meaning conveyed to their students. It is recommended that students replicate experiments in which **one** independent variable is manipulated and the effect of this is observed upon **one** dependent variable. When multiple variables are employed this almost inevitably leads to confusion and the use of longer explanations. The result often exceeds the permitted word count.

## Higher level paper 1

### 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 – 26	27 – 32	33 – 52

### General comments

This was the first November examination of the new programme, with a changed format for paper 1 to include compulsory short answer questions on all four perspectives. Well-prepared candidates were able to demonstrate both the breadth and the depth of their knowledge and understanding of psychology.

Candidate numbers at HL continue to grow, with a 40% increase in numbers, and 11 new centres offering the subject.

Fewer candidates appeared to run out of time on this paper than in previous sessions, suggesting that perhaps the short answer question format facilitates speed of response to questions on the perspectives.

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

Many candidates failed to meet the specific requirements of the question, writing vague answers which were only partially relevant and too often merely descriptive in nature.

In Section A answers, appropriate material was frequently presented in list form with no attempt at making explicit for the reader the connection with the demands of the question. A number of candidates wrote answers to short answer questions of the same length as responses to extended response questions, whilst others offered only two or three lines.

Section B responses were frequently similar to those in Section A in terms of description of content at the expense of analysis and evaluation. In general, understanding of the biological and the humanistic perspectives was relatively weak and lacking in detail.

Misinterpretation of phrases or concepts utilized in the psychology syllabus (*e.g.* basic assumptions, key concepts, methods of investigation, *etc.*) characterized the work of a large number of candidates.

Cultural, gender, methodological and ethical considerations were often added at the end of a response rather than being an integral element of a logically constructed argument.

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

Some candidates were able to provide a thorough discussion of relevant material, incorporating appropriate analysis and evaluation of the topic under consideration, with several outstanding scripts submitted. However, many candidates displayed in their responses only superficial knowledge and limited understanding of the four perspectives. The frequent lack of analysis and evaluation suggests many candidates would have benefited from more practice in ‘unpacking’ the demands of the question as set. The compulsory short answer questions indicated that some candidates were not equally prepared for all the perspectives

## **Strengths and weaknesses in the treatment of individual questions**

### **Section A**

**Question 1** *Explain why a reductionist approach adopted by many biological psychologists is controversial. [8 marks]*

Many responses demonstrated a lack of understanding of the distinction between reductionism and determinism. Frequently candidates discussed the biological perspective in general terms without reference to specific content. This tended to limit the usefulness of the answer. Where relevant discussion of appropriate material was offered, candidates were able to access marks in the higher bands although few addressed the benefits of the reductionist approach, concentrating instead on criticisms.

**Question 2** *(a) With reference to one research study, describe the main features of one method of investigation used by cognitive psychologists [4 marks]*

Most candidates chose to write about the experimental method. However, not all responses focused on the specific requirement to describe the main features of the method, instead describing the findings from a relevant study. Where case studies or interviews were identified as a method of investigation, answers tended to be very vague and inaccurate.

*(b) Outline **one** strength and **one** limitation of this method [4 marks]*

Where the method of investigation was not made the focus of the response to part (a) of this question, strengths and limitations tended to be couched in vague and general terms.

**Question 3** *Identify and evaluate **one** contribution of the learning perspective to the scientific study of behaviour [8 marks]*

The requirement to focus on contribution to the scientific study of behaviour was frequently ignored in answers to this question. Many responses considered characteristics of the behavioural perspective in general rather than contributions to scientific study such as the use of both qualitative and quantitative research, or the experimental testing of hypotheses.



**Question 4** (a) *Outline one key concept associated with the humanistic perspective [4 marks]*

This question produced some of the strongest as well as some of the weakest responses. Candidates frequently confused concepts and assumptions. Successful answers focused on **one** concept, often ‘self actualisation’, and explained it with varying degrees of explicitness.

(b) *Explain **one** assumption on which the concept outlined in part (a) is based [4 marks]*

In many cases candidates succeeded in identifying an assumption integral to the perspective yet failed to link it to the concept identified in part (a).

Too many candidates failed to use precise terminology, writing about ‘humanists’ rather than humanistic psychologists, despite the use of the term in the question.

**Section B**

**Question 5** *“Behavioural change can be regarded as arising from an interaction between innate disposition and environmental factors.” Describe and evaluate theories or studies within the biological perspective related to this statement [20 marks]*

Few candidates attempted this question. Most provided answers containing descriptive knowledge of relevant research studies, yet failed to present an organized, structured response to the specific question. The nature vs. nurture issue was popular in answers to this question, although many candidates referred to behavioural differences rather than to behavioural change.

**Question 6** *To what extent is determinism integral to the cognitive perspective? Illustrate your answer using relevant theories and studies [20 marks]*

This was not a popular choice of question, answers generally lacking theory and empirical research in support of arguments. Some responses appropriately considered ‘soft determinism’ although rarely relating this to empirical research or to theory.

**Question 7** *Consider ways in which the learning perspective has produced recommendations for change in lifestyles [20 marks]*

This was a popular question in which interpretations of the term ‘lifestyle’ differed widely. More successful answers focused on relevant application of the learning perspective’s principles, although very rarely was the required focus on recommendations for change in lifestyles made explicit. Too many responses were purely anecdotal in nature.

**Question 8** *Examine theoretical explanations of behavioural change from a humanistic perspective [20 marks]*

This question was answered by relatively few candidates, those selecting it offering much content but little of the required discussion. The wording of the question refers to theoretical **explanations**. Lack of more than one theory limited the availability of marks for some candidates.

## **The type of assistance and guidance teachers should provide for future candidates**

From the previous comments it would appear that an important focus in course delivery should be the ‘unpacking’ of questions with adequate practice in writing relevant answers. Candidates need to ensure they identify the focus of a question, and explicitly address the command terms in addition to providing relevant content. Thus frequent opportunities to analyse question requirements and then construct appropriate responses are essential throughout delivery of the course. Working together in groups and later in pairs on such tasks can facilitate development of relevant process skills.

Also apparent in many scripts in this session was a lack of skill in allocating appropriate time for SAQs and for ERQs. This suggests the inclusion in course delivery of more activities/assignments that allow candidates to differentiate between the requirements of each type of question.

Many candidates would benefit from greater familiarity with the precise terminology used in the syllabus, both the command terms and the psychological terms.

## **Higher level paper 2**

### **Component grade boundaries**

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 4	5 – 8	9 – 12	13 – 18	19 – 22	23 – 28	29 – 40

### **General comments**

This was the first presentation of the new format Paper 2, assessing candidate knowledge and understanding of two options separately from that of research methodology.

Many candidates chose to answer questions on the psychology of dysfunctional behaviour and on psychodynamic psychology, with health psychology also proving to be quite popular. Social psychology and lifespan questions were attempted by smaller numbers of candidates, with very few answering on cultural psychology, usually when apparently attracted to a question on an option for which they had not been prepared. It would seem the new options are not yet being offered to the same extent as those continuing from the previous syllabus – although they offer opportunities to introduce current applications of psychology into the course.

Most candidates budgeted time well, producing two essays of almost equal length, although it appeared some candidates were much better prepared for one option than for the other, offering a very brief response for their second choice.

In general, a disappointing lack of detailed content knowledge characterised much of the writing for this paper, especially in responses to questions from the lifespan and health options, although as in previous examination sessions the quality varied between centres, with some outstanding scripts being submitted.

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

As in previous examination sessions, many candidates seemed unable to produce an answer which focused on the specific requirements of the question as set. There was little or no evidence of planning of essays resulting from careful ‘unpacking’ of the command terms. Too often answers

simply listed ‘all I know about the topic’, listing knowledge in a disembodied way, leaving the reader to attempt to connect the material to the question. Time spent planning in the examination will be more beneficial than that spent producing simple description of a wide range of material which might not be directly relevant to the question.

Many candidates attempted evaluation in their answers but often it was of a general nature rather than being made specific to the topic. For example, in question 17, general evaluation points about psychoanalytic theory were offered rather than the more specific evaluation of historical and cultural factors influencing the development of psychodynamic psychology.

As in earlier sessions, some responses were lacking in appropriate depth of analysis, others providing superficial or naïve interpretations of the issues under consideration. In addition, a common omission was the inclusion of empirical or theoretical support for arguments, an essential ‘ingredient’ in a logically constructed response to a question.

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

There were many sound responses to questions on methodology, in which candidates demonstrated solid understanding of issues relevant to research in a specified option.

Whilst there were strong answers across most of the chosen options, candidates seemed on the whole to have been better prepared to respond to questions from the dysfunctional and the psychodynamic options than for the others.

The ability to integrate evaluation in terms of culture, ethics, gender and methodology is increasingly evident in scripts from many centres.

The highest scoring essays were not necessarily the longest but rather those focused on the demands of the question as set.

### **Strengths and weaknesses in the treatment of individual questions**

Comments are on the most frequently answered questions.

#### **The psychology of dysfunctional behaviour**

**Question 8** *Assess how the basic assumptions of two models of dysfunctional behaviour have influenced the effectiveness of each model’s explanation of dysfunctional behaviour. [20 marks]*

This question requires a description of the basic assumptions underpinning two models of dysfunctional behaviour, followed by the use of this information to assess how such views have influenced the effectiveness of each model’s explanation of dysfunctional behaviour. Answers awarded marks in the top bands were able to arrive at informed judgements of the effect that the basic assumptions have had on the effectiveness of each explanation, and here planning was clearly evident. However, candidates did not always choose two separate models, instead frequently selecting two types of therapy emerging from the same model, although this was not a question about therapies. Where candidates selected biological explanations of dysfunctional behaviour, there was often confusion between cause and effect and correlational evidence.

**Question 9** (a) *Within the study of dysfunctional behaviour, psychologists attempt to construct possible aetiologies for dysfunctional behaviour. Define the term aetiology. [2 marks]*

(b) *For one dysfunctional behaviour, describe two possible aetiologies that have been developed by psychologists. [8 mark]*

(c) *Evaluate each of the aetiologies described in part (b). [10 marks]*

On the whole, responses to this question were well focused and sound, although some omitted the required focus on one dysfunctional behaviour, in part (b). Weaker answers to part (c) tended to omit reference to strengths in their evaluation, concentrating only on limitations.

### **Health psychology**

**Question 10** (a) *Distinguish between substance use and substance misuse. [6 marks]*

(b) *Select one addictive behaviour and identify and evaluate two treatment strategies for substance misuse. [14 marks]*

There were many disappointing answers to this question. In part (a) there was much inaccurate and inappropriate use of terminology, suggesting poor understanding of the terms ‘substance use’ and ‘substance misuse’. Frequently, responses to part (b) did not identify why the selected behaviour is addictive. This would have helped the reader to understand more clearly the links between treatment and behaviour, thus facilitating evaluation of each strategy and the awarding of higher marks.

**Question 11** *Describe and evaluate physiological and psychological aspects of stress. [20 marks]*

Many responses to this question demonstrated sound understanding of both physiological and psychological aspects of stress, often supported with well-chosen examples of supporting research. Candidates who failed to attract marks in the highest bands tended to focus on one type of aspect, or on description at the expense of evaluation, rather than producing a balanced essay.

### **Lifespan psychology**

**Question 14** (a) *Describe two examples of psychological research into attachment and separation. [12 marks]*

(b) *Discuss cultural variation in attachment patterns. [8 marks]*

Answers to part (a) of this question usually identified appropriate examples of research but the detail and accuracy were often poor. Many responses did not demonstrate understanding of attachment – a precise definition would have improved the quality of such work. Cultural variation in attachment patterns has been the subject of much relatively recent research yet few essays included such material. Where relevant information was included in part (b), it was often simply ‘listed’ with little or no attempt at the discussion required by the command term. Despite the limitations of the majority of attempts at this question, examiners found impressive the quality of a few responses to this question.

### **Psychodynamic psychology**

**Question 16** *Describe and evaluate psychodynamic explanations of human behaviour. [20 marks]*

This was a popular question with marks awarded across all the markbands. The major omission in many essays was reference to more than one psychodynamic explanation of human behaviour, *i.e.* too much emphasis on the work of Sigmund Freud. However, some candidates did include the work of more recent theorists such as Klein on object relations theory. Other major difficulties arose where

candidates described theory yet did not relate it to explanations of human behaviour, or failed to introduce any evaluation, despite this being worth up to half of the available marks.

### **Social psychology**

**Question 19** (a) *Describe one psychological study of conformity. [10 marks]*

(b) *Explain how cultural and ethical considerations affect the interpretation of such behaviour. [10 marks]*

Despite clear and separate reference in the syllabus to both conformity and compliance (obedience to authority), many responses to this question confused the two, inappropriately describing, for example, the work of Stanley Milgram where the research of Asch, of Sherif, of Crutchfield or the results of more recent research into conformity would have been appropriate. Few essays investigated research into cultural variation in conformity rates, e.g. Smith and Bond meta-analysis, 1993. Surprisingly few answers engaged with ethical considerations and their impact on the interpretation of behaviour by participants in conformity research.

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

Clearly, many responses in this session suggest a lack of preparation for examination question ‘unpacking’, with insufficient practice in planning an appropriate answer in the light of the command terms. A useful approach to the development of such essential skills is to begin by setting the question ‘unpacking’ as a whole class exercise facilitated by the teacher, followed by a joint effort at constructing a focused answer, thus allowing candidates to experience success from the outset. Following this, candidates could work on past examination questions in small groups, then in pairs, and eventually be ready to attempt individual work.

As identified in earlier subject reports, it is advisable to provide a more global and contemporary view of psychology than has often been the case in order to satisfy previous syllabus requirements. This allows psychological theory to be more relevant to the experience of current students of the subject, and often facilitates more active involvement with course material.

The construction of successful responses to questions on this paper requires the inclusion of relevant empirical/theoretical evidence in support of argument. Too often in this session, scripts lacked this essential element. Although essays suggested some understanding of psychological material, the lack of detailed knowledge prevented many candidates from gaining high marks. More focused experience of demonstrating such knowledge throughout the delivery of the course seems advisable. Quick 10 minute tests (peer marked, so less teacher time and more immediate feedback to learner) per topic throughout the 2 years, are recommended.

## Higher level paper 3

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 10	11 – 13	14 – 16	17 – 19	20 – 30

### The areas of the programme which proved difficult for candidates

Some candidates found the concepts of triangulation and case studies difficult to discuss. The level of knowledge tended to be superficial and as a consequence the application of these terms to the questions was brief. Validity was also problematic and was presented in an explanatory form that was more appropriate to quantitative and experimental based research. Candidates need to be aware that similar terms used in qualitative and quantitative research do not necessarily have the same meaning.

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

The quality of candidates work related to these terms was variable. At their best candidates were able to deal with complex ideas that reflected the theoretical concepts of qualitative research. These were not ideas that could be applied mechanically although some candidates attempted to do so. It was encouraging to see that some candidates did understand that an individual case study could involve several people – for example where a school was the subject of the case study. It was still rare to read a discussion where the candidate was aware that even in the example of a single case study, of either an individual or a group of individuals within a single entity, there are still **some** aspects of the findings from the case study that may be generalised. This appears to be a difficult notion to be accepted by those candidates who insist that what applies to one individual, or group of individuals, cannot possibly apply elsewhere. A deeper understanding of case studies will reveal that on occasions it can and it does.

### Strength and weaknesses in the treatment of individual questions

**Question 1** *Compare and contrast the use of structured interviews with semi-structured interviews when conducting research in psychology*

Candidates were often aware of the differences between the two types of interviews but they provided considerably less information on similarities. Many candidates focused on differences in techniques that were concerned in asking interviewees for information. They demonstrated that structured interviews were more formal, that questions were asked in the same order and that interviewers were not to deviate from the wording of the questions. This was contrasted with the greater flexibility allowed in gaining information from respondents to semi-structured interviews. In this case the questions could be rephrased and follow-up questions could be used to elicit richer information.

These differences could have been employed in helping with discussion of the two types of interviews. Many more respondents can be interviewed by using a structured interview, not least because the expected answers are likely to be brief and may often be just a single word. The brevity of answers limits the amount of detail presented. Some candidates did make the important point that semi-structured interviews were used to obtain an interpretation of phenomena as perceived by the respondent.

**Question 2**     *Explain how the validity of qualitative research in psychology may be improved by triangulation techniques that employ different research methods.*

The majority of candidates were able to describe the term ‘triangulation’ in relation to the employment of different research methods. What candidates were not so clear about was their understanding of validity and how validity may be improved by triangulation. Validity does not have the same meaning in qualitative methodology as it does in quantitative methodology. Some candidates did know that validity is to do with the trustworthiness and transparency involved in the research process. Triangulation usually tends to improve these qualities by using, in this case, different research methods such as interviews, observation or an ethnographic approach. Each method should be described in detail so that the end users of the research may know precisely what procedures were followed, what the findings were and what interpretation was made.

**Question 3**     *Examine issues that arise when generalising from one individual case study.*

Many candidates made the dubious statement that nothing can be generalised from an individual case study. There is evidence provided in several empirical studies and discussed in many texts that processes have been discovered to be at work in a single entity, such as a hospital, clinic or school, and that the same processes have then been observed in other similar institutions. While several candidates wrongly asserted that nothing can be generalised from an individual case study, others were aware that some careful generalisations may be made in specific circumstances. It was also encouraging to note the claim that the narrative that emerges from a case study is considered by some researchers to be sufficient of itself; generalisation is not an issue that needs to be considered.

Some candidates still regard case studies as being concerned only with one person. Although an individual can be the focus of a case study, it is often a group of people who are studied. These people may work in a place like a police station, school or clinic. Generalisation is still possible whether or not the case study is about one person, a small group of persons or a large number of people.

### **The type of assistance and guidance the teachers should provide for future candidates**

Teachers should make sure that their students become aware that paper 3 questions will do more than ask for just descriptions of research methods. Students should be prepared to consider the problems that are associated with each and every method of research mentioned in the syllabus, whether these are used singly or in combination. No method is perfect in itself, and frequently the choice of research method is a compromise, hopefully the most well chosen compromise. Teachers should provide candidates with discussion periods in which methods can be discussed in depth. The methods employed in research, their subsequent findings and their interpretations are cognitively demanding. When any of these is incorrect in psychological research their subsequent use can be devastating. When research is conducted correctly and sensitively the consequences may be revealing and beneficial to life.

## Standard level paper 1

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 – 4	5 – 8	9 – 12	13 – 18	19 – 25	26 – 31	32 – 44

### The areas of the programme which proved difficult for candidates

Several candidates approached questions by depending solely on descriptions rather than by using explanation, discussion or evaluation. This same limited approach happened with questions that began with the phrase ‘To what extent.....,’ or where questions used command terms such as evaluate, explain or examine. Each of these terms required candidates to consider carefully the behavioural phenomena that they focused on, but regrettably some answers ignored this aspect of the questions.

Cognitive psychology was less well known than other perspectives, particularly when applied to methods associated with the cognitive perspective. Several essays omitted empirical evidence and theory that could have been used to discuss the cognitive perspective. Although similar problems existed to some extent with questions drawn from the biological and learning perspectives, they were not quite so apparent.

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

Many candidates demonstrated a considerable knowledge of some areas of the syllabus. Much of this knowledge was content based and reflected a considerable effort on the preparation for paper one. It was not always so easy for candidates to marshal their information in order to answer questions. For example the strengths and limitations of methods used in the cognitive perspective were not made explicit. Yet from their descriptions candidates knew of experimental work but did not often advance the experimental method as a relevant means of investigation. Had they done so, outlining the strengths and limitations required in part (b) of question 2 would have been fairly straightforward. The skills required for this more lateral type of thinking is likely to be obtained more readily by candidates’ active participation in oral discussion.

### Strengths and weaknesses in the treatment of individual questions

#### Section A

**Question 1** *Explain why a reductionist approach adopted by many biological psychologists is controversial. [8 marks]*

A reductionist approach is frequently adopted in biological psychology, yet several candidates did not appear to understand the concept of reductionism. Where answers revealed such knowledge they did not always go on to explain why this approach was taken, or what advantages or limitations it conferred. This lack of information meant that candidates did not know about the controversial debate on reductionism that takes place within psychology. Occasionally some candidates did show considerable insight and wrote good answers.



- Question 2** (a) *With reference to **one** research study, describe the main features of **one** method of investigation used by cognitive psychologists. [4 marks]*
- (b) *Outline **one** strength and **one** limitation of this method. [4 marks]*

This question caused some candidates difficulties because they identified a research study but then failed to focus on the method of investigation used in the study. As mentioned above, had candidates used an experimental study such as the identification of colours from written words related to another colour, then part (b) of the question would have been fairly straightforward to outline. A reasonable range of cognitive investigations are available in the literature but some candidates did not seem to know of a single study.

- Question 3** *Identify and evaluate **one** contribution of the learning perspective to the scientific study of behaviour.*

This area of the syllabus was better known, but several candidates tended to interpret the question in a slightly superficial way. They described a study, usually to do with classical or operant conditioning, but did not go on to evaluate its contribution to the learning perspective, or to the scientific study of behaviour. Where this type of answer was offered, few marks could be awarded.

## Section B

- Question 4** *“Behavioural change can be regarded as arising from an interaction between innate disposition and environmental factors.”  
Describe and evaluate theories or studies within the biological perspective related to this statement. [20 marks]*

Much of the nature - nurture debate is a major concern of the biological perspective, and although this debate clearly concerns other perspectives, the question required a focus primarily on the biological perspective. Some candidates were able to select appropriate studies from examples such as Hubel and Weisel’s visual competition hypothesis in kittens, and how learning from the environment affects the visual dominance of one eye over the other during the sensitive period. Better known were various split brain studies or studies concerned with the restoration of sight to previously blind people. Most of these responses also contained some evaluation although much of this was related to ethical issues and failed to consider alternative evaluative points.

- Question 5** *To what extent is determinism integral to the cognitive perspective? Illustrate your answer using relevant theories and studies. [20 marks]*

Although the question asked for relevant theories and studies to be used in the answer, these were not used sufficiently by candidates. Candidates usually knew the meaning of determinism but this in itself was inadequate to gain many marks. In both section A and section B of paper 1 it is evident that theories and studies to do with the cognitive perspective need more preparation by candidates. Without such knowledge it is difficult for candidates to attempt any discussion of the kind required for this question. In the attempts that were made several were devoted to IQ tests and a consideration of the deterministic nature of inherited characteristics. These answers gained credit particularly where the ensuing discussion gave a balanced answer. However these studies were primarily examples, and they needed to be incorporated into an essay that should have debated the extent to which determinism is integral to the cognitive perspective.

- Question 6** *Consider ways in which the learning perspective has produced recommendations for change in lifestyles. [20 marks]*

Candidates were reasonably well acquainted with studies and some theories within the learning perspective, but the question needed much more than a cursory review of classical or operant

conditioning. Even the addition of descriptions of cognitive mapping or vicarious learning was inadequate to answer a question that looked for ways in which the learning perspective has produced recommendations for a change in lifestyle. Some candidates tended to ignore this fundamental part of the question and hence the marks they gained were limited. Others did grasp that concepts or processes derived from the learning perspective can and do affect lifestyles, frequently in a quite dramatic manner.

### **The type of assistance and guidance the teachers should provide for future candidates**

Many of the answers from each of the sections of paper 1 indicate that candidates have been well prepared to answer questions by using their knowledge and understanding of many of the key studies and theories. Their difficulties lay in using this knowledge to answer questions that call for more than description. Students should be able to consider the notion that theories and the findings from within the perspectives are rarely the fixed and complete answer to psychological investigation. These theories need to be challenged and debated by candidates, a process that is probably best achieved in constructive discussion between teacher and class members. In particular the theories and studies associated with cognitive psychology need more input and greater attention by candidates.

## **Standard level paper 2**

### **Component grade boundaries**

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

### **General comments**

The present report is based on a relatively small number of candidates. Paper 2, options, requires in-depth understanding of particular areas in the field of psychology. Unlike other components of the psychology examination, this paper has remained the same for the SL after the program revision. As is usually the case, a broad range of knowledge and understanding was demonstrated in this part of the examination. There was evidence of good teaching in several centres, as reflected by candidates' performance. Empirical evidence and the inclusion of appropriate evaluative comments supported arguments. The majority of candidates followed the instructions and answered one question.

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

Some candidates appeared confused by the demands of injunctions that require focus on specific areas. The meaning of important injunctions was frequently misunderstood. When the question requires either a definition, a discussion, a comparison or an evaluation, these are different requirements that are not well differentiated in weaker responses. Candidates should be familiar with the precise meaning of these terms as interpreted by group 3 subjects within the IB diploma. Most questions begin with a key word or phrase that candidates have to be able to understand clearly in order to respond in the way that is expected of them.

The term "assumptions" presented similar difficulties; responses seemed to indicate confusion about the meaning of this term. Time allocation, although better than in previous examinations still seems to present difficulties for some candidates, resulting in undeveloped ideas in part (b) when questions are parted.

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

The new option of health was fairly popular and, with some variations, the questions were well answered. The migration of psychodynamic psychology to paper 2 has attracted many candidates who were clearly well prepared for this former perspective which has become a very popular new option. Candidates were well informed and produced comprehensive descriptions of a good standard.

## Strengths and weaknesses in the treatment of individual questions

### Dysfunctional behaviour

- Question 7**
- (a) Describe **one** empirical study of a treatment for dysfunctional behaviour. [8 marks]
  - (b) Discuss ethical considerations that have affected the interpretation of the results from the empirical study described in part (a). [12 marks]

Some candidates had difficulties in understanding the nature of empirical studies and instead tended to offer general theories related to dysfunctional behaviour. For those who did write relevant answers the description in part (a) varied from moderate to good and no particular study stood out in terms of popularity. Aims and findings were given more prominence than method, and this imbalance had consequences for part (b) responses.

Answers to part (b) concentrated on discussions of ethical issues, particularly where double blind studies were conducted, or where patients did not knowingly give approval for treatment. Some of these criticisms were given with the benefit of present day attitudes to ethical practice. Few candidates seemed to be able to see ethics in their historical or cultural contexts.

- Question 8** Assess how the basic assumptions of two models of dysfunctional behaviour have influenced the effectiveness of each model's explanation of dysfunctional behaviour. [20 marks]

Some candidates had difficulties with the word 'assumptions'. Candidates who were informed produced a good range of assumptions, but were not always able to assess the effectiveness of each model as explanations for dysfunctional behaviour. There was more emphasis on description than evaluation, despite the wording of the question.

- Question 9**
- (a) Within the study of dysfunctional behaviour, psychologists attempt to construct possible etiologies for dysfunctional behaviour. Define the term etiology. [2 marks]
  - (b) For **one** dysfunctional behaviour, describe **two** possible etiologies that have been developed by psychologists. [8 marks]
  - (c) Evaluate each of the etiologies described in part (b). [10 marks]

Although this three-part question was quite demanding, several candidates made a good attempt in the manner that they tackled each part. Etiology was not always defined but the answers showed that candidates understood the meaning of the word. Sometimes the dysfunctional behaviour chosen by candidates affected the ways in which etiologies came to be developed and the differences were very small or non-existent. More astute answers did offer good descriptions with clear differences. Where

this was the case, far better evaluations were offered in part (c), although this was not always so. It was rare to find evaluations that touched on culture or gender, but ethics were often considered.

### Health Psychology

- Question 10** (a) *Distinguish between substance use and substance misuse. [6 marks]*
- (b) *Select **one** addictive behaviour and identify and evaluate **two** treatment strategies for substance misuse. [14 marks]*

This question was generally well answered and candidates brought empirical evidence to support their knowledge. Similarities and differences were clearly known and distinguished. The insight shown by candidates continued in part (b) where treatment strategies were considered in an informed manner. A general criticism on answers is that although many were informed, the knowledge was not academic enough.

- Question 11** *Describe and evaluate physiological and psychological aspects of stress. [20 marks]*

Candidates knew much about stress and on this occasion it was informed by academic study. A large range of studies was used and stress disorders associated with wars featured quite prominently. The two 'components' (psychological and physiological) were treated separately in most answers which was not very useful for evaluation purposes. Had the same two factors been considered as part of the same behavioural phenomena, the studies and theories that support this dual concept of stress, may have produced much more material that could have been used for evaluative criticism.

- Question 12** *Describe and evaluate how the application of research findings in health psychology leads to a healthier lifestyle. [20 marks]*

Given the huge media attention to diet and exercise as a means to combat obesity and its associated illnesses, this was a fairly popular question. Regrettably some answers concentrated on precisely the factors so graphically exhibited by the media, including its disproportionate emphasis upon physiology and medical diagnosis. Since this is a psychology paper, more should have been focused on psychological aspects such as adherence to exercise programmes, the reasons for binge eating and psychological effects that lead to unhealthy lifestyles. The question also called for research findings to be applied. This was not always considered and candidates were not able to maximise their potential.

### Lifespan psychology

- Question 14** (a) *Describe **two** examples of psychological research into attachment and separation. [12 marks]*
- (b) *Discuss cultural variation in attachment patterns. [8 marks]*

This question was quite popular. Although it was intended to be associated with human behaviour, many answers focused on the studies of rhesus monkeys conducted by the Harry Harlow. So much did several candidates become engrossed with their descriptions that human attachment and separation was ignored until part (b). In this part the run of information began to dry up for some candidates. Although they were aware of the propensities of some South American cultures to breast feed babies over several years, they were not aware of practices in Japan, Israel or among some North American Indians. Knowledge of cultural variations was limited.

### Psychodynamic psychology

**Question 16** *Describe and evaluate psychodynamic explanations of human behaviour. [20 marks]*

This was possibly the most popular question on the paper, candidates were well informed and produced comprehensive descriptions based particularly on studies of the work of Freud and Erikson. Descriptions were usually of a good standard, although there was a tendency to describe studies and leave the examiner to decide whether these served as explanations. Evaluation was generally better than for previous examinations and much of this focused on the sexual morals of the time and how modern behaviour is quite different.

**Question 17** *Account for the way the development of psychodynamic psychology has been influenced by historical and cultural factors. [20 marks]*

Some of the material offered for the previous question was also applied in answers to this question, but candidates were not so well informed. This was not a popular question, and the few answers that were received most were highly descriptive and often failed to account for the development of psychodynamic psychology.

### Social psychology

**Question 19** (a) *Describe **one** psychological study of conformity. [10 marks]*

(b) *Explain how cultural and ethical considerations affect the interpretation of such behaviour. [10 marks]*

This was the most popular question in the social psychology section. Predictably the most frequent studies were those of Asch and Sherif. Some candidates erroneously tried to incorporate the obedience studies of Milgram. Descriptions were often quite sound although some were rather superficial and lacked accurate content.

Part (b) was done less well, although ethical comment was more informed than cultural considerations, and sometimes the latter received no attention. It appeared that several candidates were not aware of the cultural contexts of studies of conformity and the several replications of classic conformity studies in countries other than the USA scarcely had a mention.

**Question 20** *Compare **two** theories of collective behaviour (crowds), making reference to empirical research in your answer. [20 marks]*

Deindividuation and social identity theories were often produced, but sometimes candidates simply wrote descriptions of associated studies rather than focussing on comparisons. There was a marked tendency for some candidates to latch onto empirical evidence and collective behaviour while omitting any reference to comparison. The latter is much more cognitively demanding and those answers, which did not consider differences, or similarities were awarded fewer marks. Answers in Spanish showed good understanding of the concept of deindividuation but there was often confusion between collective behaviour and cognitive aspects of group decision making. Few references were made to empirical findings; many answers simply highlighted general considerations of social psychology.

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

Teachers could help students develop skills in reading questions carefully, identifying what is being asked. The meaning of injunctions needs careful attention. Making outlines and a list of the relevant empirical evidence, which can be described and evaluated should be helpful to most candidates.

Ethical, methodological and cross-cultural evaluations are essential components in formulating a good critical response to most questions. Teachers should pay special attention to these areas by planning explicit discussion of such issues.

Class assignments in which students are asked to refute or support certain psychological claims with empirical studies should enhance critical awareness. Candidates need to be trained in looking critically at the issues in order to substantiate and validate their assertions.