

# **MARKSCHEME**

**November 2003**

**PSYCHOLOGY**

**Higher Level**

**Paper 3**

1. **Compare and contrast the use of structured with semi-structured interviews when conducting research in psychology.** **[10 marks]**

*Refer to the markbands for paper 3 when marking this question.*

Candidates should be aware that structured interviews require each question to be asked with the same precise wording and sequence of questions for each interviewee. No interpretation of meaning should be offered, no deviation from the order of questions on the interview schedule, and no further probing of answers should be made. Deviation from the schedule throws doubt upon the reliability of the investigation. Answers are often coded and analysed statistically and hence questions are formulated to elicit shorter, and sometimes one word, responses. Usually more questions are asked, but less information is elicited from each question.

Semi-structured interviews should still follow the same order of presentation and the same wording for the main questions in the interview schedule, but greater flexibility is allowed in through the use of sub-questions in response to the interviewee's answers. Explanations of wording can be offered when required. A greater degree of creativity is required by the interviewer since sub questions have to be thought out instantly in responding to the interviewee's replies to the main questions. Richer and thicker data is obtained by semi-structured interviews.

In order to gain high marks, an understanding of several of these points, or their relevant equivalents, should be made. Average responses are likely to include some of these points and to demonstrate that they know the difference between the two types of interviews. Weaker responses are likely to offer muddled answers or be uninformed of such differences.

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

*[10 marks]*

*Refer to the markbands for paper 3 when marking this question.*

Candidates should be explicit in how they interpret the word “validity”. Validity in this question refers to qualitative research where it has a different meaning compared to its use in more positivistic approaches associated with the experimental method. In the latter case much of the interpretation is applied to measurement, *e.g.* “face validity ensures that it measures what it is intended to measure”. If a candidate offers this type of definition, or other related meanings including construct or predictive validity then a maximum of *[2 marks]* should be awarded for this part of the question. Better answers will refer to ecological validity or aspects of validity that deal with building rapport, trust and openness between interviewer and interviewee, or ensure that questions are drawn from relevant literature and have been piloted. The choice of a sample as being fit for the purpose of the research, could also be used in responses. Several past psychological studies in attitudes, for example, were based on the responses of mainly paid, male undergraduates.

The question focuses on how validity is improved by using more than one method in the research process. Higher scoring responses may point to the fact that experiments can demonstrate that differences exist between two selected samples, but that such differences can not necessarily be explained by the research findings. Interviews, case studies or an ethnographic approach may well reveal reasons for such differences. Average responses are likely to include the meaning of validity and go some way to exploring its relationship to triangulation in this context. No marks should be awarded to answers that confuse reliability with validity.

3. Examine issues that arise when generalizing from *one* individual case study. [10 marks]

*Refer to the markbands for paper 3 when marking this question.*

It would be incorrect for responses to suggest that generalizing from an individual case study is not possible, since the general is always present in the particular (Arksey and Knight 1999) e.g. a case study of a single high school (Ball 1981) shows that some processes are at work that may or may not be at work in all high schools, but are likely to be present in many. High scoring responses may point out that the case study is not in itself a methodology, but a collection of methods that the researcher uses to investigate an entity such as a single person, a team, and event or an organization.

However some purists consider that an individual case study does not need to be justified in terms of generalization, and claim that it is sufficient for the narrative to speak for itself. They argue that there is sufficient intrinsic merit in a good quality case study for it to require no further justification. Good responses may justifiably claim that where generalization is required then using several individual case studies may reveal similar characteristics. The resulting analytic generalizations can be used to confirm or challenge assumptions made by existing theory. An additional issue that may be identified is that some researchers try to make claims for their research which are beyond what their research evidence can support. Conversely some researchers fail to help their readers by indicating how they might be able to generalize from their findings.

Weaker responses are likely to confine themselves to descriptions of case studies by Freud or Piaget, while more average responses may go beyond this stage to consider one or two of the implications for generalization that have been mentioned.

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