



L-Università
ta' Malta

MATSEC
Examinations Board



Examiners' Report

IM Psychology

First Session 2023

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A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The total number of candidates who registered to sit for Intermediate Psychology was **882**, which is **144** candidates less than in 2022.

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the Main 2023 Session of the examination.

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	TOTAL
NUMBER	54	84	186	139	78	139	202	882
% OF TOTAL	6.1	9.5	21.1	15.8	8.8	15.8	22.9	100

Table 1: Distribution of grades for IM Psychology, Main Session 2023

B. GENERAL REMARKS

General Remarks on the Written Examination

This session was held in May 2023 and there were no COVID mitigation measures. This year the number of candidates was less than the year 2022 with 882 candidates, as opposed to 1026 candidates, applying for the exam. This year, there were 202 candidates that did not turn up for the exam, slightly more than the previous years with a 22.2% rate of absenteeism. The percentage of candidates obtaining a Grade F was 15% as opposed to the figure of 2022 which was of 21%. This shift was also reflected in the percentage number of candidates in each grade bracket. The majority of candidates obtained a Grade C with the number of such candidates increasing from the previous year by 1%.

Most of the candidates attempted all questions. However, the examiners noted that, most responses are still lacking in skills of analysis and critical reflection, and self-reflexivity.

C. COMMENTS ON PAPER

Section A

Question 1

Q1 is the compulsory question set in Section A.

Most of the candidates answered **Q1a** in a correct manner. When answering **Q1bi**, most of the answers provided were incorrect. Some of the responses provided did mention focus groups but it wasn't a common answer. Only a few candidates answered **Q1bii** correctly.

Question 2

Few candidates opted to answer **Q2**, and most of the answers provided were incorrect or unsatisfactory.

When answering **Q2a** most responses defined visual perception as simply one's subjective perspective of something, some specifying the fact that different people have different perspectives and experiences of the same objects and/or situations. Only a few mentioned the law of Pragnanz. In attempting **Q2b** most of the answers provided were incorrect. Few answers made reference to gestalt. In **Q2c**, very few of the answers provided gave a good definition of visual illusions. Most of the responses mixed up visual perceptions with visual hallucinations.

Question 3

The large majority of candidates opted for this question in Section A. A substantial amount of them answered quite satisfactorily.

Candidates answered **Q3a** correctly by mentioning four schools of Psychology emerging throughout its modern history (from Structuralism, Functionalism, Psychoanalysis, Behaviourism and Humanism). There were, however, a few who mixed up the schools with the approaches in Psychology, such as the cognitive and the biological approaches. When it came to the schools' descriptions, many of the responses provided were good but some mixed certain aspects of the different schools. Another common mistake was describing structuralism as the study of the different structures of the brain rather than consciousness and the mind.

In answering question **Q3b**, several responses simply mentioned all the covered information on the chosen psychological school, rather than specifically focusing on how it contributed to psychology in general, or to a particular branch of the discipline. Psychoanalysis and Behaviourism were the most chosen schools of thought. Few chose humanism, and most of the behaviourists mentioned were Skinner or Watson. Some of the responses did not clearly describe the theoretical aspect of psychoanalysis with some mixing the psychosexual stages or unsatisfactorily describing the Id, Ego, and Superego. When it came to behaviourism, candidates described the general principles of both classical and operant conditioning. However, a number of candidates confused certain terminology such as describing the bell in Pavlov's experiment as the unconditioned stimulus. Negative reinforcement and punishment were used interchangeably by some candidates.

Section B

Question 4

Q4 is the compulsory question set in section B. Candidates did relatively well in this question but found difficulty in the applied and reflective sub-questions.

Most candidates answered **Q4a** in a satisfactory manner. Various aspects and elements of non-verbal behaviour such as proxemics, bodily contact, kinesics, posture, visuals and appearance were mentioned. However, there were others who mentioned some of these without specific examples, and others who provided completely incorrect answers, such as sociological aspects that distinguish between people of different classes. In addition, some of the responses provided gave examples of the same non-verbal cue rather than three different ones.

Majority of candidates did not perform well in **Q4b**. A good number of responses mentioned a group that they are part of, while a few mistakenly chose to be part of Shmuel or Bruno's group. Some mentioned specific groups, other responses mentioned more generic and broad groups that could be more considered as categories, like men and women and friends and social classes. Some candidates solely described the group members in terms of the roles and how the members behave rather than describing how people outside the group may perceive members of their own group. Most of the experiences were described briefly and superficially, but not reflected upon in depth, in relation to the dynamic occurring between the in-group and out-group perspectives.

With regards to **Q4c**, the answers ranged from those who provided a detailed diagram of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and applied it well to the scenarios to those who were unable to describe the hierarchy of needs. Some of the responses provided did not mention or barely mentioned the protagonists in the case study (Samuel and Bruno). Regarding those who answered correctly, albeit partially, quite a considerable amount of them mentioned the need for friendship without elaborating further on what this means and implies.

Answering **Q4d**, required candidates to not only describe the experience in detail, but to also reflect quite deeply on why they acted as they did, how they deliberated their options, and on the possible consequences of their actions, not only in the short term, but for their lives. Most candidates did mention an experience in which they disobeyed an order that was given or expressed to them by other people who represented authority in their lives. Many of these experiences were similar and simplistic and were only briefly described and not reflected upon in depth. Some of the responses provided even used concepts and terminology of classical and operant conditioning to underpin and consolidate their reflections.

Question 5

More candidates answered **Q5** rather than **Q6**.

When answering **Q5a** most of the candidates gave a good definition of sex but a poor one for gender, as they did not tend to go into detail on socially determined differences such as roles, behaviours, and expressions. **Q5b** was mostly correctly answered. The candidates gave a brief explanation on what gender stereotyping is, and followed up with 3 clear examples from everyday life. Very few candidates answered **Q5c** correctly. It was mostly either left out or incorrectly answered. In addition, those who answered correctly did not mention the characteristics that an androgynous person is likely to have. **Q5d** was answered quite briefly. Only a few responses mentioned the 3 stages of how a gender schema develops when a child grows up.

Question 6

Few candidates chose to answer **Q6**.

In answering **Q6ai**, most of the candidates who answered this question answered the question correctly. Most responses referenced Bandura and the 'Bobo Doll experiment' to show how children are influenced when observing behaviour. Overall, with regards to **Q6aii**, candidates answered correctly. When answering **Q6aiii**, only a few mentioned justified and unjustified aggression. Most candidates answered **Q6b** correctly. What was interesting was that quite a few candidates misunderstood the part of the question that stated "fostering empathy" as the capability of foster parents to be empathic towards their fostered children.

Chairperson

Examination Panel 2023