



AS PSYCHOLOGY 7181/2

Paper 2 Psychology in context

Mark scheme

June 2025

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright information

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Copyright © 2025 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly level 3 with a small amount of level 4 material it would be placed in level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Section A**Approaches in Psychology**

0	1
---	---

Briefly explain the role of evolution in behaviour.

[3 marks]**Marks for this question: AO1 = 3****3 marks** for a clear and coherent explanation of the role of evolution in behaviour with some use of appropriate terminology.**2 marks** for an explanation with some clarity and/or coherence.**1 mark** for a limited or muddled explanation.**Possible content:**

- Darwin's theory of natural selection/survival of the fittest/adaptation
- genetically determined traits/behaviour which are advantageous increase the chance of survival and therefore reproduction
- genes which determine these advantageous traits/behaviour are more likely to be passed on to offspring
- genes which determine these advantageous traits/behaviours remain in the gene pool so these traits/behaviours are more likely to be expressed in future generations.

Credit other relevant content such as use of examples, eg phobias or aggression.

0 2

Use your knowledge of the fight or flight response to explain James's reactions to watching the film.

[4 marks]**Marks for this question: AO2 = 4**

Level	Marks	Description
2	3–4	There is a clear explanation of James's reactions using the fight or flight response with some accurate detail. The answer is generally coherent with effective use of appropriate terminology.
1	1–2	There is limited or partial explanation of James's reactions using the fight or flight response. The answer lacks coherence and use of appropriate terminology.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible content:

- when James watches the scary moment his hypothalamus stimulates the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system
- the autonomic nervous system stimulates James's adrenal gland (adrenal medulla) to release adrenaline into his blood stream
- adrenaline increases heart rate which may explain why James could feel his heart pounding
- adrenaline increases muscle tension which may explain why James's hands were trembling
- physiological changes caused by adrenaline increase body temperature so the body sweats to cool down which could explain why James's hands were sweaty.

Credit other relevant content.

0	3
---	---

Briefly describe how cognitive psychologists use computer models to explain mental processes.

[3 marks]

Marks for this question: AO1 = 3

3 marks for a clear and coherent description of how psychologists use computer models to explain mental processes.

2 marks for a description with some clarity and/or coherence.

1 mark for a limited or muddled description.

Possible content:

- humans are seen as information processors and seen as analogous to computers
- information moves through the computer model in a sequence of stages eg input (eg from senses), processing (the mind), output (eg behaviour)
- used to help to make inferences about internal mental processes from observable behaviour
- interconnected parts of the brain form networks which can work in sequence or in parallel.

Credit other relevant content including use of appropriate examples.

0	4
---	---

Briefly explain **one** limitation of using computer models to explain mental processes.

[2 marks]

Marks for this question: AO3 = 2

2 marks for a clear and coherent explanation of one limitation of the use of computer models to explain mental processes.

1 mark for a muddled or limited explanation.

Possible content:

- ignores the influence of emotions and motivation on information processing (machine reductionism)
- human processing is unreliable, but computer processing is reliable so they are not analogous
- relies on inferences to explain behaviour which may be subjective and/or incorrect.

Credit other relevant limitations.

0 5 Describe the processes of classical conditioning **and** operant conditioning.

[6 marks]

Marks for this question: AO1 = 6

Level	Marks	Description
3	5–6	Description of the processes of classical and operant conditioning is clear and generally well detailed. The answer is generally coherent with effective use of appropriate terminology.
2	3–4	Description of the processes of classical and operant conditioning is evident. Terminology is used appropriately on occasions. OR for a description of one type of conditioning only at Level 3.
1	1–2	Description of the processes of classical and operant conditioning is limited. The answer as a whole lacks clarity and has inaccuracies. Terminology is either absent or inappropriately used. OR for a description of one type of conditioning only at Level 1/2.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible content:

Classical conditioning

- learning through association
- involuntary
- explains the acquisition of behaviour
- association of an unconditioned stimulus with a neutral stimulus to produce a conditioned response.

Operant conditioning

- explains the maintenance of learning of (novel) behaviours through reinforcement
- voluntary
- positive/negative reinforcement
- schedules of reinforcement.

Credit other relevant material such as an annotated classical conditioning diagram or use of appropriate examples.

0 6 . 1 Explain how Niamh used classical conditioning to train the guide dogs.

[3 marks]

Marks for this question: AO2 = 3

3 marks for a clear and coherent explanation of how Niamh used classical conditioning with some use of appropriate terminology.

2 marks for an explanation of how Niamh used classical conditioning with some clarity and/or coherence.

1 mark for a limited or muddled explanation of how Niamh used classical conditioning.

Possible application:

- the food treat (unconditioned stimulus) produces pleasure (unconditioned response)
- an association is formed between the whistle (neutral stimulus) and the food treat (unconditioned stimulus)
- pleasure (conditioned response) is now triggered every time the guide dog hears the whistle (which has now become a conditioned stimulus).

Credit other relevant material such as an applied and annotated classical conditioning diagram.

0 6 . 2 Explain how Niamh used operant conditioning to train the guide dogs.

[3 marks]

Marks for this question: AO2 = 3

3 marks for a clear and coherent explanation of how Niamh used operant conditioning with some use of appropriate terminology.

2 marks for an explanation of how Niamh used operant conditioning with some clarity and/or coherence.

1 mark for a limited or muddled explanation of how Niamh used operant conditioning.

Possible application:

- positive reinforcement – the food treat acts as a reward which reinforces sitting behaviour (primary reinforcement)
- positive reinforcement – giving a food treat every now and again strengthens the association of the whistle (secondary reinforcement) with the food treat
- shift from continuous reinforcement where the dog was given a treat each time it heard the whistle to a partial/intermittent variable schedule of reinforcement as the food treat is only given now and then when the dog sits (so sitting when the whistle is blown is less likely to become extinct).

Section B

Psychopathology

0	7
---	---

In systematic desensitisation the therapist and client construct and use a hierarchy of situations related to the feared object.

Which of the following would be the most appropriate hierarchy to use with a client who has a phobia of spiders?

[1 mark]

Marks for this question: AO3 = 1

C -

Imagine a spider, look at a picture of a spider, be in a room with a spider, hold a spider.

0	8
---	---

Briefly outline deviation from social norms as a definition of abnormality.

[2 marks]

Marks for this question: AO1 = 2

2 marks for a clear and coherent outline of deviation from social norms.

1 mark for a muddled or limited outline.

Possible content:

- all societies make collective judgments about what counts as 'normal'/usual/typical behaviour
- deviant behaviour that does not conform to/breaks accepted/expected standards is abnormal
- norms vary from culture to culture.

Credit other relevant content.

0	9
---	---

Explain **one or more** limitations of deviation from social norms as a definition of abnormality.

[3 marks]

Marks for this question: AO3 = 3

3 marks for a clear and coherent explanation of **one or more** limitations of deviation from social norms as a definition of abnormality.

2 marks for an explanation with some clarity and/or coherence.

1 mark for a limited or muddled explanation.

Possible content:

- not all behaviour that deviates from social norms is a sign of illness
- norms are culturally relative so difficult to determine universal signs of illness
- social norms definition could be used/abused as an instrument of social control
- social norms change over time (lack of temporal validity).

Credit other relevant limitations.

1 0

Describe the use of drug therapy as a treatment for obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

[4 marks]**Marks for this question: AO1 = 4**

Level	Marks	Description
2	3–4	There is a clear description of the use of drug therapy to treat OCD with some accurate detail. The answer is generally coherent with effective use of appropriate terminology.
1	1–2	There is limited or partial description of the use of drug therapy to treat OCD. The answer lacks coherence and use of appropriate terminology.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible content:

- 'corrects' imbalance of neurochemicals, eg serotonin, to reduce symptoms
- SSRIs prevent the re-uptake and breakdown of serotonin so it continues to act upon the postsynaptic neuron
- typical daily dosage, eg Fluoxetine (an SSRI) which may be increased if not benefitting the patient as appropriate
- timescale – typically 3–4 months of daily use for SSRIs to impact upon symptoms
- alternatives to SSRIs – tricyclics, SNRIs
- other drugs – benzodiazepines for general relaxation.

Credit other relevant content.

1 1 . 1Using the data in **Table 1** above, calculate the percentage decrease in the mean severity of symptoms score for **Group 1** (new drug).**[2 marks]****Marks for this question: AO2 = 2****2 marks** for a correct answer: 12.837838(%) (accept any correctly rounded version: 13, 12.8, 12.84, 12.838, 12.8378, 12.83784).**1 mark** for an incorrect or absent answer with correct workings.

Correct workings:

$$29.6 - 25.8 = 3.8$$

$$3.8/29.6 = 0.12837838$$

$$0.12837838 \times 100 (= 12.837838)$$

Accept alternative correct workings.

Note: no need to show unit (%).

- 1 1 . 2** Explain **one** conclusion about the effectiveness of the new drug therapy. Refer to the percentage decreases in your answer.

[2 marks]

Marks for this question: AO2 = 1, AO3 = 1

Award **1 mark** for **each** bullet point:

- the new drug is more effective at treating OCD than no drug (the placebo)
- as the percentage decrease of the mean severity of symptoms score was higher in group 1 (new drug) than in group 2 (placebo).

- 1 1 . 3** Explain why it was important that the psychologist used the placebo group, that had a pretend drug, as well as the new drug group in their study.

[2 marks]

Marks for this question: AO2 = 1, AO3 = 1

2 marks for a clear and coherent explanation of why it was important the psychologist used the placebo group as well as the new drug group.

1 mark for a muddled or limited explanation.

Possible content:

- acts as a control to allow the psychologist to determine that it is the new drug therapy which is having an effect on symptoms
- the psychologist compares the effectiveness (the percentage decrease in the severity of symptoms score) of the new drug with the placebo (no treatment) to draw a conclusion about the effectiveness of the new drug
- using a placebo group allows the psychologist to rule out the placebo effect showing that it is the new drug therapy which is improving symptoms.

Credit other relevant content.

- 1 2** Describe and evaluate Beck's negative triad as a cognitive explanation for depression. **[8 marks]**

Marks for this question: AO1 = 4, AO3 = 4

Level	Marks	Description
4	7–8	Knowledge of Beck's negative triad is accurate with some detail. Evaluation is effective. Minor detail and/or expansion is sometimes lacking. The answer is clear and coherent. Specialist terminology is used effectively.
3	5–6	Knowledge of Beck's negative triad is evident but there are occasional inaccuracies/omissions. There is some effective evaluation. The answer is mostly clear and organised. Specialist terminology is mostly used appropriately.
2	3–4	Limited knowledge of Beck's negative triad is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any evaluation is of limited effectiveness. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1–2	Knowledge of Beck's negative triad is very limited. Evaluation is limited, poorly focused or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology is either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible content:

- the negative triad – negative view of the world, the future and the self
- faulty cognitions create vulnerability to depression
- faulty information processing, eg selective perception, overgeneralisation, magnification etc
- negative schemas, eg negative self-schema may lead to interpreting all information about oneself negatively.

Possible evaluation:

- use of supporting evidence of effectiveness, eg Grazioli and Terry (2000), Clark and Beck (1999) etc
- correlational not causal
- practical application, eg the development of CBT
- cannot explain all symptoms of depression, eg anger
- oversimplistic as focuses upon cognitive factors and there is evidence that depression can be explained as having a biological component.

Credit other relevant material.

Section C**Research Methods**

- 1 3** Briefly outline what is meant by a quasi-experiment. Explain why this study is a quasi-experiment.

[4 marks]**Marks for this question: AO1 = 2, AO2 = 2**

Award marks as follows:

2 marks for a clear and coherent outline of a quasi-experiment.**1 mark** for a muddled or limited outline.**Content:**

- a study where participants cannot be randomly allocated to conditions
- a pre-existing difference is studied (a difference study)
- the IV is a pre-existing difference between people
- the IV cannot be directly manipulated by the researcher.

Plus**2 marks** for a clear and coherent explanation of why this study is a quasi-experiment.**1 mark** for a muddled or limited explanation.**Content:**

- age (IV) is a pre-existing difference between the participants
- the psychologist cannot directly manipulate the age of the participants as they cannot make them younger or older/change their age
- the psychologist cannot randomly allocate the participants to the younger and older groups as they are already that age.

- 1 4** Write an appropriate experimental hypothesis for this study.

[3 marks]**Marks for this question: AO2 = 3****3 marks** for a clearly stated and appropriate directional operationalised hypothesis: (Younger) people aged 17–31 will make more correct identifications than (older) people aged 62–83.**2 marks** for a statement with both conditions of the IV and the DV present but either the IV or DV is not fully operationalised.**1 mark** for a muddled statement with both the IV and DV present but neither is fully operationalised.**0 marks** for expressions of aim/questions, for correlational/non-directional hypotheses or for statements with only the IV or DV or one condition of the IV present.

Accept a directional hypothesis expressed in the other direction.

1 5 . 1 Briefly outline what is meant by a matched pairs design.

[2 marks]

Marks for this question: AO1 = 2

Award **1 mark** for **each** bullet point:

- pairs of participants are matched on a variable which may affect the DV
- one member of each pair is assigned to condition A and the other to condition B.

1 5 . 2 Explain how the psychologist could have matched participants to use a matched pairs design in this study.

[3 marks]

Marks for this question: AO2 = 3

3 marks for a clear and coherent explanation of how the psychologist could have matched participants to use a matched pairs design in this study.

2 marks for an explanation with some clarity and/or coherence.

1 mark for a limited or muddled explanation.

Possible content:

- the psychologist could have identified a variable which could have affected the number of correct identifications, eg the quality of their eyesight
- the psychologist could have measured the identified variable in all potential participants, eg give each potential participant an eye test to measure the quality of their eyesight
- the psychologist could then pair participants together based on the measured variable. One younger participant and one older participant are paired together, eg because they have similar quality of eyesight.

Credit other relevant content.

- 1 6 . 1** Explain **one** reason why the mean was an appropriate measure of central tendency to use in this study.

[2 marks]

Marks for this question: AO2 = 2

2 marks for a clear and coherent explanation of one reason why the mean was an appropriate measure of central tendency to use in this study.

1 mark for a muddled or limited explanation.

Content:

- the mean is the most sensitive measure as it included all the participants' correct identifications so is most representative of the participants' performance
- as the participants' correct identifications range from 3 to 5, there are no extreme values which could skew the mean if present.

- 1 6 . 2** Calculate the mean number of correct identifications for the younger group (17–31 years).

[2 marks]

Marks for this question: AO2 = 2

2 marks for a correct answer: 4.15384615 (accept any correctly rounded version: 4, 4.2, 4.15, 4.154, 4.1538, 4.15385, 4.153846, 4.1538462).

1 mark for an incorrect or absent answer with correct workings.

Correct workings:

Number of correct identifications = 54/Total number of participants = 13.

- 1 6 . 3** Give **one** conclusion about the accuracy of recognising faces using the mean scores for **both** groups. Explain your answer.

[2 marks]

Marks for this question: AO2 = 1, AO3 = 1

Award **1 mark** for **each** bullet point:

- younger people are better at recognising faces than older people
- as the mean number of correct identifications was higher (by 1.86).

Note: Accept a conclusion and explanation in the opposite direction.

- 1 7** The psychologist wanted to find out why some of the older participants in the study achieved very few correct identifications.

Suggest how you could carry out a follow-up interview with **one** of these participants.

In your answer, you should:

- outline how you would select the person to be interviewed
- outline the type of interview you would use with that person
- give an example of an open question **and** an example of a closed question which you could use as part of the interview.

[6 marks]

Marks for this question: AO3 = 6

Level	Marks	Description
3	5–6	Suggestions are generally detailed and practical, showing sound understanding of interview techniques. All three elements are presented appropriately. The answer is mostly clear and coherent. Specialist terminology is used effectively. Minor detail and/or explanation sometimes lacking.
2	3–4	Some suggestions are sensible and practical, showing some understanding of interview techniques. At least two elements are presented. The answer may lack clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. There is some appropriate use of specialist terminology.
1	1–2	At least one element is addressed but knowledge of interview techniques is limited. The whole answer lacks clarity, has inaccuracies and is poorly organised.
	0	No relevant content.

Three elements of design to be credited:

- **how you would select the person** – how to select the person, eg random (eg identify all the older participants who achieved very few correct identifications and then use a random name generator to select a participant from this group etc), volunteer (eg identify all the older participants who achieved very few correct identifications, ask them all if they would be willing to take part and use the first participant who agrees etc)
- **type of interview** – eg structured (eg plan all the questions about difficulties identifying the faces beforehand and ask them in a fixed order etc), unstructured (eg do not plan set questions about difficulties identifying faces beforehand, allow the participant to expand/elaborate on their answers, ask follow-up questions if relevant etc), semi-structured (eg plan questions about difficulties identifying the faces beforehand but allow elaboration and/or follow-up questions if relevant etc)
- **open and closed questions** – an example of at least one relevant open question (eg why did you find it difficult to correctly identify the faces?) and at least one relevant closed question (eg were you certain you had correctly identified at least one face? YES/NO).