

Examiners' Report January 2007

GCE

GCE Psychology (8555/9555)

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Unit 6761-01

General Comments

Candidates seemed to find this paper slightly harder than previous years, which is surprising as most of the questions were similar if not the same as questions asked in previous exams. The describe/outline questions tended to be answered better than other questions, though in many cases candidates did not give enough information to gain full marks. It will help candidates if they look at the marks awarded per question and use the marks as a guide for how many points they should be making for that answer. This year, unlike in previous years, there was no application question, which required the candidates to make use of a small passage of text in their answer.

Evaluation again seems to be a problem for a large number of candidates. Many candidates are using evaluative comments without explanation, eg the results can't be generalised without explaining why they can't be generalised. Candidates also felt the need to describe theories when the question was just asking them to evaluate, so not answering the question, which led to limited marks and the candidates wasting their time.

Most candidates seemed to manage their time well and there were fewer incidents of Q6 not being attempted. Candidates used extra sheets of paper instead of using the blank pages in the paper. Some candidates still use faint pens which makes it very difficult to read the answers on some scripts and delays the marking of that script. Candidates to be reminded to use dark black or blue pens, preferably black so that this problem can be avoided.

Question 1.

Q1(a) Most candidates managed to score full marks for this. Those that didn't gain full marks often got the stages mixed up, or just wrote concrete without operational etc after it.

Q1(b) The most popular stages described were the sensorimotor stage and the pre-operational stage. Those who described the pre-operational stage usually focussed on egocentrism and conservation. Those who described the formal operational stage rarely gained full marks as their answers lacked sufficient detail. Some candidates who described the sensorimotor stage talked about a lack of object permanence in this stage rather than the development of object permanence. Some candidates did confuse the features of the stage they had chosen to describe, especially when describing the concrete and formal operational stages. A small minority of candidates confused Piaget's stages with those of Freud.

Q1(c) The answers to this question were generally poor with very few candidates gaining full marks. A lot of candidates felt they had to describe Piaget's theory in full when the question asked them to evaluate and so gained few if any marks. Most candidates used alternative studies such as McGarrigle and Donaldson as evaluative points. A lot of candidates didn't provide enough detail whilst others used terms without explaining them, eg "It's not ecologically valid." There were a lot of vague general evaluation points that could have related to any theory or study. Candidates should be reminded that any points made should be specifically applied to the theory or study they are evaluating.

Question 2.

Q2(a) Most candidates were able to answer this well, giving two key assumptions and explaining them often through the use of a relevant example. A minority of candidates didn't gain any marks because they tended to describe two theories from the social approach eg the agentic theory, which is not what the question was asking for.

Q2(c) The candidates' answers to this question tended to be polarised, candidates either gave excellent answers with good use of examples or they tended to give poor answers with a lot of description of the method rather than evaluation. When the question asks for an evaluation the candidates do not need to give any description in their answer. Most candidates mentioned ecological validity, but a lot of candidates lost marks by making incorrect statements eg "There is no control over extraneous variables" when some extraneous variables may be controlled. Some candidates also fail to understand that not all field experiments are covert and so make incorrect statements again eg "Participants never give consent".

Question 3.

Q3(a) This question tended to be poorly answered, though most candidates understood the question and managed to gain at least one mark. Some responses needed more depth to them to gain full marks and a lot of answers described cases studies of brain-damaged patients without offering much evaluation. There were a lot of general evaluation comments about cases studies in general without reference to brain-damaged patients so restricting the candidates' marks. Some candidates gave a prolonged discussion of a specific case study rather than describing the method.

Q3(b) The vast majority of candidates described laboratory experiments, there was generally a good understanding of the IV and DV and cause and effect. There was some lack of detail so candidates would say it took place in a controlled environment without going into more detail. Some candidates named longitudinal studies but then went on to describe case studies so couldn't gain any marks. Others chose to describe a specific laboratory experiment rather than describing the method, and some evaluated a method rather than describe it.

Q3(c) This was generally answered very well. A minority of candidates named theories of forgetting rather than memory, and some just named long term memory and short term memory as their two theories.

Q3(d) the multi-store model was the most common theory picked followed by levels of processing then reconstructive memory. A few candidates chose a theory of forgetting rather than memory, however this was not as frequent as in previous years. A large number of candidates described the theory and only offered an evaluation point at the end of their description. This was not required and gained them no marks for the description as the question specifically asked the candidates to evaluate. The stronger candidates backed up their answers with good examples of supporting and contradictory research evidence. However, many didn't gain the marks as they simply referenced a study and offered no explanation as to why it supported or contradicted the chosen theory. Again a large number of candidates offered general evaluative terms without any explanation with reference to the theory of memory.

Question 4.

Q4(a) Most candidates gained full marks. The most common incorrect answer was social learning.

Q4(b) The most common answers were the authoritarian personality and realistic conflict. Those who chose the authoritarian personality often gave informative answers. A lot of candidates described social identity theory, which was specifically excluded in the question, or went on to relate their answers to in groups and out groups. A large minority of candidates described stereotyping as their theory of prejudice, when in fact all theories of prejudice include some stereotyping.

Q4(c) Candidates tended to focus on education, common goals or contact between groups. Candidates offered research as an example of how it worked but unfortunately again a lot of candidates just mentioned a study without talking about the result of how it showed the reduction of prejudice.

Q4(d) This was poorly answered with a lot of candidates failing to understand the requirements of the question. A lot of candidates described more ways to reduce prejudice rather than evaluating them. Others tended to focus on the theory they had described in part c and so were unable to think of enough evaluation points. Others wrote general answers about why it is a good idea to reduce prejudice. Some candidates did attempt to use research to support what they were saying, though not many used more than one piece of research. Again a lot of candidates only mentioned the name of the research without using the results or conclusion to state how it supports a particular theory.

Question 5.

Q5(a)(i) Most candidates were able to name an appropriate study. The most popular studies were the 3 mountains study and the naughty teddy study. Marks were lost by not being specific enough eg saying conservation study without specifically saying which one. A small minority of candidates named a cognitive study, which then impacted on the marks for the rest of this question.

Q5(a)(ii) Most candidates gained at least 2 marks for describing the method of the study. Some candidates who described the naughty teddy study failed to mention there was a Piagetian condition as well.

Q5(a)(iii) A considerable number of candidates failed to give accurate detail in their answers. eg they stated that all children in the 3 mountains study were egocentric when in fact only the pre-operational children were. Therefore they failed to gain the marks

Q5(b) Nearly all the candidates attempted some evaluation of their chosen study and gained some marks. The evaluation of the study tended to be better than the evaluations earlier in the paper. A lot of candidates focussed on methodological problems and used the results of other studies in their evaluation. However, there are still a large minority of candidates who are just putting down terms eg "it can't be generalised" and not applying those terms to the study.

Question 6.

Those candidates who focussed on one study generally talked about Loftus and Palmer. Those who looked at a variety of factors focussed on leading question weapon focus and reconstructive memory. Candidates tended to answer this question well, with a lot of candidates gaining all the AO1 marks. However evaluation was not as well tackled, though those who focussed on one study tended to do better at the evaluation part of their answer. Some candidates tried to evaluate eyewitness testimony saying why it was good rather than evaluating research on eyewitness testimony. A few candidates gave anecdotal examples or common sense answers.

Unit 6762-01

General Comments

It's pleasing to note that candidates and centres are showing continual improvements for questions with specific requirements and responding well to issues raised on previous examiner reports. There are fewer instances of candidates using text language in answers, there is less confusion between key assumptions and key applications and even rarer cases of any pre-prepared answers from candidates.

The paper was on a par with previous papers and many candidates performed very well with familiar practised questions. There were however a greater number of questions that acted as discriminators between strong and weaker candidates. Some of these were rather surprising; Q1a and Q3a are prime examples here. Both are written as straight forward 'matching' questions which over the years give the majority of candidates a chance to pick up marks. Only the better candidates took up this opportunity in this paper. Q1c and Q4 were based around methodology and this area has consistently been an excellent discriminator, it proved to be again.

Evaluation still remains a problem for the majority of candidates and this was clear in some of the application questions with an AO2 requirement. When it came to anything other than describe or outline, candidates in the main struggled. This is not to detract from candidates outstanding AO1 skills, and knowledge and understanding continue to get stronger every year.

Candidates need to be reminded to make sure they do read the short stimulus material given for certain questions. A firm understanding of these will make questions more accessible. Q5 being a prime example where most candidates just saw the terms 'behavioural techniques' and 'learning approach' and thus produced pre-prepared answers on behaviour modification/therapy. Many neglected to focus on altering children's behaviour as the question required because of this.

Once again, most candidates timed their answers appropriately and completed all of the questions, with just a few running out of time/not attempting certain questions.

A growing problem is the difficulty in reading scripts from candidates who have written in pencil or used faint pens. These do not show up well on the computer screen at all. Candidates need to be reminded to use dark blue or black pens as to avoid any delay in marking and hence awarding of grades.

Question 1

A surprising number of candidates did not get full marks in part (a). Though most knew the correct description for the Id, they were often incorrect when describing the other two parts of personality.

In part (b) most candidates focused on the psychodynamic approach rather than case studies in general, which was pleasing, though there were marks for general points as well. Quite a few candidates just described specific case studies such as little Hans or Anna O without any other creditable description. Some evaluated half way through their answer, rather than just describing as the question required, which unfortunately meant they did not gain marks and wasted valuable time. Better answers tended to refer to psychodynamic principles such as analysis or interpretation of symbols within the context of the case study method. These candidates were however still also able to focus on the question and not drift off into a pure description of analysis of symbols.

Answers for part (c) were generally a bit vague and offered little in the way of concrete responses so only a few responses got full marks. Quite a few candidates described the analysis of symbols for far too long and in too much detail before even attempting to evaluate as the question required. Many of those who did evaluate mentioned the issue of subjectivity and some considered the idea of lack of measurable aspects so lack of scientific testing, though they did not make that point well. Often these answers described dreaming and became irrelevant e.g. discussing the manifest and latent content of dreams. There were relatively few answers that referred to the use of symbol analysis in therapy.

Question 2

In part (a) most candidates chose to mention the effect of the environment, though quite a few did not elaborate, so gained only 1 mark. Those who did evaluate tended to get only one more mark and not the third mark, though there were exceptions. Others focused on human and animal similarities in learning and the stimulus - response approach to behaviour. Many were able to access the identification mark but only better responses got the other two elaboration marks.

In part (b) it was pleasing to note very few candidates mentioning inappropriate studies such as Vygotsky or Little Hans. The main issue was with identifying a specific study as many mentioned Bandura without being specific and some mentioned Skinner without being specific. Little Albert was mentioned very often, which was a suitable answer, as was Pavlov.

Part (c) was well answered with the main issue again being if Bandura (in general) was the identified study, and then the procedure tended to be general and non-specific so did not gain full marks. Little Albert usually meant getting full marks, as did Pavlov. Bandura studies were most popular followed closely by Little Albert and then Pavlov. With Pavlov's study most answers were very general and tended to be a general outline of classical conditioning using the dogs as an example. Only a few candidates were specific about the procedure mentioning things such as restraining apparatus or that saliva was measured by inserting tubes into salivary glands. Many Bandura descriptions were hybrids or conflagration of more than one study so not many gained full marks.

Most candidates got maximum marks for part (d). However some candidates wrote about the aim and method also therefore wasting time that should have been spent elsewhere on the paper. Similar problems arose with Bandura not being specifically identified as a study, and then results were general as well (such as that children modeled the aggression, which

gained just one mark not two marks). Candidates need to expand on this. Watson & Rayner was described well though there was tendency for some candidates to include evaluative comments. Better candidates who chose Bandura included some excellent detail in the findings.

Part (e) was well answered in general highlighting this is taught very well (many responses went well beyond the four marks available). The majority of candidates gave detailed answers with many taking the ARRM approach. Only a few did not elaborate much more beyond stating the obvious. A minority decided to re-word the question to write about Classical or Operant Conditioning but even then were not able to make the distinction. Most candidates know the mechanisms of social learning and could explain those using appropriate examples - though some tended to list. Worryingly some candidates were confusing the social approach with social learning theory. A number of candidates wrote about behaviour therapy for alcoholics or the token economy programme in prisons.

There were a lot of weak answers for part (f) with many candidates showing a real lack of evaluation. Responses tended to be explanation of social learning not an evaluation. *"It explains that"* were plentiful and did not warrant marks as it was really A01. Candidates tended to say that it showed that people do model on others, which is what the theory says, so that is not an evaluation of it. Those who gained marks often gave Bandura as evidence for modeling. However when Bandura's studies are criticised, the criticism needs to be both accurate and detailed - for example, the studies tended to match the participants for aggression before the study, so any criticism must take this into account. One mark could be gained by saying that there are other explanations (such as genes). There were too many cases of candidates trying to use face validity without ever mentioning the term or really getting to grips with it in an appropriate manner.

Question 3

In part (a) the majority of candidates got all three marks, with both subconscious and preconscious being credited for the central part. Most had unconscious as appropriate, not subconscious there, so they gained marks. Only a minority of candidates spelt the terms correctly, though marks were generally still awarded. A handful gave id, ego, and superego which were not appropriate. There were still some instances where weaker candidate's usage of non -Freudian terminology proved worrying.

In part (b) for the features of the three stages the phallic stage was clearly described the best as candidates wrote about the Oedipus complex. For the oral and anal stage there were many who gained one mark for mentioning some sort of focus on the relevant area, however, few mentioned the focus of pleasure (though marks were given) and few went any further to get the second mark, such as mentioning the id for the oral stage. Unfortunately too many candidates said how adults if fixated would behave, but this was not actually describing the stage itself. Others accessed easy marks for erogenous zones. There were much fewer instances of candidates getting features of each stage mixed up which was pleasing, but sadly this was countered by the sheer volume who described personality resulting from fixation.

Most candidates were able to identify at least one weakness in part (c) though many could not explain the weakness for the second mark. Few gained full marks. It seemed that candidates did know some weaknesses of Freud's theory, though did not express them well. For example, if they said it was unscientific, they said there was no evidence rather than explaining how the concepts are hard to measure, or how there is little experimental evidence. A significant number mentioned the focus on sex, and how this was a weakness, but they would need to justify this claim. Others said that it does not go beyond puberty, which gained one mark but tended not to gain full marks as they did not really say why this was a weakness. There was often a discussion about Freud's stages being too rigid, there

appeared to be some confusion with an evaluative comment that could be made about Piaget. Once again a handful of candidates did not read the question at all and highlighted strengths of the theory.

Question 4

In part (ai) the majority of candidates successfully identified the method, with some giving animal studies and most giving lesioning. Real minorities were unable to get credit; these candidates tended to identify longitudinal or cross - sectional studies for example.

In part (aii) a few candidates described the method, but most evaluated as appropriate. However, some evaluation was general such as hurting animals, which was not appropriate. If answers focus on ethics and using animals they must look at guidelines being broken rather than saying (as many did) that it was cruel. Another general comment that is not successful is saying that the method cannot be done on humans as either it is not done or it is done for a reason and within guidelines (or is a naturally occurring situation). Evaluation must be specific. Quite a few evaluated by saying lesioning shows the function of a part of the brain, which is not really an evaluation point unless they say and it does this better than an EEG, or something similar. Also if candidates say that it is an invasive method, they need to say why that is bad or compare it with another method such as an EEG. So candidates did gain marks in general but few gained full marks. Others tried to use technical terms such as reliability and generalisability but without any real thought or application and so needed to target their answers better.

In part (bi) there were a significant number of candidates who described scanning - and others where it seemed that they were describing scanning, but the answer was not clear. Other responses were too general and did not actually describe the method (such as fixing electrodes to the head). Many gained a mark by saying how it was used in the sense of where and when it was used (such as when looking at sleep patterns) and some outlined a study that used an EEG, where they could also gain marks. However, actually describing the procedure involved in the method was not frequently done, and if done, was not done in depth. Quite a few candidates mentioned the EOG as well as the EEG as they mentioned fixing electrodes to the eyes - which was okay usually as the rest of the answer was appropriate. Some candidates got EEG and ECT mixed up. Some responses went into great detail about different types of brain waves and tended to get off the point a bit. Many gave examples of how EEG has been used in experiments which was appropriate up to a point but some answers tended to lose focus and became irrelevant. Better answers did focus on the procedure as used in the Physiological approach and made good use of studies such as Dement and Kleitman to highlight this.

Most candidates gained one mark out of the two available for part (bii) if they gained marks at all. They tended to give one point such as that the method is non-invasive, but without saying more or making the point well, and tended to get one mark out of the two. Others gave inappropriate or vague points - again often saying what the method does (measures brain activity) without saying why this is a strength. The few that were able to get both marks focused on the method being scientific and replicable with appropriate elaboration.

Question 5

This was quite well answered by those who interpreted the question correctly. Many candidates appear to give a prepared answer for an essay question on using learning approach concepts to explain managing behaviour - and this worked okay for them in the end, though there was then material that was not relevant as well. Quite a few used classical conditioning of phobias without making the answer relevant to children, though they nearly all then moved to operant conditioning and got some marks in the end. Some also added social learning theory, which often gained them an extra mark. Some gained marks by using token economy principles, though they then tended to mention prisoners not children, which meant they had not applied the material well to the question. Few candidates were able to gain full marks on this question. Many referred to mental institutions and the use of aversion therapy to treat alcoholics. A number of candidates failed to mention children's behaviour at all. The most common error was to confuse negative reinforcement and punishment. Better answers tried to keep things simple (child given stickers for desired behaviour) and applied reinforcement; rewards and punishment well.

Question 6

Where this was an appropriate answer, focusing on (usually) activation synthesis or (sometimes) reorganisational theory, marks were gained quite well, mostly with some evaluation comments. However, few described the theory well enough for all four marks and very few evaluated for more than about two marks. The usual problems were noted; candidates not distinguishing between physiological and psychological or dreaming and sleeping. Bearing in mind this type of question has come on a fair few times before, many candidates appeared ill-prepared. Many went on to focus their efforts on Freud and symbols which was fine but only for an evaluation point.

The main problem was when a candidate gave Freud as a theory (and quite a few did) or a sleep theory (again, quite a few did - giving mainly restoration theory). Yet more candidates wrote about Dement and Kleitman and REM sleep which didn't really address the question. So, with many not focusing their answer correctly, there were quite a few who gained no marks for this question. Even when activation synthesis theory was correctly chosen, there was confusion in the answer. There were too many hybrid answers mixing up elements of various theories. Often some idea of random firing of neurons was mentioned but then this was said to be to clear the brain of unwanted thoughts or here was confusion over the idea of synthesis.

There were however some excellent answers from prepared candidates who gave superb descriptions of both the activation and synthesis stages of the theory. They were then able to highlight supporting evidence and criticise using alternative explanations for evaluation

Unit 6764

General Comments

Most candidates are clearly well prepared for this examination and have good knowledge of the material on the specification, regrettably this is not always translated into correct answers for a variety of reasons. One general point that continues to cause problems on Unit 4 is the time available. While time allocation between the two options has clearly improved since the first outing of 6764 in 2002 many candidates do not divide their time well within their two option. Candidates who know the material well are able to write far more than is necessary to gain the marks, and while this is understandable it is not advisable, in too many cases candidates ran out of time on their last question and thus failed to gain the marks they may have hoped for. Centres would be well advised to remind their candidates to tailor the time they allocate to a question to the number of marks available.

In general while some questions certainly challenged candidates others were very accessible. The more challenging questions usually ask candidates to use material they should know well in a slightly unusual way, thus making it more difficult to use a pre-prepared answer. There are still a few candidates who do produce pre-prepared responses. These usually gain very low marks as they do not address the questions as set. Inevitably there are also the responses where the candidate has misinterpreted the question. Candidates who upon receiving their results have a mark much lower than they expected are often in this category. It is well worthwhile drilling candidates into taking more time to check they have read and interpreted the question correctly and that they are using the appropriate skill (AO1 or AO2) in the answer.

Option A Clinical Psychology

Clinical psychology continues to be a very popular option and the majority of candidates display a good level of knowledge and understanding. One issue that continues to be of concern is the frequency with which candidates mix up approaches, eg offering psychodynamic explanations when physiological have been asked for. There are still a few candidates who insist on referring to eg eating disorders collectively when asked to describe **one** disorder, thus losing marks as they believe they have given enough points for the marks when only half of them refer to a single disorder.

Question 1a

While most candidates could successfully describe the symptoms of a mental disorder there were those who merely produced a list of symptoms punctuated by commas, insufficient when asked to describe. Others mixed up features and symptoms. A significant minority described the symptoms of two disorders rather than one, this was particularly a problem with eating disorders where both anorexia and bulimia were given

Question 1b

The majority of candidates were able to give some evaluation of the physiological causes of their chosen disorder. However few gained full marks, usually because they relied too heavily on assertions and failed to produce evidence in their responses. Inevitably a small number evaluated either psychological explanations in general or psychodynamic in particular. While this problem has reduced over time it remains significant.

Question 1c

Far too many candidates described the social factors rather than assessing them leading to many marks of zero. Those candidates who attempted to assess and drew more widely than the disorder they had dealt with in parts a & b often did very well.

Question 2a

Although cultural factors is on the specification and candidates will have learned studies on this topic the phrasing clearly threw many. Good answers would briefly give the findings from studies such as Fernando, Malgady and Widiger & Spitzer and gain full marks. A significant minority of candidates left the question blank.

Question 2b

Awareness of the cultural factors in diagnosis was well answered by some candidates, most were able to address the question to some extent though a very few seemed unaware that this was on the specification at all. The tendency to leave both Q2a & Q2b blank had a strong centre bias and suggested that a few centres might have omitted to cover this topic.

Question 3

Good answers gained full marks on the essay with accurate descriptions and evaluations of systematic desensitisation and token economies being the most popular choices of behavioural therapies. Candidates displayed a good level of knowledge in general and were able to evaluate their chosen methods effectively. A minority of candidates used the criminological application of token economies to aggressive prisoners, failing to gain marks as it did not refer to mental disorders. Some responses spent a great deal of time explaining the behavioural approach within psychology, inevitably losing valuable time on material that could gain no credit and consequently not achieving the higher marks that a more focused response would gain. This was a question that allowed those candidates who knew the material and read the question carefully to do really well. There were, as always, a small number who had clearly not learned the material required. There were candidates who did not focus their answers on the question set. It seems the two words "behavioural approach" triggered the response and the balance of the question was not even considered. Centres may wish to emphasise the consequences for results when a very well written essay loses 25% of the marks available on the paper, simply because the candidate has not written to the title given.

Option B Criminological Psychology

Criminological Psychology continues to be the most popular option with centres, and in general the quality of answers on this paper was somewhat better than in the recent past. There was some evidence that a few centres may have missed out minor topics they guessed would not appear at this sitting as none of the candidates were able to answer a particular question. Centres are reminded that questions can and will be drawn from all areas of the specification.

Question 1a

Many candidates were able to give an accurate and detailed outline of the process involved in creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. However a significant minority placed emphasis on the theory and so failed to gain all the marks. A small but significant number of candidates seemed to have no idea what the self-fulfilling prophecy was, either describing something such as an attributional bias or not attempting the question at all.

Question 1b

There were some excellent answers to this question. Jahoda's study was the most widely cited evidence though others drew more widely. A few failed to link evidence from educational studies to anti-social behaviour, thus limiting their marks. A number of candidates used the blue eyes - brown eyes study by Jane Elliot as an example of self fulfilling prophecy. While the study does show some elements of the phenomenon it is not a good example and is best avoided. The children were acutely aware of the claims of inferiority and superiority and self fulfilling prophecy is a process where the recipient of the prophecy is unaware of it at the start and may only become aware of it because of the way they are treated.

Question 1c

Many candidates who had struggled with self-fulfilling prophecy were able to redeem themselves on this question where there were many excellent responses. Answers typically cited evidence both for and against media affecting violence with the most popular being Eron, Parke and Charlton, though there were many more. A few candidates still persist in citing the Jamie Bulger case, to their disadvantage, as the importance of media violence in that particular case is now seriously questioned. Given the wealth of reputable studies lined up on both sides of the argument there is no need for candidates to rely on anything other than reputable psychological research

Question 2a

While most candidates had no difficulty whatsoever in identifying two different factors that may influence a jury, indeed a few gave considerably more than two, many struggled to outline the nature of the factor and so failed to gain full marks. Some clearly assumed there would be an identification mark for each factor. There were therefore a good number of answers where candidates who undoubtedly thought they had done well, and probably could have gained full marks without difficulty lost 1 or 2 marks through not giving sufficient detail.

Question 2b

This was clearly a question candidates found challenging and while credit could be gained by the evaluation of the methods of specific studies few did this. Descriptions of mock juries and shadow juries gained no credit but many were able to gain some marks for the standard criticisms about such studies lacking realism, consequences and having unrepresentative samples. Better answers used studies to illustrate the points and were thus able to gain further credit by way of elaboration.

Question 3

This was one of the best answered essays within criminological psychology since the start of the specification. Good answers were able to give a clear and detailed account of how profiling is undertaken and then evaluate it effectively. Many answers were able to incorporate up to date information about the role of profiling with the arrests for the serial killings in Ipswich just before Christmas, clearly supporting that this is an application of psychology. Evaluation was generally not as good as the description though most candidates were able to give some research evidence regarding its effectiveness.

Option C Psychology of Education

There were very few entries on Education this time. Whereas the overlap in material between AS and A2 is often well exploited by candidates taking criminological psychology, this did not seem to be the case here with some very weak answers on the Piaget questions. The essay produced a very wide range of marks with some excellent answers but also some that were very unfocused. Too many candidates rely on commonsense rather than evidence.

Question 1a

Given that Piaget also occurs in Unit 1 this was a surprisingly poorly answered question. There were some candidates who seemed totally unaware of what the process of adaptation was, while many were only able to describe it in the most general terms. Most answers showed knowledge that adaptation was involved in the development of schemes, and the majority were able to make some reference to states of equilibrium and/or disequilibrium but accurate knowledge of assimilation and accommodation was sparse

Question 1b

Weaker answers described rather than evaluated, a common Unit 4 problem, receiving an evaluation mark only when contrasting Piaget's work with others. There were a small but significant number of candidates who seemed unaware of what Piaget's theory said thus making any attempt to evaluate its use within education futile. Better answers evaluated the use of discovery learning with particular reference to both early years education and Nuffield science, curriculum development and the appropriateness of material in the curriculum as well as changes in teaching styles. Some candidates who had failed to answer part a accurately nonetheless achieved high marks here.

Question 2a

Despite knowing many studies that look at bias in educational assessment many candidates were unable to report the findings of such studies. Typically weaker answers either made generic assertions or described the process of IQ testing. Good answers showed sound knowledge of studies such as Labov and Quay. It is worth noting that work such as Bernstein's is only tangentially linked to assessment bias and thus a link needs to be made to gain any credit.

Question 2b

Good answers considered the issues of culture fair testing, the importance of both values and language being changed to make tests relevant to minority groups and the wider ramifications of the differences in performance between boys and girls in the UK. It was very worrying to see so many candidates claim that it was unfair that girl's had to achieve more correct response on an IQ test than a boy of the same age for an equivalent IQ with no understanding at all of why this is a perfectly reasonable strategy. It is clearly worth emphasising more strongly the difference in maturational rates between boys and girls as the reason behind this practice.

Question 2c

While this was generally the best answered part of this question few were able to give sufficient detail to access all the marks. Suggestions such as culture, fair testing and awareness training were often given but most candidates failed to capitalise on such ideas by suggesting how such measures might affect assessment, whether they may be effective or how problematic they may be to put in place.

Question 3

Typical answers to this question focused on labelling, stereotyping and self-fulfilling prophecies as ways in which student performance may be affected. Most candidates succeeded in getting some AO1 marks for their description of these but many failed to evaluate at all. Better responses used studies such as Baker & Crist, Brattesanti et al and Rogers in addition to the almost universal Rosenthal & Jacobson. A small number of candidates succeeded in losing their way completely and produced essays on teaching styles.

Option E Sports Psychology

Sports psychology is distinct from the other options in two ways. Firstly the candidates are considerably better at answering applied questions within sport than any of the other options. Secondly they are far worse at using psychological evidence rather than commonsense in their answers. Centres may well find it useful to implement strategies such as making candidates use at least two different pieces of named research in a homework to develop the evidence habit.

Question 1a

Most candidates were able to successfully outline the process of social learning and there was evidence of the use of pertinent examples that gained credit for aiding the clarity of the answer. While the majority of candidates produced extremely good answers there were a few who failed to relate the description to sports behaviour.

Question 1b

While describing the process of learning through social learning was generally well done the evaluation of it was, in general, quite weak. Many answers were limited to the suggestion that there were other explanations, such as personality, and with no direct evaluation of social learning theory itself. Given the wealth of material available in this area the responses to this question were very disappointing. Better answers considered the limitations set on imitation based on ability, attention and motivation and the creation of novel responses. Evidence from studies showing the effect of imitation in sporting behaviour were also cited in these responses.

Question 2a

While some candidates were able to give an accurate and succinct description of social loafing there were a few who seemed to have completely forgotten what the term meant. Even the better answers rarely accessed all the marks available, often forgetting to include information or examples beyond the basic outline.

Question 2b

There were a good number of candidates who answered here with what should have been in Q2a. This gained no credit, and as these candidates had often failed to put the correct material in the first question they failed to gain credit on two parts of this question. Those who focused correctly on what was required tended nonetheless to be light on evidence with which to assess the theory, thus inevitably limiting their marks. It is still a feature of sport psychology that candidates seem to be far less able to cite evidence from research studies to back up their claims than in any of the other options.

Question 2c

This was probably the best answered question within the sports option with many candidates gaining full marks. The best answers made suggestions that were pertinent to particular sports as well as general suggestions and gave examples of strategies to eg increase social interaction among players.

Question 3

Answers to this question took in a very wide range of marks with the best responses giving a summary of theories, state and trait anxiety together with useful evaluation points. Far too many candidates however seemed unable to distinguish between anxiety and arousal, an important difference, especially in the light of this essay title. Many limited themselves by merely describing theories such as inverted U and catastrophe. There were far too many candidates who gave answers that indicated they thought they knew the material but failed to address the question sufficiently. This blunderbuss approach to an essay rarely produces a reasonable mark and takes up time when it is in short supply and is particularly prevalent when essays on anxiety/arousal, social facilitation and similar topics are asked.

Psychology - Grade Boundaries

Unit 6761-01

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	72	49	43	37	32	27
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6762-01

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	72	50	44	38	33	28
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6764-4A and 4B (option 1)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	72	47	42	37	32	27
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6764-4A and 4C (option 2)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	72	46	40	35	30	25
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6764-4A and 4E (option 4)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	72	46	40	34	29	24
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6764-4B and 4C (option 5)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	72	47	42	37	32	28
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Unit 6764-4B and 4E (option 7)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	72	47	42	37	32	27
Uniform boundary mark	100	80	70	60	50	40

Notes

Maximum Mark (Raw): the mark corresponding to the sum total of the marks shown on the mark scheme.

Boundary mark: the minimum mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade.

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