PSYCHOLOGY

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 9	10 - 20	21 - 29	30 - 41	42 - 54	55 - 66	67 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 22	23 - 33	34 - 45	46 - 56	57 - 68	69 - 100

Higher level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 25

The range and suitability of the work submitted

It was refreshing to see that nearly all of the IAs submitted were of a suitable topic and were considerate of ethics. While most projects tended to investigate cognitive processes, there was a range of other topics considered as well. Some social psychology topics were investigated. It was noted that far fewer candidates are conducting conformity studies.

Additionally most were designed in an experimental manner as required by the guidelines. Candidates should always remember that if they cannot randomly allocate their participants to their two conditions, then the study might not be truly experimental. This issue will be addressed later in this report when addressing the results and discussion section as well.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A: Introduction.

Most of the background studies were relevant to the prediction being made in the hypotheses. Some IAs are still starting with very long, general introductions to the topic that do not necessarily support the purpose of the Introduction section. Candidates should attempt to go

beyond simple description of the background studies. Analysis of the results and a link to the current topic might help a lot of candidates focus. Research hypotheses must be clearly operationalized. Measurement should be apparent as well as a prediction that is consistent with (or justifiably in opposition to) the background studies. These hypotheses should also be formulated to show a prediction in difference rather than a correlation. One group scoring 'significantly higher mean number of correct answers' is a better prediction than 'as one increases, so will the other'. The former clearly states a prediction of difference between two groups while the latter implies a correlation coefficient being calculated.

Finally an understanding of the concept of significance and significant differences should be apparent from the formulation of both the research/alternate hypothesis as well as the null hypothesis. Many candidates are not demonstrating their understanding of the link between the formulation of the hypotheses, the experimental design, target populations, and generalization of the findings.

B: Design.

Participant designs were handled slightly better this session. Most were able to adequately justify the use of a particular design based on its strengths or features. The independent and dependent variables should be clearly and explicitly stated.

C: Participants.

Most candidates justifiably used opportunity sampling techniques. However, many did not state HOW this was done. Characteristics of the target population were not always addressed. This is a very important step in the HL IA as it relates to the concept of significance, inferential statistics and reporting of results. At HL candidates should be able to make an attempt to generalize their findings to a target population. While this generalization should be found in the Discussion section, candidates must accurately and precisely define a target population in the Participants section. It would be recommended to purposely limit the scope of the target population so a stronger statement of confidence can be made. If results do not prove to be significantly different, then a statement can also be made in the Discussion about NOT being able to generalize to the target population. This is a very valuable aspect that has not been well addressed in the IAs to date.

D: Procedure.

Generally well done. Attention to detail is necessary for replication to be possible.

E: Results.

Candidates should use the tests listed in the IB psychology course guide. While others may be more powerful, these tests have been selected to keep the process simple enough for candidates to get a good understanding without too much focus on the tests themselves. Results should be stated and include measures of central tendency and dispersion as relevant to the topic and design.

F: Discussion.

Many candidates are not discussing their results and findings in this section. This could include discussion of generalization, anomalous data/outliers, analysis of results using the descriptive statistics, etc. Usually there is a very brief restatement of the results, then candidates go into links to the Introduction section. There is usually very valuable analysis that could be done, quickly, easily and simply but discussing some of the topics listed above. For example, if the standard deviation for one condition is very low, while it is very high for the other condition. This is a great point to discuss and many candidates are not taking advantage of this type of discussion.

Weaknesses can also be very superficial; the most common claim was that the sample size was too small. This is not always a problem and is probably not the most important thing to change. Adding more participants also adds more confounding variables and individual differences…this is rarely acknowledged by candidates. Perhaps a poorly defined target population led to errors in sample selection. Candidates should attempt to focus more on quality and procedures rather than simply quantity.

G: Presentation.

Most candidates were within the word limits. References should be cited using a standard format that is consistently applied. This includes any Internet reference.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

While many IAs were of a high quality, there are still some areas that need to be further refined. Candidates should demonstrate understanding of the following:

- Operationalized hypotheses – research/alternate & null
- The concept of significance & significant differences
- Target populations – limiting the scope and providing anonymous characteristics
- Random allocation to groups/conditions
- Generalization of results to a target population
- Discussion of results and explanation of the findings

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 10	11 - 12	13 - 14	15 - 20

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Almost all samples marked had a range of topics suitable for IA SL psychology, that is, they were experimental studies in the appropriate fields of psychology. Only several works failed to meet this basic requirement. Specifically, several candidates manipulated two IVs, or conducted an experiment that departed significantly from the procedure of the study identified as being replicated.

Another source of error was that in some cases experiments were chosen without considering if the conducted experiment will meet all the guidelines presented in the marking criteria - especially the results section. It seems that some students saw the IA as an opportunity to do an interesting psychology experiment to "prove" something they've read or heard about - rather than as an opportunity to carry out an experiment and write a good and clear report. In most of these cases criterion E (results section) was generally not well handled with most experiments being unsuitable for generating descriptive results, i.e. measures of central tendency (mean and/or median) and measures of deviation (standard deviation and/or range).

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

The majority of candidates were able to identify and explain the study that they were replicating but some explanations of the results of this study lacked clarity. Not all candidates were able to clearly state their aim; instead they simply stated that their aim is to replicate a previous study.

Criterion B

Most candidates were able to identify their IV & DV but many could not operationalize them. The independent variable rarely included information about the variable itself and the control condition (condition in which the IV is not manipulated) and often the dependent variable was not expressed in quantified terms. Candidates from several schools described their design as a laboratory study rather than discussing their specific exp. design.

Criterion C

This section was usually well written. Still, although some descriptions were long winded they failed to include the basic information (i.e. number of participants). Sampling technique and/or justification was sometimes absent.

Criterion D

The procedures varied in standard from excellent to poor. Some candidates were spending time discussing their production of materials and preparation for the experiment, and then rushing through the procedures that they followed with their participants, therefore leading to a lack of replicability. Complete letter for debriefing participants was rarely present in the Appendix.

Criterion E

All candidates were able to present some results; however too many were losing marks in their presentation of graphs and tables, many forgetting to label their axis or to give an appropriate title. Although most students had many graphs many of them did not graph data in a way that reflected the aim of the study. Also, there was a lot of graphing of raw data. Overall it seems that the use of descriptive statistics is not always well linked to the aim of the study. For example, very few reports included any type of measurement of dispersion while most of these reports included all three measurements of central tendency. It seems that candidates do not fully understand the relevance and meaning of measures of deviation. In some cases, candidates presented results reporting variables other than the independent variable (e.g. gender).

There are still a large number of candidates who are placing raw material in the main body of their report.

Criterion F

This criterion was frequently not fully addressed and therefore this section for many candidates tended to be the weakest section in the report. It seemed by the time candidates had reached this section they were concerned about word length and that meant they didn't clearly discuss strengths/weaknesses of the method used (too often simplistic things like room temperature or noise outside the room were presented as weaknesses), or modifications or suggestions for further research. Few reports adequately compared the candidate's experiment with the replicated study's procedures. Often over simplifications were stated – i.e. candidates had a tendency to assume that more participants would make their "study more accurate.'

Two important neglected areas in discussion were the weaknesses of the devised

questionnaire/material used and what improvements could be made; and anomalies that cropped up either during the conduct of research or during the tallying up of data which did not support the results of the study being replicated.

Criterion G

A few papers did not meet format requirements by not including a Reference section or Appendices. Word count was not always identified on the cover page. Some candidates wrote more than the limit of 1500 words.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should review the guide to make sure they understand the differences between SL and HL papers. Many students did null hypotheses testing, and some carried out inferential stats. Introductions were sometimes full reviews of literature; students sometimes did not carry out replications, but totally modified studies. Often the cumulative effect was that word counts were exceeded although all the requirements for SL have not been met. Candidates need to be clearly taught what is acceptable for an IA concerning the manipulation of the IV. In addition, centres would benefit from spending some time ensuring that candidates are clear exactly what is meant by experimental design. To ensure that all candidates reach their highest potential, they also need to ensure that candidates are aware of what is meant by the term “justification”.

Teachers should stimulate students to choose and report the most appropriate measure of central tendency and variability. This choice should be clearly justified in terms of the suitability of the measure for the specific sample and level of measurement.

Some candidates still struggle with what to put into each section of the report. There is also the problem that reports are over word-limit. There seem to be two reasons for this:

- Introductions are packed with irrelevant studies and theory that is not required on SL.
- The materials section is written as a narrative and the procedures are overly detailed.

In scientific articles and reports it is a common practice to use certain style of writing. Candidates at this level might also be acquainted to use passive form instead of pronoun "I" and past tense instead of the present tense in their reports, although these are not mentioned in IBO criteria.

Higher and standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries – higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 19	20 - 26	27 - 32	33 - 52

Component grade boundaries – standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 44

General comments

Apparent in a number of scripts was a lack of skill in allocating appropriate time for section A and section B questions. Quite a few candidates tended to spend far more time on Part A than can be justified by the mark allocation. The questions in section A are intended to produce shorter answers and examiners make allowance for the relative brevity of responses when awarding marks. On the other hand, candidates should realise that all section B questions ask for well developed analysis and evaluation as well as in-depth knowledge and understanding.

There were scripts from some schools clearly indicating that candidates had studied very few research studies from each perspective, with consequent implications for their ability to address the requirements of the questions, particularly in Part B.

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

Some candidates had difficulty answering precisely what the question asked. For example, in Question 3, many engaged in a description of a study or an experimental procedure that supported a theory, but often with little explanation of the theory itself. Also, especially in Part B questions, many responses relied too much on description rather than addressing the evaluative aspects of the question. Candidates very often failed to make relevant references to ethical, gender, methodological or cultural considerations.

Most of the candidates that chose the case study as an example of a method from the humanistic perspective inappropriately discussed generalisability as a weakness. Some candidates demonstrated limited understanding of terminology and interpreted application to mean assumption. A few candidates struggled with a pertinent definition of ecological validity.

As illustrative material for the cognitive perspective, a number of candidates offered a description of Bandura's 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 perhaps not the best example illustrating key assumptions, concepts and theories of the cognitive perspective.

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

Overall, knowledge of perspectives was generally sound, with the majority of candidates able to identify appropriate concepts, theories, assumptions and applications from the perspectives, and to provide relevant research examples. Responses from candidates in some centres were a pleasure to read as they demonstrated in-depth knowledge and understanding applied in a logically constructed answer which focused very well on the requirements of the question.

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

Section A

Biological Perspective

1. Most candidates described studies or theories of stress, localization of function in the brain, genetic predisposition and biological factors involved in dysfunctional behaviour such as schizophrenia or depression. However, they frequently ignored the requirement to focus on the contribution to the scientific study of behaviour. The interpretation of contribution was more usually about the contribution to explanations of behaviour from biological research. The best answers, on the other hand, made a clear connection to the scientific study of behaviour, describing, for example, the contribution of correlation research, or of precise, objective data.

Cognitive Perspective

2. Most candidates were able to offer some level of understanding of ecological validity and to identify an appropriate research study within the cognitive perspective. However, many candidates focused too much on the description of the study, omitting to explain how this study lacks ecological validity. On a number of occasions results and/or conclusions of the study weren't discussed; these are particularly important, given that ecological validity focuses on the interpretation of results. Some candidates confused the concept of ecological validity with statistical (sample-to –population) generalisation, or with reliability. Demand characteristics (and other methodological features of the study) were sometimes evaluated, but weren't linked to ecological validity. A number of candidates described Bandura's Bobo Doll or Kohler's studies without clearly identifying the cognitive aspects of those studies.

Learning Perspective

3. Candidates almost invariably described classical conditioning, operant conditioning, or observational learning/social learning theory; a few successfully used insight learning or latent learning. Descriptions were generally satisfactorily, but full details (e.g. for classical conditioning, identification of UCS/UCR/etc, and of the processes of extinction, generalisation, spontaneous recovery) were not often given. Although nearly all candidates could identify a theory from the learning perspective, answers sometimes described supporting research without focusing on the theory itself. This was particularly true of classical and operant conditioning. Sometimes assumptions of the learning perspective were discussed, but not an explanatory theory based on them.

   The theory of social learning was rarely well described or explained. The important cognitive 'mediators' (attention, retention, etc) were almost never discussed. It was usually left to a descriptive account of one of Bandura's studies to answer the question, which very rarely fulfilled the requirements of theoretical explanation.

Humanistic

4. Virtually all candidates discussed the case study or the interview, as suggested in the question. The main problem here was not relating the method to the way in which it is *used by humanistic psychologists,* as the question explicitly asks. While most candidates were able to identify a relevant strength, quite a number discussed difficulties in generalising from one case study (or other method) as a limitation; this is an inappropriate criticism in view of the ideographic approach used in humanistic research.

Section B

5. Correlates of behaviour were examined with skill in a few answers. However, not many candidates presented a critical analysis and evaluation of this contribution to our understanding of behaviours. Weaker responses failed to make clear the relationship between physiological processes and psychological behaviours, rarely questioning the role of correlates as "determinants" of behaviour. The correlation/causation question – which could well have had attention - was only very occasionally raised. The behaviours often needed more precision (e.g. the claim that melatonin affects the sleep cycle – without further explanation). Little research evidence – beyond broad, general claims – was cited, except in the best answers.

6. Well prepared candidates described two theories in very good detail, illustrated them with appropriate research and offered evaluation based on methodological considerations. Theories of memory and cognitive dissonance were popular. The strength most often mentioned was the possibility of studying these theories empirically.

   Most candidates spent too much time on the description of the theories lacking time to evaluate them. Better responses were those addressing two theories related to the same topic such as the multi-store memory model and the working memory model. In such a case the evaluation of the theories could be productively done comparing their relative effectiveness in understanding human behaviour. Weaker responses

produced a superficial account of theories from two different topics with no or little evaluation. Sometimes assumptions were discussed, but not the explanatory theories based on them. Culture and gender were often superficially mentioned as important considerations, but with little evidence or explanation of how they could be related to an understanding of cognitive theories

7. Most responses to this question identified appropriate applications of operant or classical conditioning in the worlds of work, education or therapy. Applications sometimes referred to the ability to explain a social or psychological question, but most focused on the practical use of theories/findings from the learning perspective. However, responses tended to be descriptive with little discussion. Discussion of applications could include relative effectiveness of the applications, and problems of culture and ethics. Discussion could also be related to the quality of the research from which the applications are derived, as long as the focus remained on the applications. Little substantial research evidence was used to illustrate and evaluate the applications; many responses were illustrated by anecdotal or hypothetical instances. A few candidates had difficulties understanding the meaning of "application" and discussed assumptions instead. Some had a hard time finding two or more applications from one theory.
8. Reasonably comprehensive and accurate accounts of theories (predominantly Maslow's theory of a hierarchy of needs) were given in part (a). Discussion of strengths and limitations was usually relevant, but often superficial. A number of responses, however, offered thoughtful considerations of strengths and weaknesses with emphasis on cultural considerations that, in many cases, were explored in some depth.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should practice identifying command terms and what they require. They need to be well prepared to apply their knowledge in various contexts. Planning activities to get students in groups to state briefly what the examiner is requiring on past questions would be beneficial. Through such exercises, critical distinctions, such as between theory and supporting research, and between applications and assumptions, would become apparent.

Candidates should be able to answer questions directly and precisely, providing theoretical and empirical support. They need practice with writing essays, with constructing well organized answers. Asking them to present a plan would help them to take the habit of making one. Such an obligation would encourage them to organize their ideas before answering questions.

Candidates should practice developing coherent and logical arguments. Having candidates working together in groups, debating different psychological topics and issues, could facilitate the development of critical analysis and evaluation skills.

Higher and standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries – higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 18	19 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 40

Component grade boundaries – standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 4	5 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 20

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

Most popular questions in paper 2 were selected from the following options: social psychology, dysfunctional psychology and psychodynamic psychology. In comparison to previous sessions there seemed to be a slight drop in the popularity of questions coming from Health Psychology and Lifespan Psychology. In general the quality of responses tended to indicate that the majority of candidates lacked specific conceptual knowledge and understanding. Also, many candidates have significant problems with providing appropriate and detailed research support. There were many candidates who provided long general introductions in their responses. Too often this approach resulted in overly descriptive responses lacking a clear focus to the question.

The main problem noticed in poorer scoring responses was their inability to follow the command terms of the questions. For example, more often than not a 'Compare and contrast' question would be followed by a description of each of the two conditions that needed to be compared and contrasted or a “ discuss“ question elicited responses whereby only an explanation or description was offered.

The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated

Some responses showed depth of knowledge, broad understanding, and the ability to critically synthesize information and research studies in a coherent and logical manner. Many responses, however, were descriptive in nature, showing little indication of analysis, or any ability to answer precisely what the question was asking.

As mentioned in previous reports, a lack of practice in the skills of reading and understanding all aspects of the essay question, rather than a lack of knowledge tended to be a relevant constraining factor in candidate performance. Therefore a lot of times the evaluation was presented in a general manner rather than evaluating what was specifically asked for in the specific question (e.g. if a question is on research methodology and the candidate evaluated a related theory then the response is not completely relevant and focused on the set question) .

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

The areas of the programme which proved difficult for candidates in Psychology SL P2 had to do with applying knowledge of the cultural, ethical, gender, and methodological considerations appropriate to the questions. Most candidates only mentioned these considerations on a very surface level, thus evaluation was limited and not well developed. This problem was especially evident in responses to questions 15, 16, 19, 20 and 21 in which the specific question or a part of the question was focused on these issues.

The first six questions were rarely addressed by candidates. Some candidates fell into the trap of using common sense rather than psychological theory and research when answering these questions.

The psychology of dysfunctional behaviour

Question 7

This was one of the most popular questions within the whole exam paper. Many candidates choose to describe and analyse the biomedical etiology and drug treatment of schizophrenia. Another popular choice was the cognitive etiology and Beck's treatment of depression.

Overall this question was answered quite well reflecting that candidates were well prepared. Most responses reflected that candidates were able the clearly describe both an etiology and an appropriate and relevant treatment for a specific disorder. The major weakness was that candidates did not explicitly explain the relationship between the etiology and the treatment – but discussed them (described and evaluated them) in a separate manner. Although the question specifically asked for only one etiology some responses provided detailed accounts on several etiologies. Examiners noticed that low quality responses tended to describe the disorder in great detail, with only a limited and general reference to a relevant etiology and treatment.

Question 8

Question 8 was not a very popular choice within the option but the majority of responses addressing this question offered sound knowledge and understanding.

a) Responses to the first part of the question in many cases reflected good knowledge and understanding of the main features of one classificatory system. The most popular systems addressed were the DSM and ICD, while relatively few discussed classificatory systems from other cultures, such as the Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders (CCMD). Some responses provided very long and detailed descriptive accounts of the system, which probably limited the amount of discussion they managed to provide to the second part of the question. Weaker responses provided a general account of the diagnostic process without making reference to a specific classificatory system.

b) Most responses provided clear and well supported arguments concerning limitations of classificatory systems. Criticism of the classification systems such as the DSM-IV and ICD tended to focus on issues of reliability and validity, and to question the general suitability of a categorical as opposed to a dimensional approach. The work

of Rosenhan was referenced quite often. In some cases arguments were well presented and clearly described and the responses provided detailed accounts of relevant empirical studies but failed to explicitly link these two parts of the response. Ethical considerations including issues of labelling, self-fulfilling prophecies and the rights of individuals were also often addressed by many candidates. Although candidates were generally familiar with the shortcomings of the classification system(s) in the diagnostic process they seemed to focus far less on the actual strengths of having a classification system for diagnosis. Strengths of classificatory systems were very often presented in a limited and overly simplistic manner. This often resulted in an 'unbalanced' conclusion regarding 'to what extent' aspect of the question.

Some weaker responses offered overly simplistic and extreme statements such as "the DSM is/is not reliable/valid" with minimal evidence to support these claims.

Question 9

Although this question did not attract many responses the quality of responses tended to vary greatly. Some responses provided accurate and detailed description and thorough evaluation of two relevant studies. Evaluative comments offered clear reference to methodology and ethics – e.g. Rosenhan's study was a popular choice. The weakest responses tended to offer vague and general knowledge of research studies within psychology of dysfunctional behaviour. Most responses tended to provide rather clear and detailed descriptions of 2 studies with minimal evaluation. Often in these descriptive accounts candidates chose two studies with similar or identical research methodology and thus limited themselves to the same evaluative comments for both studies.

Health psychology

Question 10

This question wasn't frequently addressed. In most cases responses demonstrated detailed descriptive knowledge of research findings or theories from health psychology without much indication how these can be applied in other situations. While it is generally good to provide some theoretical or research background many candidates struggled to be selective with this knowledge and failed to move towards a qualitatively more demanding answer to the question on how research findings/theories are applied. Some responses correctly described two applications of research findings or theories from health psychology but instead of evaluating the success or otherwise of the application offered evaluation of empirical studies. There were some excellent responses clearly describing and evaluating how research findings can be applied to different forms of stress reduction.

Question 11

a) This was the most popular question within the option. Most responses offered a rather clear and accurate outline of the experimental method and some knowledge (with frequent inaccuracies) of the case study method.

b) For this part of the question it was essential that the response refers to a relevant study from health psychology to evaluate the method chosen. In most cases

candidates failed to address all aspects of the question and tended to provide either a response overly focused on a general research method but failing to clearly identify or describe a relevant research study or a response overly focused on the research study but instead of evaluating the research method the focus of the response was on evaluation of the findings.

Question 12

This question was the least popular within this option. While responses presented adequate knowledge of studies or theories within the field of substance use and misuse, relatively few analysed how these findings could be used to predict and/or alter health related behaviour.

Overall, a number of different empirical studies were provided but in a very limited and superficial manner.

Lifespan psychology

Question 13

This question was not a popular choice within the option. In most cases responses presented a limited account of changes in identity with vague and superficial reference to empirical studies or theories.

Question 14

Most responses provided limited description of the two theories with little or no comparison or responses that offered limited description of general theories within lifespan psychology without relating them to socialization.

Question 15

Very few candidates responded to this question at HL or SL. However, when this question was attempted it seemed that it tended to attract the attention of unprepared candidates who provided a vague, general outline of cultural differences in adolescent behaviour with minimal reference to psychological research. Most responses lacked specific knowledge of the option. Some responses to this question correctly addressed issues such as gender role differences in different cultures.

Psychodynamic psychology

Question 16

The quality of responses tended to vary considerably for this question. There were two general approaches to this question in terms of structuring the responses. The more popular was to discuss particular examples of research in psychodynamic psychology and then evaluate them. This approach tended to provide detailed descriptions of examples of research and sometimes got overly focused in discussing the detailed particulars of a specific study rather than the research methodology employed. The other approach began the essay by identifying the specific research methods (e.g. case study method) and then giving an appropriate example (e.g. Little Hans, Wolf man). The latter approach tended to earn higher marks as candidates seemed to remain more focused on the demands of the question.

It was good to see that most responses correctly framed their discussion to research methodology rather than therapy. However responses from some schools were still wrongly identifying free association and projective techniques as research methods.

Question 17

Several different problems were identified in responses to this question:

- Answers to this question tended to be rather descriptive and reflected poor ability to address the compare/contrast aspect of the question. In a number of cases responses provided long descriptive accounts of different key concepts such as psychosexual/psychosocial stages of development, birth order. There were also some descriptive reviews of different research studies (e.g. Little Hans, Anna O, psycho-historical studies of Sioux and Yurok Indians).
- Another common problem was that some responses reflected considerable knowledge about Freud's account on explaining the influence of childhood experiences on adult behaviour but insufficient understanding of an alternative view.
- Some responses provided detailed descriptions and comparisons of two general theories with minimal reference to the influence of childhood experience on adult behaviour.

Question 18

In general most responses reflected good knowledge and understanding of Freud's views of the role of the unconscious, however relatively few adequately address neo- Freudian standpoints on the role of the unconscious mind in human behaviour. The vast majority of candidates gave overly descriptive responses fully detailing Freud’s theory of the structure of the mind and hydraulic theories accompanied by limited accounts of Erikson's or Jung's view of the role of the unconscious mind.

Also, although many responses reflected good descriptive knowledge in most cases only limited comparison was present.

Social psychology

Question 19

Questions 19 and 21 were the most popular in P2.

Most responses to this question reflected good knowledge of research studies in Social Psychology and appropriate but general knowledge of ethical considerations.

Approaches taken by candidate tended to be two-folded:

Some responses started with a general description and discussion of ethical considerations and then linked these with examples of research studies in social psychology. In most cases these responses offered detailed description and some discussion of relevant ethical considerations.

Other responses tended to start with examples of empirical studies. This approach was often less successful as candidates invested too much time and effort in the description (and sometimes evaluation) of the studies with minimal attempt to discuss ethical considerations.

A few excellent responses provided accurate, clear and detailed discussions of several ethical considerations in 2 or 3 studies and linked these to discussion of methodological issues. The most popular studies were the following: Milgram's obedience study, Zimbardo's prison simulation study, Sheriff's study and /or Asch's conformity. Ethical themes most frequently addressed were the following: -- no harm to participants, right to withdraw, informed consent, issue of deception, etc. Complete or fully detailed description of the procedures of research studies were not included in the top scoring responses. Those that did include this type of information tended to get off topic or run out of time.

Question 20

a) Most responses provided a clear and relevant summary of the main characteristics of a research study on conformity. In some cases responses overly focused on the procedure or findings while ignoring other relevant features of the study (e.g. aim, design, participants).

   A majority of responses tended to outline Asch's study.

   In some cases a limited outline was provided with just a description of the procedure and a very limited and inaccurate (over exaggerated) account of the findings

   Another common problem was that some responses offered very good and detailed description and general evaluation of the study or underlying theory that was too long and unnecessary in terms of the requirements of the question.

b) Part b) proved to me more difficult. Most responses tended to provide responses with general knowledge of individualistic and collectivistic cultures but failed to link these clearly to the interpretation of behaviour in these studies. Overly descriptive responses tended to be offered providing over-simplified interpretations of cultural differences.

   A few good responses tended to provide a well.-developed discussion of some cultural considerations referring to the influence of the historical era on the behaviour of participants, and/or differences in gender roles in different societies, and/or providing empirical support on high levels of conformity in some collectivistic cultures.

   Low quality answers gave fragmented accounts of alternative research or discussed similar topics such as obedience and then linked obedience studies to the historical context.

Question 21

This was the most popular question in P2.

The quality of responses tended to vary considerably for this question.

Too often the main emphasis of the response was on describing the study in detail. The research method was outlined but the evaluation tended to focus on the study rather than the research methodology. Most popular choices were the following:

Experiments – lab and field- (Asch, good Samaritan)

Observation – natural and controlled (Zimbardo or Milgram often cited)

Some responses described a relevant research method but failed to correctly link it to a research study in social psychology.

Overall, the strategy of structuring the response tended to follow the same pattern as for question 16, with the same problems appearing.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- One cannot overemphasise the value of carefully reading the question before selecting the one to answer.
- Candidates should be aware that all information presented in the response should be selected and presented in such a way that it is made relevant to the specific question asked. Teachers should advise candidates to have a structured plan for their response, this avoids unnecessary detours in writing the response and it keeps the response focused on the specific question.
- Teachers should emphasize the tremendous importance of the particular command terms in a question. Candidates should be informed about how different are the demands of a "describe" question and an "examine" question. Candidates should be warned against general answers - e.g. if the question asks about "treatments for a dysfunctional behaviour", scripts filled with general theory about a dysfunctional behaviour will receive very few marks.
- The approach to answering comparison questions should be practised with clear and explicit identification of both similarities and differences.
- There is also a need to stress awareness of methodological issues. It is usually beneficial to integrate different elements of the syllabus when a school designs its own psychology programme. As students normally do not find "Research methodology" very interesting this component could easily be integrated into the study of Options.

Higher level paper three

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 17	18 - 30

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

Despite improvements noted in recent years that have been demonstrated by the increase in candidates' understanding and knowledge for this part the programme, there have been areas that remain difficult. In the current paper candidates were seemingly unaware that participant observation comprises both covert and overt approaches to psychological investigation.

Evaluation of semi -structured interviews was not sufficiently well understood to answer the second part question 2. Candidates' concept of generalization was very limited as shown in their answers to question 3. The issue does need to be thoroughly addressed since most qualitative research depends upon in-depth investigation of small numbers of participants. If candidates are unable to respond to the criticisms expressed concerning research findings based upon small numbers then evaluation of their use becomes very problematic.

The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated

In general candidates found some difficulties in using the key terms or clues provided in the questions. Question 1 answers should have been focussed on "ethical issues" rather than a general description of how to conduct participant observation. Question 2 required a "relevant sampling technique" to be used to select the participants for interviewing. Those answers that claimed that convenience sampling would be useful for this purpose were not awarded many marks. Question 3 carefully asked "to what extent is generalization possible." Responsible case studies do not claim that their findings can be applied universally, but neither do they claim that no aspect of their findings can be utilised by others. There is a position between these two extremes that needs to be more thoroughly explored by candidates.

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

Question 1

Some candidates did appreciate the difference between covert and overt participant observation. In the former the researcher becomes part of the group under investigation without revealing his or her identity, in the latter the researcher openly declares his or her identity to the group and continues with the research process. Covert observation contains more ethical issues to be resolved since the group members do not know that they are being observed. The dilemma for any ethical committee faced with a decision to allow such

research to go ahead focuses on their knowledge that where the researcher is overt, the very presence of such a person will destroy the integrity of group behaviour.

Even where the participant observer is overt from the beginning, there are ethical issues to do with the effect on individual group members as a result of being observed by others. Cooperation may well be given to the researcher but the behaviour of the group members is bound to be compromised, and they may feel embarrassed by the presence of the stranger in their midst.

Question 2

Some candidates appear to think that random samples are the best or only choice in deciding on a relevant technique. This is rarely the case in psychological research since the extent to which a random sample is representative of a small number of participants is questionable. A better technique would be to employ a stratified approach.

Semi structured interviews are a compromise between the imposed restrictions of the structured interview and freedom of the unstructured interview that is allowed to wander at the will of the interviewee. As with all compromises there is a cost to pay. The construction of questions in a semi-structured interview would inevitable constrain the responses that the interviewee could give if he or she was not restricted in this manner. On the other hand the use of constructed interviews would lead to short answers that lacked the rich depth of response needed for qualitative analysis.

Question 3

Two problems arose with several answers to this question concerning generalisation. It is incorrect to state that since data obtained by qualitative research is expressed in words, it would become more scientific if these words could be assigned numeric values. Such a strategy would mean that if statistical tests could be used, the spoken words would take on a mantle of scientific respectability and all would be well with the research world.

Equally erroneous is the notion that the use of small numbers of participants in research cannot possibly contain any element of generalisation and that no credence should be placed upon any findings that used small numbers. This assertion has same fallacious understanding as the assumption that the findings from similar research can apply to everyone. The candidate needs to address the extent to which generalization is possible.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

The points indicated above suggest that teachers need to research these areas since they are also represented in the new programme. An increasing number of books and journal articles, for example, focus on generalisation. Some school/college texts are now being produced that give substantial insights in the issues noted above.

If time and energy permit, it would be profitable for teachers to occasionally indicate how such research strategies have their origin and development informed by philosophical theory, particularly those theories that dwell on the experiences and feelings of the individual's interpretation of the world.