GCSE PSYCHOLOGY

8182/1: Paper One Cognition and behaviour
Report on the Examination

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General comments

There were many impressive scripts in this first sitting of GCSE Psychology Paper 1 with students being able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of relevant material, indicating effective teaching and learning – particularly in the new topic areas of Perception and Development. The overall performance suggested that many students had prepared well for this examination. There were relatively few scripts with unanswered questions and little evidence that students had run out of time. However, there were also some scripts that reflected a failure to apply some straightforward techniques to the examination – for example, where required, students should link their answers to the context of the stem. A significant number of responses were not contextualised and therefore failed to gain full credit.

There were a few questions that challenged students with examples of responses that were not clearly related to the questions set in each section. This indicated that students do need to ensure that they read the questions and any stem material carefully if they are to provide answers that directly address the requirements of the question. Particular attention should be paid to the command words used. Having said that, the paper allowed more able students to show their ability through the higher-order skills of application to stems, and extended and elaborated evaluation. Questions that discriminated best were questions 5, 10, 13, 17 and 18; with question 6 proving to be particularly challenging for many/most students. In this question, many students failed to notice that the second part of the question was about evaluating something different to what they had been asked to describe in the first part. Teachers need to be aware of this type of question that is different to those asked on the legacy specification and prepare students accordingly.

Many answers suffered because students did not focus purely on what the question was asking and time was often wasted on general pre-prepared but irrelevant description. For example in question 5, many students gave lengthy description of the procedures of Bartlett's original study. Students should take time to read the specific demands of each question carefully, rather than simply writing everything they know about the topic. For example, 'outline' questions do not require evaluative material and 'evaluate' questions do not require descriptive material. This was noticed particularly in questions 5, 12, and 17.

Students should use the marks available as a guide to how much they need to write and tailor their answer to suit the expectations. Answering a three-mark question requires more than one brief point but not two sides of material, as was seen far too often in questions 11.2 and 22.2.

Responses to questions involving elements of research methods suggested that many students had limited practical experience of the procedures involved in designing and conducting a study. In order to answer these questions effectively, it is important that students gain such practical experience as part of their course. This was an issue across both papers this year, as well as a long standing issue on the legacy specification.

The majority of students wrote their responses to questions clearly and in the allocated space provided. However, it is important to remind students that these papers are marked online and examiners do not see whole scripts. Examiners will only see material that is written on the lines provided for answering a particular question - they will not see writing in the margins or answers written in the space belonging to another question. Students who need to write more than the given

space allows should use additional pages and these will be matched with the response and marked as a complete answer.

It is also important that students use black ink or a black ball-point pen as instructed; some students did not use the correct pen, resulting in faint writing which was sometimes difficult to read. Poor handwriting was an issue on some scripts with some being barely legible, which posed a particular challenge for examiners. In such cases, teachers would do well to make special arrangements to ensure that their students are not disadvantaged. Students should also be reminded of the need to write clearly, using paragraphs for longer answers.

Section A: Memory

Question 1

This question was answered well, with almost three-quarters of students identifying the correct answer. However, some struggled with the instructions about how to indicate their choice of response in the appropriate mark box and even more with how to amend their choices correctly. It would be beneficial for centres to ensure their students have the opportunity to practice what to do before the exam.

Question 2

Many students found this question challenging, with a significant number failing to correctly identify both statements about the multi-store model of memory.

Question 3

This question was generally answered well, with over half of answers receiving two marks. Most referred to capacity and duration, with encoding less frequently referred to. A number of students stated that long term memory is split into 'types', and correctly named them; it was pleasing to see a breadth of knowledge. However, there were several responses that incorrectly referred to the duration of long term memory as being 'permanent'.

Question 4.1

Most students engaged with the stem, with a few demonstrating detailed understanding of how context can affect memory, often mentioning cues/triggers. However, many could not grasp what the question was asking, often answering in terms of 'STM only lasts 8 seconds so the memory of toothpaste had disappeared by the time Samir arrived at the bathroom' or 'Samir had not rehearsed the information because he was too busy thinking about his holiday'. Over a third of responses gained no marks, with a small percentage gaining full marks.

Question 4.2

Many students knew that there was a link between Samir's old memory of driving on the left and his new learning of driving on the right, but fewer students could explain this in terms of the two memories causing confusion. Sadly, there was often no reference to the stem, with nearly half of students accessing just one of the two available marks; around a quarter of responses gained full marks. A few students were able to correctly refer to Samir experiencing proactive interference which, despite not being on the specification , is still relevant and could be still be given full credit.

Question 5

This question proved to be a good discriminator between those students who were able to evaluate the theory and those who were only able to describe a study. Stronger answers referred to the reconstruction of memories in eyewitness testimony, and the supporting evidence from 'War of the Ghosts'. Unfortunately, many students chose to evaluate – or simply describe – Bartlett's study, and thus received few, if any, marks.

Question 6

Most students attempted this question and were able to provide accurate and detailed descriptions of the study. Good understanding of the primacy and recency effect and Murdock's procedure was frequently demonstrated. Here, the synoptic element of this question was poorly answered with Murdoch's study often being evaluated (with no reference to the research method of a laboratory experiment) as opposed to the requirements of the question. Many responses confused research methods with experimental designs, and attempted to evaluate experimental designs. Sampling problems were also frequently discussed. However, there were also some students who demonstrated a very good understanding of laboratory experiments and were able to give an effective evaluation, with some answers achieving level 2 or above.

Section B: Perception

Question 7

This multiple-choice question proved to be more challenging than anticipated, with only just over half of the responses gaining the mark.

Question 8

This question was not well answered, with under half of responses failing to gain the mark. Many students referred to 'interpreting information' or 'making sense of information' and thus gained no credit. Students do need to be able to define the key terms in order to gain marks in this type of question.

Question 9

Over half of the students were able to name two monocular depth cues and gained full marks, although a small number incorrectly referred to binocular cues, which were not creditworthy.

Question 10

Good knowledge of Gregory's theory was displayed by many students, but very few were able to explain the Ponzo illusion with accuracy in the context of the constructivist theory. Often, appropriate terminology was included as part of the answer but with no real understanding; many responses simply described the illusion. As a result, few responses gained the full 4 marks.

Question 11.1

Well over half of the students correctly identified the data as quantitative and/or primary alongside an appropriate explanation. However, some students evaluated quantitative data whilst others described what the data represented, rather than the *type* of data shown in the table. Again,

students need to be reminded to use the number of marks available for a question as a guide to the amount that needs to be written as an answer.

Question 11.2

Some students answered this question well, explaining the results in terms of the difference in the number of presents being due to the levels of excitement before and after Christmas. However, many displayed muddled understanding, suggesting that less presents were drawn after Christmas because the children had received less presents than expected so the number drawn was 'more realistic'. Nevertheless, almost half of students gained full marks for this question.

Question 12

Some responses were excellent – well above what was required for 6 marks. The key discriminator in this question was the use of specialist terminology. Better answers referred to motion parallax, optical flow and texture gradient; students who included affordances in their answer showed very good understanding. However, many answers included an evaluation of Gregory which was not creditworthy; some responses provided a detailed description of the 'visual cliff' study, which did not add anything to the answer.

Question 13

Students who chose to design a study based on Gilchrist and Nesberg generally answered well, but many did not receive a mark above 4 because the choice of experimental design was not justified and there was no reference to the data collected. Very few answers gained the full 6 marks for this question. Responses to this question suggested that many students had limited practical experience of designing and carrying out research; in order for these skills to be developed, it is important that students are given the opportunity to carry out practical experience as part of their course. Students who tried to be innovative mostly failed to gain many marks, because the task did not meet the criteria of a 'perception' study. However, it was pleasing to see that the majority of answers included both conditions of the IV when referring to the expected results.

Section C: Development

Question 14

Almost two-thirds of students answered this question correctly, although once again some struggled with the instructions about how to indicate their choice of response in the appropriate mark box.

Question 15.1

This question was answered rather poorly, with only some responses gaining the one available mark. Many students referred to the way different people learn, or how people learn, and struggled to give a definition that didn't include the word 'learn'. Again, students do need to be able to correctly define the key terms in order to gain marks in this type of question.

Question 15.2

Almost all students gained at least 2 marks for this question, with over two-thirds achieving level 2. The answers which correctly applied their knowledge, mentioning 'key dates in history' and 'history

text books', were able to access more marks. Very few answered this incorrectly; those who did wrote about watching videos without any link to listening/verbalising.

Question 16

Students seemed to enjoy this question, and over a third gained a mark in level 3. Many students were able to match Ella and Jake to the correct developmental stage according to Piaget, describing the behaviour well in terms of egocentrism (or for Ella, lack of egocentrism). Some however, focused on conservation, therefore displaying muddled knowledge and application. Many students began their answer by unnecessarily naming and describing all four of Piaget's stages; reading the question carefully could have avoided this and saved valuable time. In general, though, this question was answered well.

Question 17

Many students provided relevant evaluation in this question with several being aware, for example, that Piaget may have underestimated children's abilities, and used critical research to illustrate their point. However, several students did not gain any credit, because of either misreading or misunderstanding the question, and simply described Piaget's theory or evaluated his studies with no link to the theory. Students need to be reminded to pay particular attention to the command word(s) in the question.

Question 18

This question proved to be a challenge for the majority of students. Most were not able to describe Willingham's learning theory, with many answers incorrectly focusing on his research into the effects of praise, of self-regulation, and on dyslexia. Very few students provided relevant or correct evaluation; very few students gained a level 3 mark for this question. Teachers should give careful consideration to focusing on Willingham's *learning* theory with their students, as it is this area of Willingham's research that is included in the specification.

Section D: Research Methods

Question 19.1

Most students were able to draw a frequency table with rows and columns, with appropriate headings and behaviour categories; over half gained the full four marks. Of those students who could not sketch a frequency table, many drew a variety of graphs or tally charts – but credit was awarded for identifying two appropriate categories of behaviour. Several answers, however, incorrectly included 'making phone calls' as one of their two categories.

Question 19.2

This question proved to be challenging, with very few students gaining both marks. Some answers mentioned 'having more people observing', but failed to mention the need to compare their data. There were several incorrect responses that suggested that 'sitting in different areas of the cafe' or 'observing people at different times of day' would ensure high inter-observer reliability. Students who displayed understanding often mentioned 'checking or comparing data' or using video cameras to 'check'.

Question 20.1

Whilst there were some very good answers, a common error was to name and describe ethical issues, and these responses gained no marks.

Question 20.2

This question was generally answered well, with nearly half of students gaining both marks. Most knew that the researcher would need to approach the participants *after* the observation to debrief and ask for permission to use their data, but some answers lacked the necessary detail to gain full marks.

Question 21

It was pleasing to see that almost half of all students gained full marks for an operationalised hypothesis, and nearly a quarter gained one mark. However, some responses were written as an aim or a statement of results (i.e. there was …) rather than a testable statement.

Question 22.1

This question proved to be more challenging than expected, with just over a quarter of answers gaining the 1 mark available. Most students demonstrated a basic understanding, but either did not refer to the effect of an extraneous variable on the dependent variable, or the answer lacked the necessary clarity to be awarded credit.

Question 22.2

Many responses suggested that students were not clear on what they were being asked to do in this question. Although an appropriate extraneous variable was often identified, several students suggested ways in which it could be *dealt* with, rather than how it may affect the results. Most students, who identified 'age' as an extraneous variable, easily gained the three marks available.

Question 23

Most students could outline a problem that might occur when using a questionnaire. However, in many cases, no link was made to the study/phone use, with the result that over half of students did not gain the second mark. Again, students must be reminded to read the question carefully, and refer to the stem when this is appropriate to the requirements of the question.

Question 24

This question was generally answered well, with almost two-thirds of students gaining two marks or above. The most common error was a missing suitable title, despite the need for it being clearly requested. Students who did provide a title often did not gain the mark for it, due to the 'mean/average' not being referred to. Several students drew a histogram, and therefore did not gain the mark for the correct plotting of the results.

Question 25.1

It was pleasing to see that a significant number of students were able to calculate both ranges correctly, gaining both marks. Sadly, basic arithmetic calculations let a few students down, with some students gaining just 1 mark because of this.

Question 25.2

Students generally found this question difficult. Many responses demonstrated a poor understanding of what the range shows, and were therefore unable to draw an appropriate conclusion. Several thought that a higher range for males meant that males spent longer on the phone, and many responses simply restated the data calculated in question 25.1. Some students did answer this question correctly though, stating that the spread/variation of scores is larger for males because the range is higher.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.