

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. Explain neuroplasticity 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 of neuroplasticity with reasons or causes.

A detailed account of neuroplasticity could include, but is not limited to:

- a definition of the key term neuroplasticity (biological changes in the brain in response to environmental stimuli)
- long-term potentiation leading to dendritic branching
- the processes of synaptic pruning or cortical remapping.

When describing the study, the relevant area of the brain where neuroplasticity is observed should be identified.

Relevant research may include, but is not limited to:

- Bremner et al.’s (2008) study on plasticity of the hippocampus in post-traumatic stress disorder
- Draganski’s (2004) study of neuroplasticity in the mid-temporal area and learning in jugglers
- Luby et al.’s (2012) study of maternal support and hippocampal development
- Maguire et al.’s (2000) study of the hippocampi of taxi drivers
- Rosenzweig, Bennett and Diamond’s (1972) animal research on the role of environmental factors on neuroplasticity in the cerebral and occipital cortex
- Merzenich et al.’s (1984) study of cortical remapping in owl monkeys.

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

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

If a candidate only describes an appropriate study without explaining neuroplasticity, up to a maximum of **[4]** should be awarded

As the question is focused only on the physiological process of neuroplasticity, it is not necessary to demonstrate a behavioural change; studies of cortical mapping are appropriate.

Cognitive approach to understanding behaviour

2. Describe the multi-store memory model 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 the multi-store model of memory (MSM). When describing a model, the candidate should go beyond simply identifying the components and outline their role in memory processing.

Relevant studies may include, but are not limited to:

- Miller’s (1956) study testing the capacity of short-term memory (STM)
- Peterson and Peterson’s (1959) study exploring duration in STM
- Glanzer and Cunitz’s (1966) study demonstrating the serial position curve including the impact of rehearsal on the primacy effect and the impact of delayed recall on the recency effect
- Sperling’s (1960) study of iconic memory
- Milner et al.’s (1968) case study of retrograde and anterograde amnesia in patient HM

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

If a candidate describes the multi-store model without making reference to a relevant study, up to a maximum of **[5]** should be awarded.

If a candidate only describes an appropriate study without describing the multi-store model, up to a maximum of **[4]** should be awarded.

Sociocultural approach to understanding behaviour

3. Describe social identity theory 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 social identity theory with reference to one relevant study.

Description of social identity theory may include, but is not limited to:

- social categorization into in-groups and out-groups
- social identification and conformity to group norms
- social comparison and positive distinctiveness
- out-group homogeneity
- the role of salience of social identities on behaviour.

Studies related to social identity theory may include, but are not limited to:

- Abrams’s (1990) study on the role of social identity on levels of conformity
- Cialdini et al.’s (1976) “Basking in Reflected Glory” study
- Drury et al.’s (2009) study of helping behaviour
- Hilliard and Liben’s (2010) study of social categorization and stereotype formation
- Levine’s (2005) study of helping behaviour
- Tajfel et al.’s (1971) studies on social categorization and intergroup behaviour
- Sherif et al.’s (1961) “Robbers Cave” study

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

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

If a candidate only describes an appropriate study without describing social identity theory, up to a maximum of **[4]** should be awarded.

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. Evaluate **one or more** evolutionary explanations for human behaviour.

[22]

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

The command term “evaluate” requires candidates to make an appraisal by weighing up the strengths and limitations of one or more evolutionary explanations for human behaviour. Although a discussion of both strengths and limitations is required, it does not have to be evenly balanced to gain high marks.

Evolutionary explanations of human behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- mate choice in humans (such as sexual selection and sexual dimorphism)
- parental investment theory
- phobias (biological preparedness)
- altruism (kin selection and/or reciprocal altruism)
- major depressive disorder (Pathogen Host Defence Hypothesis; Social Competition Hypothesis)

Relevant research could include, but is not limited to:

- Buss et al.’s (1990) study on sexual selection and mate selection.
- Clark and Hatfield’s (1989) study on sexual behaviour (parental investment)
- Fessler et al. (2006) or Curtis (2004) on natural selection and disgust
- Mineka and Cook (1989) on biological preparedness and phobias in rhesus monkeys
- Madsen’s (2007) study on altruism
- Raison and Miller’s (2012) Pathogen Host Defence Hypothesis and depression
- Singh’s (1993) study of mate choice and waist-to-hip ratio
- Waynforth and Dunbar’s (1995) study of mate selection strategies in lonely hearts columns

Candidates could make effective use of examples of research conducted with non-human animals but there must be an explicit link to human behaviour.

Strengths and limitations could include, but are not limited to:.

- empirical support
- methodological and cultural considerations
- possible theoretical assumptions and/or biases
- issues of validity and reliability
- reductionism
- generalizability of findings
- contradictory explanations or findings

If the candidate addresses only strengths or only limitations, the response should be awarded up to a maximum of **[3]** for criterion D: critical thinking.

5. To what extent is **one** cognitive process reliable?

[22]

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

The command term “to what extent” requires candidates to consider the merits or otherwise of arguments about the reliability of one cognitive process. Responses should show understanding of contradictory explanations or findings.

Cognitive processes could include but are not limited to:

- memory
- thinking and/or decision making

Relevant studies may include but are not limited to:

- Brewer and Treyen’s (1981) study of the role of schema in the reconstruction of memory
- Loftus and Pickrell’s (1995) study on the formation of false memories
- Neisser and Harsch’s (1992) study of flashbulb memory
- Sacchi et al.’s (2007) study of post-event information and reconstructive memory
- Yuille and Cutshall’s (1986) study on eyewitness testimony
- Strack and Mussweiler’s (1997) study of anchoring bias
- Tversky and Kahneman’s (1974) study on heuristics and biases
- Chen et al.’s (2016) study of the Gambler’s Fallacy in real world decisions

When responding to the command term “to what extent”, considerations may include, but are not limited to:

- degree of empirical support
- methodological considerations
- possible theoretical assumptions and/or biases
- issues of validity and reliability
- generalizability of findings.

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

6. Discuss acculturation.

[22]

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

The command term “discuss” requires candidates to offer a considered and balanced review of acculturation.

Relevant studies may include but are not limited to:

- Lueck and Wilson’s (2010) study of acculturation and assimilation
- Wang et al.’s (2010) study of acculturative stress in Asian Americans
- Miranda and Matheny’s (2000) study of acculturative stress in Latino adults
- Berry et al.’s (2006) study of acculturative stress in immigrant youth
- Shah et al.’s (2015) study of acculturation, obesity and cardiovascular risk
- Torres et al.’s (2012) correlational study of integration and disorientation in Latino-Americans

Discussion points may include but are not limited to:

- implications of the findings
 - methodological considerations
 - difficulties establishing cause-and-effect relationships in correlational research
 - external and internal validity of research
 - generalizability of the research
 - areas of uncertainty.
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