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# A-LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY

7182/1 Introductory Topics in Psychology  
Report on the Examination

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## **General**

Overall, it appeared that many students managed their time well and attempted most questions on the paper. Typically, students were able to cite an abundance of knowledge and understanding in many areas. However, in several areas they tended to cite an excess of detail that was not always necessary eg lengthy descriptions of studies for questions that required application of knowledge to the scenario. Students are reminded they must read all questions carefully and be mindful of the number of marks available for each question.

On occasion, in lengthy essay questions key assessment objectives were completely missing, which significantly impacted students' marks. Understanding the commands of questions remains a clear area where students can improve their attainment. In places, a significant minority of students misunderstood what the questions were asking for. They answered with material from a different area of the specification eg with question 3 on minority influence a significant number of students gave a response centred around conformity in general, which struggled to score any marks.

## **Section A - Social Influence**

### **Question 1**

This was a challenging question that made many students carefully consider their knowledge of research methodology. Over 70% of students were able to score marks in this question and the most common incorrect response given was option C (laboratory experiment).

### **Question 2**

Many students were able to score well in this question, with a variety of knowledge being suitable to apply to the question. Over 60% of students scored four or more marks. Occasionally students cited conformity knowledge, but this was often framed around the scenario and was able to score some marks. A minority of students made limited use of dispositional factors eg locus of control and/or a lack of authoritarian personality. However, this was not done as effectively as the abundance of situational factors that matched the scenario more clearly.

A significant minority of responses revolved around common sense type answers with minimal psychological knowledge, as well as many responses that did not match their explanation to the correct theory eg lack of proximity and legitimacy of authority.

### **Question 3**

Most students were able to access this question effectively, with many making effective use of research studies. The most popular and effective pieces of research used here were Moscovici's work on consistency and Nemeth and Brilmayar's work on flexibility. Other pieces of research that were useful to this question included Wood's meta-analysis on consistency and minority influence, as well as Martin's research outlining deeper thinking and minority perspectives. The depth provided in these pieces of research varied, but many students were able to cite accurate detail which was awarded higher marks.

The discussion part of the question was completed less effectively. Students often made very generic comments about the artificiality of the research and ethical implications. However, stronger responses tended to explicitly connect these points with the question. They considered what minority influence looks like in the real world in contrast to laboratory-based research. To gain

higher marks, students need to remember to relate their evaluations of studies back to the question.

In addition, there was some effective use of real-life examples such as women's rights movements and the civil rights movements, as well as considering some practical applications of minority influence research.

## **Section B – Memory**

### **Question 4**

Many students were able to answer this question well and had a clear understanding of what is meant by 'standardisation,' with over 60% scoring marks on this question. Students were also able to make a range of suitable suggestions about how standardisation could have been applied to the scenario.

### **Question 5**

Students generally had difficulty with this question and often did not acknowledge the use of 'chance' in the setting up of an investigation. Many students confused the term 'randomisation' with random sampling, whereas others mistakenly used tautology in their response. It is apparent that students need to understand the distinction between random sampling and randomisation much more clearly.

The second part of the question was answered more effectively. Many students suggested the use of random allocation of participants, or for the order of words in the wordlist to be decided randomly.

### **Question 6**

A variety of responses were seen with this question. Some students completely understood the results of the experiment and could explain them in the context of the multi-store model. Knowledge of the primacy and recency effects was often put to good use, but students were able to score maximum marks without this knowledge. Some responses showed various levels of confusion. Some students assumed all the results of both groups could be solely explained by short term memory, whereas some students wrongfully responded with knowledge of the working memory model. In addition, further confusion was seen with students citing the sensory register to explain the results of the study.

### **Question 7**

Students appeared well prepared for this question and were able to cite a variety of research studies and theory to gain significant credit. The mark scheme allowed students to respond with either theory and/or research and many were able to write a significant amount for this question. The most popular and effective material used included the Yerkes-Dodson law, Johnson and Scott's research as well as Yuille and Cutshall's real life research. Many students were able to successfully discuss the contradictory findings of research into this area in relation to the level of anxiety experienced. However, some answers lost focus and described research into misleading information and/or post event discussion.

Discussion commentary was more effective than that seen in question 3, with students often citing further evidence, such as Pickle's contradictory research into the element of surprise as well as

some real-life applications of research. Over 40% of students were able to gain level 3 marks or higher in this question.

## **Section C - Attachment**

### **Question 8**

Many students were able to complete impressive and focused responses to this question. Often students cited classical and operant conditioning explanations of attachment, yet rarely did they mention Social Learning Theory. Students often utilised the correct terminology from behaviourism to explain attachment, which was often accompanied by a small appropriate diagram. Students were clearly well prepared for this area of the specification.

A very small minority of students described learning theory without any reference to attachment, which often resulted in no marks.

### **Question 9**

Although this type of question had not been seen before, many students were able to answer accurately with detail. Students were able to capture key components of the research in a concise way, often citing accurate percentages of attachment types. The best responses incorporated small amounts of procedural knowledge as well as several findings for the investigation. On occasion students confused the number of studies and/or countries that were included in this meta-analysis, as well as confusing the types of insecure attachments which were more common in specific countries.

Students ought to be able to acknowledge that the most common attachment type in all countries is secure, as on occasion students were suggesting that either avoidant or resistant attachment types were the 'most common' in some countries. This misunderstanding can easily be corrected.

### **Question 10**

It appeared that students were well prepared for this question with many giving effective and detailed responses about Bowlby's maternal deprivation hypothesis. This typically centred around the risks of missing the critical period, documented effects of maternal deprivation and accumulated separation from the mother figure. Further effective use of aspects of Bowlby's work that were related to the consequences of maternal deprivation included an impaired internal working model and the continuity hypothesis. All the above was suitable to apply to the scenario and students typically completed this effectively.

The discussion element of the question was also answered in an impressive manner. Useful commentary included various research evidence such as the use of Bowlby's 44 juvenile thieves, Rutter's work with Romanian orphans as well as contradictory evidence eg Koluchova's work with the Czech twins. Furthermore, effective comments also included the socially sensitive nature of the maternal deprivation hypothesis and the multiple practical applications to come out of this work.

On occasion, some students lost focus on the question and gave excessive details of research. This clearly impacted the time they had to complete the question. Students must always keep the wording of the questions in mind and make greater attempts to summarise research in a more concise manner.

## **Section D - Psychopathology**

### **Question 11**

This question saw a variety of responses from students. Although many students were able to outline the definition effectively, there was some considerable overlap with other definitions of abnormality, which restricted students' marks. The application to the scenario was generally completed very well, with students often suggesting the specific criteria related to Dave's poor mental health. Effective use was made of resistance to stress, positive self-attitudes, and accurate perception of reality.

### **Question 12**

Lots of accurate and detailed responses were given to this question. Students often cited well-learned points that related explicitly to failure to function adequately. However, students must avoid making generic evaluative comments that relate to all definitions of abnormality. For instance, many responses centred around how the definition is culturally biased, but then failed to make clear links to how this specific definition suffers from this problem. Higher marks could have been gained by making explicit links to the failure to function adequately definition eg suggesting how violating moral standards is likely to vary between cultures.

### **Question 13**

Overall, this question was answered poorly by most students, despite content analysis being a named research method on the specification. A significant minority of students described thematic analysis instead of content analysis. Students must be able to outline what a content analysis entails and understand the distinct differences between this and thematic analysis.

### **Question 14**

Students who understood what is meant by a content analysis were able to score well, applying their knowledge to the scenario of analysing the diary extracts. A small minority of students who did not understand content analysis struggled to score marks.

### **Question 15**

Students found this question difficult and often misinterpreted its meaning. The students were asked to suggest how the reliability of the content analysis could be improved. Instead, many responses focused on how reliability can be assessed. In addition, many did not read the information carefully. They did not acknowledge that two researchers were already involved in the analyses of the diary extracts, meaning that marks could not be gained for suggesting using an additional researcher.

### **Question 16**

Most students effectively completed this short essay question, with almost 60% of students gaining level 3 marks or higher. Many were able to competently outline the three parts to Ellis's ABC model of depression and extract the relevant application points to match some parts. More detailed responses often incorporated further examples of irrational beliefs eg utopianism and musterbatory thoughts. Likewise, students were able to provide some notable discussion points, typically making effective use of: REBT/ CBT as a practical application, problems of explaining endogenous

depression as well as citing alternative explanations of depression that Ellis's model does not consider. In some cases, students understandably gave some short responses (at the end of this paper), but they still managed to address all three assessment objectives.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.