PSYCHOLOGY

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 10	11 - 21	22 - 30	31 - 41	42 - 55	56 - 67	68 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 22	23 - 33	34 - 46	47 - 58	59 - 72	73 - 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

Once again this session, the most popular topics investigated for the internal assessment project were related to cognitive psychology. This trend is expected and acceptable as most studies were designed using a clearly experimental method, with one independent variable being manipulated by each candidate while measuring the impact on one dependent variable. There were examples from other areas of psychological research, such as social psychology that were well designed and highly appropriate.

There did, however, still appear to be an unusually high number of projects being submitted that do not meet the most essential requirement of the IB psychology internal assessment. The candidate must manipulate the independent variable. Naturally occurring differences between groups are not appropriate for the requirements of this project. This also means that characteristics of the participants (such as gender) are not acceptable. If a study is not experimental then a zero may be awarded.

As many candidates chose an independent samples design, one consideration should be random allocation. If anything limits the choice of which group a participant is tested in, then the design is most likely not experimental under the IB psychology definition.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Introduction

Theories and studies provided in the introduction sections were generally relevant to the aim of the study. This background lays the foundation for the prediction of the hypothesis, the design, report of results and the discussion. All material in this section should be directly relevant to the expectation or design decisions that the candidates have made. To achieve highest marks there should be an analytical component that goes beyond restating the procedure or results of a study. This analysis does not have to be extensive, but it should be focused and highly relevant.

The aim of the study and the hypothesis should be clearly stated and carefully worded. As the IA guidelines require all studies to be experimental, the research hypothesis should clearly predict an expectation of difference between the two conditions. Wording that implies a correlational study should be avoided.

Criterion B: Methods: Design

Justification of the design choice was better than in previous years. However, there are still a number of cases where the *methodology* was justified rather than the *design*. The use of an experiment does not need to be justified as this is mandated in the guide. Instead, the justification of the candidate's choice of participant design should be made clear. Why use an independent samples rather than a repeated measures design?

Ethical guidelines were generally very well followed and well documented.

Criterion C: Methods: Participants

Generally well done, however there should be greater emphasis and understanding of the importance of the target population. The goal of experimental research is to provide a level of confidence that the differences found between the two conditions is 'real' and therefore the results can be generalised to a larger population. In this section, a clearly defined target population should be the basis for sampling. The discussion of generalisation to this target population should be covered in the Discussion section after the results have been analysed. However, it is important to set up the basis for this here in the Participants section with the target population.

Criterion D: Methods: Procedure

This was very well done. This should be an account of *when* things happened. The other sections of the report up until now are generally focused on the *why* or *how* of the experiment. This is the time to describe when those things were done so that others may replicate the study.

Criterion E: Results

Coverage of descriptive statistics continued to be very well done and there were improvements in the reporting of inferential statistics as well. The reporting of the results must accurately reflect the hypothesis and the variables. These links should all be clear and explicit.

It should be noted that the results should never be reported according to the gender of the participants. That means there should be no comparison of how males and females did in the experimental and/or control conditions. While gender is a very interesting topic, gender of the participant is not an experimental independent variable.

Criterion F: Discussion

This section is worth the most marks and thus requires very careful construction. The guide outlines specific points that should be addressed. Many reports simply restated comments from the Introduction without linking to the results. The best limitations/weaknesses to discuss are those that are most relevant. That is, those problems in the theory, prediction, or design that had the most possible impact on the results. Sample size is often cited, but rarely justified as a limitation. Having more participants does not ensure 'better' results.

Higher Level candidates are also required to use inferential statistics. Nearly all do report these in the Results section, but very few actually discuss the implication of these results, e.g., confidence about generalisation to the target population.

Criterion G: Presentation

This was very well done. All reports should follow the sections outlined in the guide.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Candidate performance continued to be quite strong this session. Quite a number of recommendations from past reports are being implemented. It is suggested that all teachers read through old examiner reports again. There are valuable suggestions that are still relevant today.

Teachers are encouraged to have candidates review the continuity within their reports. There should be a continuous link throughout the entire paper that ties the background, aim, hypothesis, design, results and discussion together. Many times candidates submit papers where the results reported are not directly relevant to the hypothesis. The concept of relevance is central to success on this project. Are the background studies relevant to the hypothesis? Is the hypothesis relevant to the aim? Does the discussion include the most relevant points?

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

Candidates displayed a wide range of performance on the November 2009 examination session.
Most of the studies were replications of cognitive studies and for the most part were of acceptable quality. Most of the studies that didn't prove to be up to standards lacked proper manipulation of the independent variable.

For example some candidates attempted to introduce an interference effect in their study where the lack of clear manipulation of the independent variable led to rather poor marks.

Generally, most of the lower quality reports shared the following problems:

- Obvious misinterpretations of the term “experiment design”;
- Procedures were properly presented but they lacked sufficient detail. Serious omissions and mistakes in some reports meant that there was no possibility of replication;
- Candidates proved to have problems with descriptive statistics and interpretation of results. They often failed to display a full summary of results in tables and/or graphs. An important part of any research report is a clear description and analysis of descriptive statistics related to the aim of the research. Some candidates failed to include any verbal interpretation of such descriptive measures, implying a lack of understanding of such data analysis.

Some centres displayed work that was of exceptionally high standard, where the reports were well organized and written with care. The majority of candidates are now aware of ethical considerations, especially in the way that participants were presented with a written informed consent form prior to their participation in psychology experiments. Most candidates addressed the following issues in their informed consents: the right to withdraw at any time and the right to refuse personal data to be used in any way.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Many candidates had problems in clearly formulating the aim of the research. Also, weaker candidates outlined the original study by focusing mainly on the findings but failed to address other relevant characteristics of the study (design, relevant characteristics of target population, sampling method, independent and dependent variable, summary of data). This reflects the tendency of weaker candidates to present information in a routine manner and a lack of understanding of the reasons why the original research study should be explained in the introduction and subsequently incorporated in the discussion section.

Stronger candidates had a good general understanding of the experimental method. However, many candidates tended to provide inadequate attention to all relevant aspects of the experimental study. Although candidates are required to only replicate or adapt an experiment that has already been conducted and published, they still need to thoroughly consider all necessary steps of the experimental process and fully evaluate the methodology used. Data interpretation and discussion are the most cognitively demanding aspect of the report where consideration should be given to all of the relevant characteristics of the experimental research and these should be compared in an organized manner to the original study. At the end of the report a careful conclusion should be drawn from the considerations that have been made.

The ability to produce summarised and accurate reports is an important skill to be developed, so the word count aspect of criterion G should not be trivially approached. Candidates will be penalised for exceeding the maximum word limit, as will those individuals failing to meet the minimum requirement.

Criterion A: Introduction

It appeared that more candidates in this session were attempting to provide a clear and explicit aim for their research study. In comparison to previous sessions this was an improvement; however there were still many candidates unable to express the aim in language that is reasonably clear.

Criterion B: Method: Design

Overall candidates lacked knowledge and understanding of research methodology and in many examples they had problems with applying their knowledge to a specific aim that they have chosen. In addition to this some reports reflected that candidates lack knowledge of psychological research terminology. In this section candidates should identify the design of their research study and not the research method chosen. Since both HL and SL candidates are required to select and perform an experiment of their choice they need not justify why the study is an experiment. Justification of design asks the candidate to explain why they have chosen a specific type of design. In general, there are three types of design: repeated measures, independent samples and matched pairs design. Candidates should select the most appropriate design for a specific aim and in the conditions in which the study will be performed.

In some reports candidates tended to select an appropriate design, but still had difficulty justifying its use. When justification was attempted this referred to vague and general justifications that were not linked to relevant methodological issues. Simply stating that repeated measures “takes care of individual differences“ with no further explanation is not sufficient.

On the whole, most candidates correctly stated the independent variable and dependent variable for their experiments, but these definitions often lacked clarity.

Criterion C: Method: Participants

Some candidates had problems with identifying an appropriate target population from which they selected their sample. Examples of relevant characteristics which should be stated are the following: age, gender, culture, educational background, number of participants, etc. Stating this information helps the candidate compare their study to the original study. Characteristics of the participants should include more than just the number of people involved, for example, gender, age, educational background, culture, common characteristics. In cases where the characteristics of participants in the candidate's study are different from the characteristics of participants in the original study this information is of great relevance and should be thoroughly considered in the discussion section.

Criterion D: Method: Procedure

In most cases the procedure section was well written. Most candidates provided relevant description of the procedures used; however, some reports only included a brief and incomplete listing of steps, which hampered the ability to replicate the study as it was written. Occasionally, standardized instructions or debriefing letters were mentioned in the procedure but were not made available in the appendix. In lower quality reports it was rather common for candidates to omit quite important aspects of the study needed for replication (for example, the time provided to complete the experimental task).

Criterion E: Results

The results section varied considerably in quality of presentation and detail and information that was provided.

Some of the reports that earned high marks for criterion E included:

- A clearly titled and labelled table indicating results of descriptive statistical calculations – measures of central tendency and dispersion,
- A simple and clear bar graph of the measures of central tendency for the experimental and control condition.
- A narrative description of the results which is relevant for the stated aim

Unfortunately, some weaker reports failed to include any graphical representation at all or included graphs which were inappropriate (*e.g.* displaying raw data), or unclear (*e.g.* did not label the graph accurately).

Criterion F: Discussion

In most reports candidates provided a discussion of their results in relation to the original research in the introduction section. Usually an identification of the main weaknesses of the study was provided and several suggestions for improvement were stated. Most candidates, however, were not discussing some of the differences they may have discovered in their descriptive statistics other than those of central tendency. For example, most candidates presented measures of dispersion of each condition in the results section, yet they rarely discussed what these actually meant. Also, many candidates overlooked possible confounding variables that might have affected their study. Before writing the discussion section candidates should carefully examine procedural aspects, ethical considerations or sampling biases that might have had an impact on the results obtained in their study. Candidates should clearly refer to both strengths and limitations of their research along with suggestions for future investigations.

Criterion G: Presentation

The format of the reports was often very good. However, candidates did not always include in the reference section all the references they referred to in the Introduction and Discussion. Also some candidates still had problems with references from the Internet.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates need to take care of how they express their aim, interpret the results and present a clear and structured discussion.
- Candidates should start with a clear and testable aim in which the independent and dependent variables are explicitly stated.
- The introduction needs to be written carefully, providing some general background information, a review of the original experiment being replicated with an explanation of the design and findings, and it should include an explicit statement of an aim.
- Candidates should never display tables of raw data in the results section.
- There are still some reports that are done superficially and in a hurry. Candidates should be reminded to choose their descriptive statistics carefully and to interpret their results by specifically relating them to the aim stated in the introduction

- Candidates need to choose and compute the appropriate descriptive statistic for their research. In addition to this, graphs should present a summary of the scores that are specifically related to the aim stated in the introduction. Additional findings related to controlled variables (*e.g.,* age, gender) should not be mentioned unless they are relevant to the aim and the candidate plans to interpret these findings in the discussion.
- In some reports, candidates failed to consider all of the variables that might have affected their results. Providing a simplistic list of a series of possible shortcomings is not sufficient. Candidates should try to explain the exact way in which a specified problem could potentially affect the interpretation of results.

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 - 20	21 - 25	26 - 31	32 - 44

General comments

Most candidates were well prepared to manage their time between questions and were able to complete the examination.

Candidates generally demonstrated adequate content knowledge but had difficulty giving answers focused on the question asked. For instance, in question 1, a significant number of responses discussed both a strength and a limitation while the question clearly asks for one or the other. In question 5, more than one strength and more than one limitation are expected; however, in a number of cases only one of each was discussed.

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

It seemed that the most difficult areas for the candidates were associated mostly with skills rather than the syllabus. A main difficulty was in the understanding of either the terms of the syllabus, or of the command terms. A common example of lack of understanding of a syllabus term was the requirement to outline *one methodological consideration* from the cognitive perspective. The understanding of the term “consideration” apparently caused some problems; methodological consideration was sometimes misinterpreted and led to a variety of inexact responses.

A particular example of insufficient command term understanding was evident in question 6 (7 in HL paper) where the directive *to what extent* is the learning perspective effective in explaining a psychological or social question was virtually disregarded by those answering the question. Finally, there were a number of students who wrote answers in an informal, almost conversational style, showing a lack of knowledge of psychological terminology.

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

Candidates were generally familiar with syllabus requirements, particularly content areas. Overall knowledge of perspectives was satisfactory with the majority of candidates able to identify appropriate concepts and theoretical explanations and provide relevant research examples. There were several examples of outstanding levels of organization and structure in section B including evaluative methodological comments.

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

Section A

Biological Perspective

Question 1

Most candidates outlined an appropriate psychological study from the biological perspective. However, the outline did not include identification of the method used in the study. Part (b) often included both strengths and limitations, ignoring the request for one **or** the other, leading to shallow explanations. Quite often the strength or limitation referred to the study rather than to the method.

Cognitive Perspective

Question 2

Many candidates explained the lack of ecological validity in Loftus and Palmer's study of eyewitness testimony. The concept of ecological validity was generally well understood, although sometimes it was confused with statistical generalisation of results. In many cases the explanation of the methodological consideration was brief since the description of the study was too detailed. Some responses discussed an ethical issue, but did not relate this to a methodological consideration.

Learning Perspective

Question 3

In the best answers, candidates provided a clear definition of determinism, focusing on environmental determinism and included elements of predictability and lack of free will. The involuntary, reflexive nature of classical conditioning was discussed in many of the best answers. Operant conditioning/reinforcement and Social learning theory were generally not used as well in relating the particular concept to determinism.

A number of answers did not explain or define determinism at all; this usually made the link with the concept less than clear. Too many responses focused on the description of the concept and offered only a superficial explanation of the link between the concept and determinism.

Humanistic Perspective *(HL Only)*

Question 4

The best answers emphasized on either a new focus on the uniqueness of human experience or the methodological focus on the ideographic revision of concepts such as generalisability. Good answers also often discussed the perspective's minimisation of the applicability of animal research findings to human behaviour in favour of a focus on human subjective experience. Too often, however, answers failed to focus on the contribution to the study of behaviour, and instead just described a humanistic theory.

Section B

Biological Perspective

Question 5

This was a very popular question. A broad range of explanations was available: localisation of function in the brain, the influence of neurotransmitters and hormones, and genetic influences were equally chosen in the responses. The main weakness in dealing with this question was the lack of balance between descriptive and evaluative elements. Many responses would describe the explanation in detail, but with limited evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. The best responses included particular research studies in their discussion and did not only refer to broad findings in the area.

Cognitive Perspective

Question 6

Few candidates chose this question and there were a very few excellent responses that were clearly carefully prepared. The majority tended to be insubstantial, with lack of familiarity with cognitive perspective, and only general knowledge of cultural considerations. A number of responses focused on the concept of schema, especially in relation to Bartlett's study, but little analysis was made of its cultural aspects. Culture and perception was another focus, with Deregowski's study being typically used, but interpretation of behaviour was rarely the focus of the discussion.

Learning Perspective

Question 7

Many candidates selected this question and the psychological issue chosen was usually aggression. Bandura's theory of social learning was presented with one of his Bobo Doll studies described at some length. Evaluation was mostly provided by reference to other models of aggression from within the learning perspective, or other perspectives explanations of it, especially the role of genetics and hormones. The extent to which the learning perspective is effective in explaining the question was, however, rarely emphasized in the discussion.

Humanistic Perspective *(HL Only)*

Question 8

This question was a popular choice and was generally quite well done, with reasonably substantial evaluation. Most responses discussed just one explanation, and this allowed some depth of discussion. Those that chose two explanations (typically Rogers and Maslow) usually did not make much of a link between the two. Humanistic explanations were often criticised for not being scientifically valid; such criticism often revealed a lack of understanding of the assumptions and purposes of the perspective.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should practice identifying command terms and what they require. They need to be better prepared to apply their knowledge in various contexts. Teachers need to help candidates focus on what the question asks.

The command term *to what extent* is a prompt that needs to be addressed more carefully. *Methodological consideration* may need clarification as well.

Psychological language needs refinement in some cases; there was too much informal language used in this paper. The concepts of *reliability* and *validity* especially should be more precisely defined; these were often used incorrectly.

Higher and standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries – higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 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 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 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: Psychology of Dysfunctional Behaviour, Psychodynamic Psychology and Social 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 evaluative depth, and hence regardless of the content area, they had difficulty providing the deeper level of analysis required in this paper.

Also, many candidates had significant problems with providing appropriate and detailed research support. There were many candidates who provided long general accounts of material partially relevant for the focus of the question.

The main problem noticed in poorer scoring responses was candidates' inability to understand and address the specific question stated. For example, more often than not a "Describe and evaluate one research method" question would be followed by a description and an evaluation of specific empirical study.

The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated

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

Too many times the evaluation or discussion was presented in an overly general manner rather than evaluating/discussing what was specifically asked for in the stated question. For example, if a question is about gender considerations in the interpretation of behaviour and the response only provides a detailed account of examples of gender differences within an option without selecting the relevant information or supporting it with relevant psychological research (how do gender differences affect the interpretation of findings) then the response is not 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 P2 had to do with applying knowledge of the cultural, ethical, gender, and methodological considerations appropriate to the questions. Most candidates only outlined these considerations on a very superficial level, thus evaluation was limited and not well explained. This problem was especially evident in responses to questions 7, 13, 16 and 19 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. Just a few 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

Question 7 was not a very popular choice within the option and the majority of responses addressing this question offered general and limited knowledge and understanding.

In most cases responses provided a limited description of several gender considerations related to the interpretation of dysfunctional behaviour. Most often different prevalence of disorders for men and women in different cultures was reported as well as the issue of gender bias of professionals during the diagnostic process. Examiners noticed that low quality responses tended to describe gender considerations in general without making them relevant to psychology of dysfunctional behaviour.

Candidates should provide more than a basic recounting of general gender considerations and elaborate on why or how these considerations may be important for interpretation of dysfunctional behaviour.

Question 8

This question was frequently addressed. Most responses reflected good descriptive knowledge of two empirical studies related to psychology of dysfunctional behaviour (popular choices were: Seligman's study, Little Albert, little Hans, Rosenhan's naturalistic observation, studies on concordance rates between identical and fraternal twins). However, too often the description provided just the basic information concerning the study with an overwhelming emphasis on the findings.

Some responses provided very long and detailed descriptive accounts of one empirical study with limited reference to the second empirical study. Weaker responses provided a general account of research methods used in psychology of dysfunctional behaviour without making reference to specific empirical studies.

Question 9

This was the most popular question within the whole exam paper. Many candidates chose to describe and analyse the biomedical model/theory or behavioural theory of dysfunctional behaviour. Many responses offered a detailed account of the biomedical model of schizophrenia reflecting thorough knowledge and understanding of the role of neurotransmitters, accurate knowledge of brain regions and evaluating the model by discussing the effectiveness of drug treatments for schizophrenia.

Other responses provided good descriptive accounts of a model or theory and provided some evaluation of the model/theory by referring to empirical evidence supporting or refuting the model/theory. Usually these essays were clear, nicely organized and supported with appropriate knowledge. At times evaluative comments were present but needed further elaboration. In evaluation of the model, candidates tended to focus on strengths and limitations and a discussion of the effectiveness of the model in treating dysfunctional behaviour or evaluated the model through a comparison to alternative models of dysfunctional behaviour. Examiners were pleased to see that in the majority of cases there was some evaluation present even in responses of lower quality. However, the general trend in most cases still tends to be that there is more emphasis and knowledge presented in the description of the model than when evaluating it. For example, when evaluation was presented by comparing the main model to alternative models of dysfunctional behaviour this comparison was implicitly stated through a detailed descriptive account of these two models instead of actually presenting comparative points – ways in which different models are similar or different or by presenting arguments about how a certain alternative model emphasizes factors that are ignored by the original model. Thus, the comparison of the models was often implicit.

Weakest responses to this question tended to offer long descriptions of one specific dysfunctional behaviour accompanied with an outline of an appropriate model or focused more on a particular therapy rather than the model of which it is representative.

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 related to disordered patterns of eating without much indication of how these can be applied in specific 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 several applications of research findings or theories on disordered patterns of eating 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 treatment of disordered patterns of eating.

Question 11

This was the most popular question within the option. Many responses to this question demonstrated sound understanding of both physiological and psychological aspects of stress, often supported with well-chosen examples of relevant 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 discussion, rather than producing a balanced essay.

Question 12

This question was the least popular within this option. While responses presented rather adequate knowledge of studies related to health psychology, relatively few discussed how placebos are used in the study.

A few excellent responses included an example of research study and detailed analysis of physiological and psychological influences of placebos on participants.

Lifespan psychology

Question 13

This question was not a popular choice within the option. In most cases responses presented a limited account of gender considerations with vague and superficial reference to empirical studies or theories. Responses to this question tended to be of similar quality as responses provided to question 7 in Psychology of dysfunctional behaviour.

Question 14

Most responses provided limited description of two theories with little or no evaluation or responses that offered limited description of general theories within lifespan psychology without relating them to specifically to the stage of adolescence. Some high quality responses provided detailed descriptions of two theories of adolescence accompanied with clear reference to empirical support and a thorough account of how cultural, gender or methodological considerations may affect the interpretation of findings in these studies.

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 human developmental theories throughout the lifespan with minimal reference to research studies.

Psychodynamic psychology (HL Only)

Question 16

a) Answers to part (a) of this question usually identified appropriate examples of research but the detail and accuracy were often poor. The majority of responses provided an outline of Freud's case study of Little Hans or Anna O.

b) Most responses failed to clearly address the question stated. Vague and limited descriptions of research methods or methodological considerations were usually offered and many responses failed to relate methodological considerations to the specific study described in part (a). Still it was comforting to see that most responses correctly framed their discussion to research methodology rather than therapy.

Question 17

This question was a very popular choice within the option. The main problem identified in responses to this question was that responses to this question tended to be rather descriptive and reflected poor ability to address the evaluative aspect of the question.

In a number of cases responses provided long descriptive accounts of different key concepts such as psychosocial stages of development, birth order or archetypes. There were also some descriptive reviews of different research studies (e.g. participant observations of Sioux and Yurok Indians, psychohistorical methods). Although the material provided was often correct it was not presented in a way to address the “evaluative” aspect of the question.

Question 18

In general most responses reflected good knowledge and understanding of Freud's explanation of human behaviour, however relatively few adequately addressed neo-Freudian explanations of human behaviour. The vast majority of candidates gave overly descriptive responses fully detailing Freud’s account of aggressive behaviour or gender differences accompanied by limited accounts of Erikson's or Jung's explanations of human behaviour.

Social psychology

Question 19

Question 19 was the most popular in this option.

The most popular studies were the following: Milgram's obedience study, Zimbardo's prison simulation study, Sheriff's study and /or Asch's conformity.

Most responses to this question reflected good knowledge of research studies in Social Psychology and appropriate but general knowledge of research methods. Approaches taken by candidates tended to be two folded:

Some responses started with a general description and discussion of a research method and then linked these to an example of a study in social psychology. In most cases these responses offered detailed description and some evaluation of a relevant research method.

Other responses tended to start with an example of a research study in social psychology. 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 the research method.

Question 20

This was the least popular question within the social psychology option. The studies of Asch and Milgram were frequently discussed in answering this question. While most responses demonstrated detailed knowledge of relevant research from social psychology, some struggled with the discussion of predictions about individual or group behaviour. Stronger responses assessed the extent to which predictions can be made by considering some relevant strengths and weaknesses of the research. Another popular approach was to discuss several factors which may affect the finding of one study of obedience or conformity. For example, discussion of variables affecting the findings from Asch's conformity studies (such as culture, type of task and group size) laid a sound basis for the assessment of the extent of predictive validity. Weak responses were overly descriptive of the research with little reference to an argument on the extent to which findings allow predictions.

Question 21

a) Most responses provided a clear and relevant explanation of the relationship between prejudice and discrimination. Weaker responses tended to provide definitions or examples of prejudice and discrimination with vague reference to their relationship.

b) Part b) proved to me more difficult. The tendency was to adequately describe two or more ways in which prejudice or discrimination can be reduced. However explicit discussion was not very well addressed. Often responses provided one way of reducing prejudice in detail while the other way was only outlined.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- What proves to be the biggest challenge for all candidates is displaying that they have moved from just memorizing facts and findings. Candidates should keep their responses as close to addressing the actual question as possible, which often they fail to do, choosing instead to list all facts that they know. Teachers should advise candidates to have a structured outline to their response. This could remind them to keep on track and avoid unnecessary detours in writing the response and it keeps the response focused on the specific question.
- Teachers should emphasize the relevance 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.
- When answering comparison questions, candidates should practise clearly stating the similarities and differences.

- 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 and understanding prevented many candidates from gaining high marks.
- Many candidates choose to describe rather than properly evaluate and discuss the given information. Many responses reflect that candidates have done a good job in memorizing relevant information but they are not confident enough to critically discuss this information. Candidates should be firmly guided during the delivery of the course in order to master the skills of discussion and evaluation of psychological research and theory:

    - **How to present psychological research**

      Frequently, candidates gave very long and general descriptions of research which left a feeling that they lacked knowledge and understanding of the question and instead chose this as a "safe" method in an attempt to acquire some marks.

      For the vast majority of questions a detailed, non-selective description of all aspects of the study (especially the procedural details) is not necessary. Candidates should be guided in their analysis of psychological theory and research. This will help them understand how to include the most relevant aspects from psychological studies and theories in order to clearly answer the specific question set.

    - **Relevant evaluation**

      For teachers, the main concern should be preparation of their students for appropriate evaluation of psychological theory and research. It is recommended that candidates get the necessary experience in tailoring their evaluative comments to respond to the question as set. Rather than just stating any consideration that may be relevant to a particular study, candidates should discuss how these considerations may make us re-evaluate the findings from the study, how they limit the application of the findings, how they may have benefited the researchers and made their theory stronger.

Higher level paper three

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 30

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

Case studies of one individual are too frequently dismissed by candidates as having no possible use for others since, it was claimed, findings must be unique to that individual. There is a need for a more thoughtful approach to case studies, especially in the way in which this research approach is valued so highly by psychologists and other scientists involved with behavioural investigations. In a distinctly different way candidates should not accept the notion that triangulation is a universal panacea that is able to resolve all of the difficulties that occur in psychological research.

These two extreme attitudes to aspects of research, either of universal rejection or universal acceptance, should be treated more sensitively and carefully. Several candidates appeared to lack sufficient depth of understanding of case studies and of triangulation and regrettably they were unable to be awarded good marks for either of the answers that included these concepts.

The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated

Many of the answers presented tended to be polarised towards either end of a continuum that extended from quite weak to excellent. This may well be the result of the levels of knowledge and understanding that candidates attain during discussion. It is evident from the content of answers that some areas of the programme appear not to have been studied in sufficient depth; this impression is reinforced by candidates' written statements on some scripts that claim that they have not covered a specific concept or term that is in the programme.

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

Question 1

Many candidates correctly suggested that since it is one individual that was the focus of the qualitative case study that not all of the findings from the investigation could be applied to others. Unfortunately this point was where several answers stopped, and although a few candidates managed to reiterate the point in different ways very few marks were gained for such superficial answers. Candidates should consider that the majority of case studies are likely to produce findings that have at least some resonance for others. For example when the first causes, diagnoses or cures for abnormal behaviour are discovered in the course of a case study these can become the stimulus for further research with other cases. This approach is often the driving force behind psychological investigations.

The phrase "…..Discuss the extent to which….." should suggest to candidates that there may be some elements of findings from single subject case studies that could be considered as applying to others. Most answers rightly suggested that case study findings could create the impetus for further research. This suggestion might well have earned more marks had it also offered examples from which discussion could have been stimulated.

Question 2

Participant observation was probably the best known method of those mentioned on the question paper. The differences between overt and covert participation was sometimes stated, but the large majority of answers assumed that covert observation was synonymous with the term 'participant observation.' Many candidates were so enthusiastic in relating their knowledge and understanding of this method that they lost sight of the aim of the question that called for a discussion of potential ethical problems associated with the use of participant observation. This was unfortunate since much effort was wasted in writing irrelevant material.

Despite this a majority of answers did include relevant considerations of ethical issues such as the use of deceit, the fact that participants could not always be given de-briefing, or that participants and researchers were demeaned by the lies that were employed during the course participant observation. The ethical defence offered was that valid findings were much more likely to occur if secrecy was maintained and several studies were mentioned in order to support this argument. There was very little discussion that sought to uphold a more open approach to participant observation.

Question 3

Candidates should not think that triangulation is a universal panacea that is capable of righting all of the difficulties of psychological research. As with each individual method of research, both advantages and disadvantages are also incorporated in triangulation itself. Nor should candidates claim that the term triangulation is used because it is derived from the use of three methods or three theories. The term is taken from the more ancient science of surveying or navigation where there is a necessity for accuracy by fixing points in three dimensions. The point is made here in the hope that fewer future candidates will avoid the slavish adherence that it must be three types of research method that are employed in order to claim that triangulation has been used.

Many candidates rightly claimed that triangulation does give some assurance that findings are more likely to be accepted as effective if findings are similar when they come from different research methods, times or theories. But, as some candidates correctly indicated, this claim is not acceptable in all cases. Similar findings may be derived from several different research approaches but this does not make necessarily make the findings correct. Changing qualitative interpretations of participants into numeric values and applying a statistical test does not make any findings more effective or more correct.

An interesting and relevant point was made by some candidates that using two or more research methods that investigate a similar phenomenon will increase the effort, time and cost of the total research involved. The overall effectiveness of the research can then be called into question. This point is accepted but it raises another concerning the effectiveness of findings in terms of their accuracy and correctness when only a single research method is employed.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

It is evident from the excellent quality of several of the examination responses that both teachers and candidates can and do work very effectively and produce an impressive level of work. For those whose candidates need to improve their standards, teachers would do well to read, absorb and implement the guidance provided in the Psychology Guide. These guidelines that have to be adhered to by question setters and examiners and as such their central importance for teachers is fundamental. From the comments made in the previous section it will be apparent that students need to do more than identify and describe the methods that are associated with each question. They also should be able to evaluate and discuss each method, including references to research studies that employ such methods.