

Markscheme

November 2025

Psychology

Standard level

Paper 1

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Section A markbands

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The answer does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response is of limited relevance to or only rephrases the question. • Knowledge and understanding is mostly inaccurate or not relevant to the question. • The research supporting the response is mostly not relevant to the question and if relevant only listed.
4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response is relevant to the question, but does not meet the command term requirements. • Knowledge and understanding is accurate but limited. • The response is supported by appropriate research which is described.
7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response is fully focused on the question and meets the command term requirements. • Knowledge and understanding is accurate and addresses the main topics/problems identified in the question. • The response is supported by appropriate research which is described and explicitly linked to the question.

Section A

Biological approach to understanding behaviour

1. Describe **one** research method used in **one** study related to the brain and behaviour. **[9]**

Refer to the paper 1 section A markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “describe” requires candidates to give a detailed account of one research method related to the brain and behaviour. Behaviour may include cognitive processes.

Research methods used when investigating the brain and behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- experiments (e.g., Crockett et al., 2015; Draganski et al., 2003; Antonova, 2011)
- quasi/natural experiments (e.g., Maguire, 2000; Sharot, 2007)
- case studies (e.g., HM, Milner, 1966; KF, Shallice and Warrington, 1970; MA, Tierney et al., 2001)

Brain imaging techniques (e.g. MRI, fMRI, PET) are not considered research methods, and a response which focuses on the use of these techniques rather than on a research method itself (e.g. experiment, case study) would not be appropriate.

Animal studies are acceptable provided they are used to illustrate the research method.

If a candidate describes more than one research method credit should be given only to the first description.

If a candidate refers to more than one study, credit should be given only to the first study.

If a candidate describes one research method without making reference to a relevant study, up to a maximum of **[5]** should be awarded.

If a candidate only describes a relevant study without describing a relevant research method, up to a maximum of **[4]** should be awarded.

Cognitive approach to understanding behaviour

2. Explain reconstructive memory with reference to **one** relevant study. **[9]**

Refer to the paper 1 section A markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “explain” requires candidates to give a detailed account, including reasons and causes, for reconstructive memory.

Explanation of the nature of reconstructive memory could include, but is not limited to:

- Confabulation – a memory based on a fabricated, distorted or misinterpreted memory, often believed to be true in spite of contradictory evidence
- schema processing – memory processing based on prior knowledge in the form of schemas that could result in distortion
- false memories – recalling an event that never happened and believing it to be true
- post-event information – any details or information encountered after an event has occurred that can influence or alter a person’s memory of the original event.

Examples of appropriate studies could include but are not limited to:

- Bartlett’s (1932) “War of the ghosts” study
- Brewer and Treyens’s (1981) study on in-office schema
- Neisser and Harsh’s (1992) Challenger disaster study
- Loftus and Pickerell’s (1995) “lost in a mall” study
- Shaw and Porter (2015) – implanting false memories of a crime
- Loftus and Palmer’s (1974) car crash study
- Yuille and Cutshall’s (1986) study of the effect of leading questions on eye-witnesses to a real crime

If a candidate explains reconstructive memory without making reference to a relevant study, up to a maximum of **[5]** should be awarded.

If a candidate only describes a relevant study without explaining reconstructive memory, up to a maximum of **[4]** should be awarded.

If a candidate refers to more than one study, credit should be given only to the first study.

Sociocultural approach to understanding behaviour

3. Describe acculturation with reference to **one** relevant study. **[9]**

Refer to the paper 1 section A markbands when awarding marks.

The command term “describe” requires candidates to give a detailed account of acculturation.

Candidates could describe concepts of acculturation, acculturation strategies (Berry’s acculturation model), and/or acculturative stress.

Relevant studies may include, but are not limited to:

- Lueck and Wilson’s (2010) study on predicting acculturative stress in Asian immigrants and Asian Americans
- Wang et al.’s (2010) study on positive psychological functioning in Cuban American university students
- Shah et al.’s (2015) study on obesity in South Asian workers in the United Arab Emirates
- Miranda and Matheny’s (2000) study on socio-psychological predictors of acculturative stress among Latino adults
- Berry et al.’s (2006) study on attitudes towards acculturation among immigrant youth
- Torres et al.’s (2012) correlational study of integration and disorientation in Latino-Americans
- Lyons-Padilla et al.’s (2015) study on marginalization and radicalization risk among Muslim immigrants.

If a candidate describes acculturation without making reference to a relevant study, up to a maximum of **[5]** should be awarded.

If a candidate only describes a relevant study without describing acculturation, up to a maximum of **[4]** should be awarded.

If a candidate refers to more than one study, credit should be given only to the first study.

Section B assessment criteria

A — Focus on the question

To understand the requirements of the question students must identify the problem or issue being raised by the question. Students may simply identify the problem by restating the question or breaking down the question. Students who go beyond this by **explaining** the problem are showing that they understand the issues or problems.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below.
1	Identifies the problem/issue raised in the question.
2	Explains the problem/issue raised in the question.

B — Knowledge and understanding

This criterion rewards students for demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of specific areas of psychology. It is important to credit **relevant** knowledge and understanding that is **targeted** at addressing the question and explained in sufficient detail.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response demonstrates limited relevant knowledge and understanding. Psychological terminology is used but with errors that hamper understanding.
3–4	The response demonstrates relevant knowledge and understanding but lacks detail. Psychological terminology is used but with errors that do not hamper understanding.
5–6	The response demonstrates relevant, detailed knowledge and understanding. Psychological terminology is used appropriately

C — Use of research to support answer

Psychology is evidence based so it is expected that students will use their knowledge of research to support their argument. There is no prescription as to which or how many pieces of research are appropriate for their response. As such it becomes important that the research selected is **relevant** and useful in **supporting** the response. One piece of research that makes the points relevant to the answer is better than several pieces that repeat the same point over and over.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	Limited relevant psychological research is used in the response. Research selected serves to repeat points already made.
3–4	Relevant psychological research is used in support of the response, and is partly explained. Research selected partially develops the argument.
5–6	Relevant psychological research is used in support of the response and is thoroughly explained. Research selected is effectively used to develop the argument.

D — Critical thinking

This criterion credits students who demonstrate an inquiring and reflective attitude to their understanding of psychology. There are a number of areas where students may demonstrate critical thinking about the knowledge and understanding used in their responses and the research used to support that knowledge and understanding.

The areas of critical thinking are:

- research design and methodologies
- triangulation
- assumptions and biases
- contradictory evidence or alternative theories or explanations
- areas of uncertainty.

These areas are not hierarchical and not all areas will be relevant in a response. In addition, students could demonstrate a very limited critique of methodologies, for example, and a well-developed evaluation of areas of uncertainty in the same response. As a result, a holistic judgement of their achievement in this criterion should be made when awarding marks.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	There is limited critical thinking and the response is mainly descriptive. Evaluation or discussion, if present, is superficial.
3–4	The response contains critical thinking, but lacks development. Evaluation or discussion of most relevant areas is attempted but is not developed.
5–6	The response consistently demonstrates well developed critical thinking. Evaluation and/or discussion of relevant areas is consistently well developed.

E — Clarity and organisation

This criterion credits students for presenting their response in a clear and organized manner. A good response would require no re-reading to understand the points made or the train of thought underpinning the argument.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Does not reach the standard described by the descriptors below.
1	The answer demonstrates some organization and clarity, but this is not sustained throughout the response.
2	The answer demonstrates organization and clarity throughout the response.

Section B

4. Discuss the relationship between genetics and behaviour.

[22]

Refer to the paper 1 section B assessment criteria when awarding marks.

The command term “discuss” requires candidates to offer a considered review of the relationship between genetics and behaviour.

Candidates may address one behaviour to demonstrate depth of knowledge or may address more than one behaviour to demonstrate breadth of knowledge. Both approaches are equally acceptable.

Relevant behaviours that may be used to discuss the relationship may include, but are not limited to:

- intelligence
- sexual orientation
- mental health, e.g. depression, PTSD, addiction
- aggression
- mate selection / mating behaviour.

Relevant studies may include, but are not limited to:

- Bouchard et al.’s (1990) reports on the “Minnesota Twin Studies”
- Kendler et al.’s (2006) twin study on genetics and depression
- Caspi et al.’s (2003) study on genes and depression
- Weissman et al.’s (2005) longitudinal family study on depression
- Caspi et al.’s (2002) study on the “warrior” gene and aggressive behaviours
- Bailey and Pillard’s (1990) research into genetics and sexuality.

Discussion may include, but is not limited to:

- methodological and ethical considerations
- how the research findings have been interpreted and applied
- implications of the research findings
- assumptions and biases
- areas of uncertainty e.g., the role of the environment in gene expression, and the diathesis-stress model
- supporting and/or contradictory evidence
- alternative explanations/factors

5. Discuss **one** model of thinking and decision-making.

[22]

Refer to the paper 1 section B assessment criteria when awarding marks.

The command term “discuss” requires candidates to offer a considered review of one model of thinking and decision-making.

Models of thinking and decision making include but are not limited to:

- dual-processing model – explaining two systems of thinking, system 1 and system 2
- theory of reasoned action and theory of planned behaviour.

Relevant studies could include but are not limited to:

- Alter and Oppenheimer’s (2007) study on legibility of font and thinking
- Tversky and Kahneman’s (1974) studies on judgement under uncertainty
- Strack and Mussweiler (1997); Englich and Mussweiler (2001) on anchoring bias and decision-making
- Kvaran et al.’s (2013) study on the effect of analytic and experiential modes of thought on moral judgment
- Albarracin et al.’s (2001) meta-analysis of theory of planned behavior as a model of condom use
- Bechara et al.’s (2000) study on the role of the vmPFC in decision-making.

Discussion may include but is not limited to:

- methodological and ethical considerations
- how the research findings have been interpreted and applied, for example in biases and heuristics
- implications of the research findings
- difficulties in studying cognitive processes such as thinking and decision-making – e.g. isolation of variables and measuring cognitive processes; artificial nature of experimental research
- issues of reliability and validity
- generalizability of findings; sampling biases
- supporting and/or contradictory evidence
- comparison with alternative theories
- individual differences in thinking and decision-making.

If a candidate addresses more than one model of thinking and decision-making, credit should be given only to the first one.

6. Discuss **one or more** cultural dimensions of human behaviour. [22]

Refer to the paper 1 section B assessment criteria when awarding marks.

The command term “discuss” requires candidates to offer a considered review of one or more cultural dimensions of human behaviour.

Responses should present the core traits that define the chosen cultural dimension(s). Candidates may address the chosen cultural dimension(s) generally, for example, that it is the effect of a culture on the beliefs and values of a society, or in a more detailed manner with explanations based on social mobility, agricultural versus urban, democratic principles, economic stability, etc. Both approaches are equally acceptable.

Relevant research may include, but is not limited to:

- Berry (1967); Kulkofsky et al. (2011); Wei et al. (2001) – individualism/collectivism
- Zhang et al. (2010); Eylon and Au (1999); Lynn et al. (1993) – power distance
- Chen et al. (2005); Hofstede and Bond (1988) – long-term/short-term orientation (Confucian dynamism)
- Vunderick and Hofstede (1998) – masculinity/femininity
- Shane (1995) – uncertainty avoidance

Discussion may include, but is not limited to:

- methodological considerations
- how the findings of research have been interpreted and applied
- implications of the findings
- assumptions and biases
- areas of uncertainty
- supporting and/or contradictory evidence
- alternative explanations.

Candidates may discuss one cultural dimension in order to demonstrate depth of knowledge or may discuss a larger number of cultural dimensions in order to demonstrate breadth of knowledge. Both approaches are equally acceptable.
