



AS

Psychology

7181/2 Psychology in Context: Paper 2

Report on the exam.

Published: August 2024

Contents

The below table is interactive. You can press the control button & click on the title of the question to go directly to that page.

| Contents | Page |
|---|-------|
| Summary | 3 |
| Assessment objectives | 4 |
| Research methods questions | 5-13 |
| Short answer questions | 14-17 |
| Extended response questions (<u>8+ marks</u>) | 18-21 |
| Further support | 22 |

Summary

Overall performance compared to last year.

It was pleasing to see that many students were thoroughly prepared for this examination and consequently performed well. Encouragingly, overall performance on the paper improved by almost 10% from 2023. Performance across Section B: Psychopathology was particularly strong and showed significant improvement upon the previous examination series. Section A: Approaches in Psychology was the next best section although performance was slightly lower than last year. Performance on Section C: Research Methods was lower in comparison to the other two sections, and this appears to be following an historical trend. However, it was gratifying to note that although performance was not as strong in this section compared to the other sections, it has improved since 2023. It was pleasing to see that the majority of students attempted most or all of the questions and most appeared to complete the paper in the allocated time.

Topics and skills where students performed well.

Section A: Approaches in Psychology

Students generally performed well in Q3, explaining a limitation of Bandura methodology, and in Q5, labelling a typical neuron. This was particularly pleasing to see in Q3 as historically students have tended to struggle more with evaluation questions (AO3), and it is encouraging to see this improve with each subsequent examination series.

Section B: Psychopathology

Performance across all the questions in this section was very good and indicates a clear area of strength. This was particularly evident in Q7, a multiple-choice question on behaviours characteristically shown by people with OCD, and in Q8.1 and Q8.2, two research methods questions asking students to calculate a mean and use this to draw a conclusion. Around three quarters of responses for each of these questions were awarded full marks.

Section C: Research Methods

See section on pages 5-18.

Topics and skills where students performed less well.

Section A: Approaches in Psychology

Students performed less well in Q1, outlining the emergence of psychology as a science, and in Q4, outlining one role of schema. A detailed discussion of these questions can be found on pages 14-17.

Section B: Psychopathology

Pleasingly, there were no questions on this section in which students performed less well when compared to other questions in other sections on the paper.

Section C: Research Methods

See section on pages 5-18.

Assessment objectives

| AO | Comment |
|---|--|
| AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures. | As in previous series, students performed relatively well when demonstrating knowledge and understanding, although there was significant variation seen throughout the cohort of students. |
| AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• in a theoretical context• in a practical context• when handling qualitative data• when handling quantitative data. | Performance in AO2 varied considerably depending upon the demands of the question. Students generally performed relatively well applying their knowledge to novel situations such as in Q9. Student performance across other areas for this assessment objective, for example in the research methods questions, varied significantly and appeared to depend upon the subject content they were being asked to apply their knowledge of. |
| AO3: Analyse, interpret and evaluate scientific information, ideas, and evidence, including in relation to issues, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• make judgements and reach conclusions• develop and refine practical design and procedures. | Students appear to be improving their analysis, interpretation, and evaluation with each series. Although not quite as strong as AO1, this is an area where many students were able to perform well. Although varied, there were some impressive responses in Q19 where many students were able to suggest how they would carry out an observation, demonstrating their ability to design practical procedures. |

Research methods questions.

Research methods questions were found largely in Section C: Research Methods, but there were also two questions in Section B: Psychopathology.

Questions where students performed well.

Students performed well across several research methods questions.

Section B: Psychopathology

Students particularly excelled in Q8.1 and Q8.2 where they were required to calculate the mean and draw a conclusion using this calculation. However, a minority of students did not give their answer to Q18.1 to 2 significant figures as the question asked.

Section C: Research Methods

Students performed relatively well in Q11 (identifying and justifying a type of interview), Q13 (writing an open question) and Q16 (how to conduct random sampling).

Following on from Q8.1 in Section B: Psychopathology, students were evidently well prepared for calculation questions as they again performed well in Q18.1 where they were required to calculate the median and mode. A small minority of students did appear to become confused as the data set was bimodal (3 and 8) and some either just gave one of the modes or incorrectly answered 5.5 suggesting they did not fully understand how to calculate the mode when there was more than one in a data set. Students were required to give both modes to be awarded the mark.

Questions where students performed less well.

Section C: Research Methods

One notable area of for development was students' ability to formulate hypotheses in Q12 and this seems to be a common area of difficulty which has occurred historically across previous series. Students also appeared to struggle with Q14 and Q15 which asked them to identify the population and sample used in the study respectively. Performance on Q17, where students had to identify an ethical issue, explain why it was important to address this issue and how the issue could have been dealt with, was also varied. Finally, students struggled to apply their knowledge of a measure of central tendency in Q18.2 and gave largely generic responses which were not about the actual data they had calculated.

Q19 was a challenging question as it was the first time this style of question has been asked on an AS examination. Although similar in style to the format of some previous A Level questions, it is important to note that the demands of this question are focused on the students' suggestions of how the psychologist could carry out the observation and not justification. Despite this being a novel style of question for AS examinations, encouragingly many students were able to provide some relevant suggestions. It is clear that students are gaining important practical experience of how to design and/or carry out psychological research and so understand concepts fully and can apply them in an examination setting.

Common misunderstandings

Question 12

One of the psychologist's questions asked the teachers to rate the general level of obedience for their class as a whole on a scale of 1–10. A rating of 1 meant the general level of obedience was low and a rating of 10 meant the general level of obedience was high.

Write a suitable hypothesis for use with this question.

[3 marks]

There was significant confusion and inaccuracy in the responses to this question. Disappointingly, around two-thirds of students were not awarded any marks for this question. Many students wrote an incorrect type of hypothesis, with the most common incorrect response being a directional hypothesis, despite it clearly saying in the stimulus material that 'Previous research showed inconsistent findings.' Of those students who did write a non-directional hypothesis, many failed to fully operationalise the IV and/or the DV by failing to include 'teachers' either in the IV (teachers' ratings of obedience) or in the DV (teachers of year 2 and year 5 children). It is important that students can write accurate hypotheses, and this appears to be an area where many students need much more practice and support.

Exemplification of a successful response

There is a difference in the ratings of the general level of obedience by the teachers of year 2 ~~for~~ their class as a whole on a scale of 1-10 compared to the ratings of the teachers of year 5 of ~~the~~ ^{the general} level of obedience of their class on a scale of 1-10.

An excellent response which has identified the need for a non-directional hypothesis, and which has fully operationalised both the IV ('ratings...by the teacher') and the DV ('teachers of year 2... teachers of year 5').

Exemplification of a less successful response

There will be a difference in the ~~level of~~ rating of the general level of obedience for the class as a whole ~~from~~ on a scale of 1-10 in the year 2 classes and the year 5 classes

A typical 2-mark response. The student has identified the need for a non-directional hypothesis but has failed to fully operationalise either the IV or the DV (or both) which need to contain 'teachers.' For example, the teachers of year 2 and year 5 for the IV or the teachers' ratings of obedience for the DV.

The obedience rating for younger children will be ^{higher} ~~lower~~ than the obedience rating of older children, which the teachers will rate from a scale of 1 to 10.

A typical example of a response which cannot be awarded any marks as the wrong type of hypothesis (directional) has been written.

Question 14

Identify the population the psychologist was interested in studying.

[2 marks]

Students performed significantly less well on this question and most seemed unable to correctly identify the population. Indeed, less than 20% of the cohort of students were able to access any marks on this question. Students appeared to have very little, if any, understanding of what a population was so were unable to apply this in their answer. There was significant confusion between teachers and children, with many students incorrectly identifying year 2 and year 5 children as the population rather than the teachers of these children. Of those students who could identify the teachers as the population, few could go on to fully identify the population coming from the primary schools in the city. It appears that this needs to be an area of focus for students moving forward.

Exemplification of a successful response

The population the psychologist was interested in studying comprises teachers of Year 2 and Year 5 classes in primary schools within their city.

A clear and correctly identified population which includes both key elements of teachers of year 2 and year 5 and being from the primary schools in the city.

Exemplification of a less successful response

teachers for year 5 and year 2 students

An incomplete and therefore 1-mark response which, although correctly identifying the teachers (of Year 2 and Year 5), has failed to include that they come from the primary schools in the city.

The psychologist was interested in studying primary aged children. Both year two children and year five children.

A typical example of a response which cannot be awarded any marks as the population has been mis-identified as the children not the teachers.

Question 15

Identify the sample used by the psychologist in the study.

[1 mark]

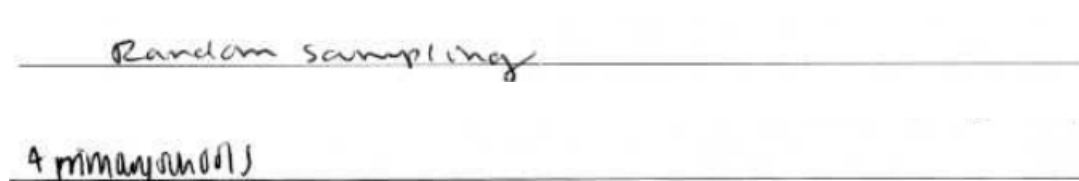
Responses to this question were very weak. This question relied on the students being able to answer Q14 thus required an understanding of what a population was and then being able to correctly apply this to the study. Unfortunately, around 90% of students were unable to identify the sample. There was significant confusion between the sample (which the question asked for) and the sampling method (which they were told in Q15). It appeared that many students did not understand what was meant by the sample and, once they had looked at Q15, went back and wrote 'random sampling' as they were told this in Q15. As with Q14, there was significant confusion between teachers and children with many students incorrectly identifying year 2 and year 5 children as the sample rather than the teachers of these children. Of those students who could identify the teachers as the sample, few could go on to fully identify the sample being the teachers of year 2 and year 5 from the four schools who agreed to take part. As with population, it appears that samples (rather than the sampling method) need to be an area of focus for students moving forward.

Exemplification of a successful response

The sample used by the psychologist in the study consists of teachers of Year 2 and Year 5 classes from the four primary schools that agreed to participate in the research.

A clear and correctly identified sample which includes the key elements of teachers of year 2 and year 5 and being from the four primary schools (who agreed to take part).

Exemplification of a less successful response



Typical examples of a responses which cannot be awarded any marks as either the sampling method rather than the sample has been identified (as in the first response) or an incomplete sample has been identified (as in the second response).

Question 17

Identify one ethical issue that should have been addressed in this study. Explain why it should have been addressed and how it could have been dealt with.

[3 marks]

Disappointingly, students performed less well on this question despite the format of the question being very similar to those seen in previous AS examinations. Similar to previous questions, there was much confusion between who was involved in the study. The ethical issue identified, the explanation of why it should be addressed and the method for dealing with it need to be about the parties involved in the study which is predominantly the teachers and possibly the schools. Many students talked about informed consent from the children or their parents which was not relevant as they were not part of the study.

Exemplification of a successful response

Confidentiality - the teachers responses should be kept confidential and anonymous by using numbers instead of names when recording their responses in the interviews. This should be addressed to ensure that the teachers were able to freely to answer honestly without changing their answers e.g. because they did not want to be seen as bad teachers for having disobedient classes

An excellent 3-mark response. This student has clearly identified a relevant ethical issue ('Confidentiality'), has explained why it should have been addressed ('...answer honestly...having disobedient classes.' and has explained how it could have been dealt with ('...using numbers instead of names...')

Exemplification of a less successful response

one ethical issue is ~~the~~ ~~pr~~ privacy and confidentiality of the children. They were not injured by the study.

A typical example of a response which cannot be awarded any marks as the children were not involved in the study, so their privacy, confidentiality and informed consent are not relevant.

Question 18.2

Explain why the median may be a more appropriate average to use with the data for the Year 2 teachers in Question 18.1 than the mode.

[2 marks]

Despite students appearing comfortable with calculating the median and mode in Q18.1, less than half could go on and explain in Q18.2 why the median might be more appropriate for the data calculated in Q18.1. Some students gave very little, if any, explanation and although they appeared to be able to calculate them, appeared to not really understand their relative strengths and limitations. Of those that appeared to understand these, many students simply gave generic strengths of the median and/or limitations of the mode rather than applying these to the actual calculations from Q18.1 as the question asks. Additionally, the question asks them to explain why the median is better than the mode for this data so there should be some comparison in students' responses.

Exemplification of a successful response

There are 2 modes (it is bimodal) but only one median so the median is more appropriate since it gives a better idea of central tendency and represents the data better.

A good 2-mark response. This student has clearly identified that there is a difference in the number of average scores (2 modes and 1 median) and has explained that this makes the median more useful ('since it gives a better idea of central tendency').

Exemplification of a less successful response

The median provides us with one value whereas the mode can sometimes give us 10 values like the Year 2 teachers had a mode of 3 and 8.

A typical 1-mark response. This student has clearly identified that there is a difference in the number of average scores (2 modes and 1 median) but has not explained why this makes the median more appropriate.

It takes the middle value and is less affected by ~~extreme~~ outliers than mode which is only most frequent.

A typical example of a response which cannot be awarded any marks as the explanation is not relevant to the data from Q18.1.

Question 19

Psychologists often observe the behaviour of children.

Suggest how you could carry out an observation of obedient behaviour in Year 5 primary school children.

In your answer, you will be awarded credit for providing appropriate details about the following:

- the type of observation you would carry out
- **at least two** examples of appropriate operationalised behavioural categories you would observe
- the behavioural sampling method you would use for your observations.

[6 marks]

Students' performance varied greatly on this question but encouragingly, most students were able to gain at least some marks and nearly two thirds of the responses were awarded 3 marks or more. It is important that students address the demands of this question and address all three bullet points. Additionally, students need to provide some details of how they would carry out the type of observation they have identified (the first bullet point) and how they would use the type of behavioural sampling method they have identified (the third bullet point). Students should avoid wasting time on justification of their suggestions as this is not what the question demands. Unfortunately, too many students simply named a type of interview and/or behavioural sampling method and failed to outline how they would use them but instead included irrelevant justification of why they had chosen them. For the second bullet point it is important that the examples of behavioural categories to be observed are operationalised (as the question asks), to actually measure obedient (or disobedient) behaviour and align with the behavioural sampling method chosen. There was also some significant misunderstanding of behavioural sampling methods; many students wrote about the participant sampling method and thus did not get any credit for this bullet point.

Exemplification of a successful response

To observe Year 5 primary school children, a naturalistic observation should be used that is covert. This is to ensure that the behaviour of the children is natural because if, for example, they knew they were being observed, they may change their behaviour to be more obedient which reduces the validity of the findings. ^{The students} ~~Example~~ should be observed during lessons at school over the course of 1 week (5 days). Examples of behavioural categories could be 'children talking while the teacher is talking', 'talking back to the teacher in a rude manner' and 'actively ~~not~~ not doing the set task'. The behavioural sampling method I would use is event sampling where a tally ~~count~~ is ^{kept} ~~kept~~ of the behaviours observed so that I can see the frequency of obedient ^{and} ~~disobedient~~ behaviour and compare the two ~~results~~.

Despite some irrelevant justification of the type of observation towards the beginning, this response contains all of the elements needed for a level 3 response. The student has identified a type of observation (lines 2 and 3) and given some detail of how this would be carried out (lines 9 and 10). They have then given some examples of operationalised behaviour categories. Although the first and second categories suggested are implicit measurements of obedience, the third suggestion is explicitly measuring (dis)obedience. The student then goes on to identify an appropriate behavioural sampling method which would work with their suggested behavioural categories and also gives some detail as to how they would use this to record observations.

Exemplification of a less successful response

- I would observe, the amount of times all children listened to one ~~of~~ instruction and write it down.
 - I would also observe, the amount of children who didn't listen to an instruction and write it down
- I would carry out a covert observation so that I would be in the setting of the ~~same~~ children being observed.
- Extra space
- I would use ~~structured~~ ^{random} systematic sampling to gain which primary schools to observe and also the year group to observe.
- also make to sure to gain informed

A fairly typical example of a response where the student has at least attempted to engage with each of the bullet points. The final point is confused and is about the sampling of the participants, not the behavioural categories which is not required and so cannot gain credit. However, there is some very implicit knowledge of event sampling, even though it is not named, in the attempt at behaviour categories ('the amount of times all children...'). The student has attempted to give two examples of behavioural categories at the start and although these are about obedience, these are not operationalised as it is unclear how 'listening' and 'not listening' could be observed. In the middle paragraph, the student has identified a type of observation but has not explained how this (covert) observation could be carried out.

Short answer questions

Questions where students performed well.

Students performed well in several short answer questions across Section A: Approaches in Psychology and Section B: Psychopathology.

Section A: Approaches in Psychology

Students performed relatively well on Q2 and Q3 where they were asked to demonstrate their knowledge of how Bandura investigated social learning and then to asked to explain one limitation with this. It is important to note that students must ensure that their answers are focused upon how Bandura investigated social learning, i.e. his methodology, and not his findings or conclusions. This was particularly evident in Q3 where some students explained a limitation of social learning theory or of Bandura's findings and not of his methodology as the question demanded.

Students also performed relatively well on Q5 where they were asked to label a typical neuron. Over two thirds of students achieved 2 marks or more. The most common mistake students made here was labelling component D as a 'receptor' or 'receptor site' but these would be found on the post synaptic neuron.

Section B: Psychopathology

Students performed relatively well on all the short answers questions.

In Q7, the multiple-choice question, students were asked to identify two behavioural characteristic of OCD which over two thirds of them were able to do correctly.

For Q9 students were required to apply their knowledge of the two-process model to a phobia of the dentist. Encouragingly, students performed relatively well on this question and there appeared to be a notable improvement in this area (application of knowledge) from previous series. However, it is important that students apply their knowledge to the scenario and do not waste valuable time writing generic knowledge which does not address the demands of the question. It was also important for students to use some accurate specialist terminology from classical and operant conditioning if they are to access the higher levels/marks.

Questions where students performed less well.

Q1 appeared to be a challenging question for many students, most likely due to this being the first time this has been directly asked about in an AS examination. This question had one of the highest proportion of responses not attempted (over 2%) on the paper. Students also appeared to struggle with the demands of Q4, which asked them to outline one role of schema.

Common misunderstandings

Question 1

Outline the emergence of psychology as a science.

[4 marks]

Many students focused their answers to this question on the work of Wundt but failed to gain many marks as it was not focused upon his contribution to the emergence of psychology as a science but was merely a description of his research. A few students did produce some excellent responses which used their knowledge of the timeline of approaches in psychology to explain how they contributed to the emergence of psychology as a science.

Exemplification of a successful response

Psychology first started to be accepted as a science through the work of Wilhelm Wundt, the father of psychology, who used structuralism and introspection to study the mind. The lack of reliability of this led to ~~the~~ learning approaches by behaviourists who used the scientific method to systematically ^{and} objectively ~~and~~ study ^{observable} behaviour. This then led to the development of the ^{extra space} cognitive approach and biological approach which increasingly used the reliable scientific method and through rigorous testing develops theories for behaviour based on thought processes ^(cognitive approach) and biology ^(biological approach).

A clear and accurate outline with a clear focus on how psychology has emerged (and developed) as a scientific discipline.

Exemplification of a less successful response

The first psychology lab was opened by Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig, Germany to study internal mental processes through introspection, by telling participants to self-report ~~at~~ their thoughts and feelings to a sound of metronome, ~~Howe~~ in controlled conditions. However, this may have social desirability bias.

Extra space Wundt further explained ~~at~~ structuralism, breaking down experiences and feelings into simpler components to understand it better.

A typical example of a level 1 response which has outlined the work of Wundt but has not effectively linked this to the emergence of psychology as a science.

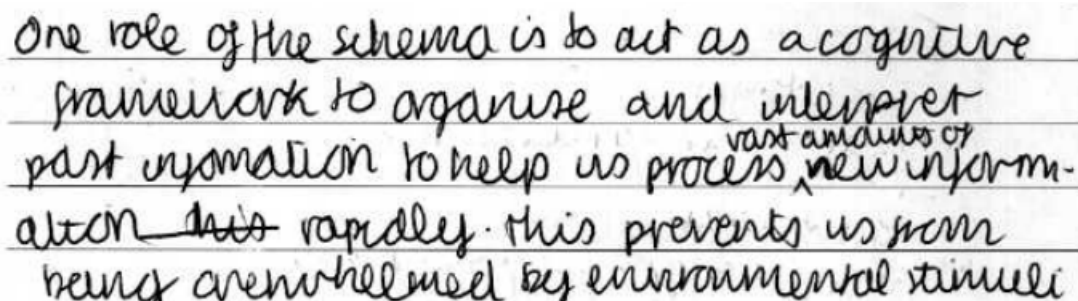
Question 4

Outline **one** role of schema according to the cognitive approach.

[2 marks]

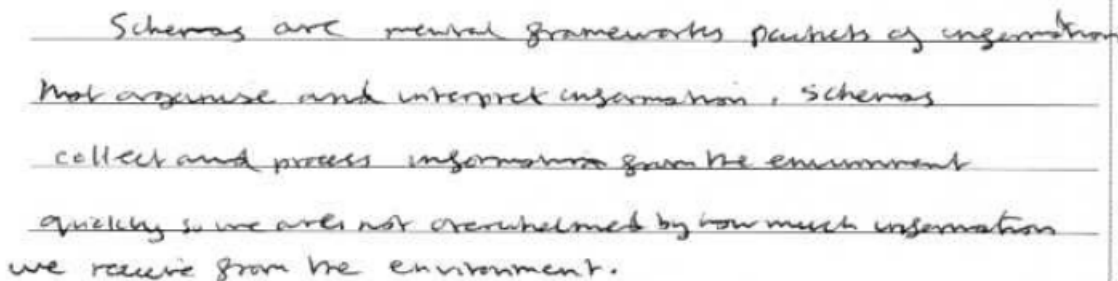
Performance on this question was relatively weak as many students appeared to misunderstand the demand of the question and simply gave an outline of what schema are rather than outline one role of schema. Over a third of students were not awarded any marks on the question suggesting they either failed to understand the demands of the question or lacked the knowledge to be able to answer it correctly.

Exemplification of a successful response



One role of the schema is to act as a cognitive framework to organise and interpret past information to help us process ^{vast amounts of} new information ~~that~~ rapidly. This prevents us from being overwhelmed by environmental stimuli.

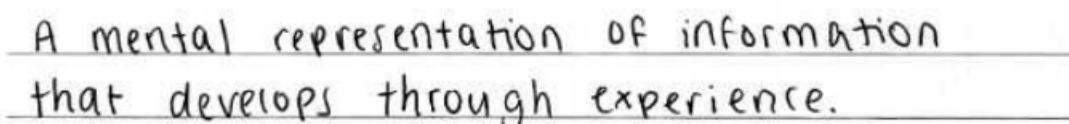
An excellent answer which has gone well beyond the requirements of the question. This response has cleverly combined several roles of schema into one coherent outline.



Schemas are mental frameworks packets of information that organise and interpret information. Schemas collect and process information from the environment quickly so we are not overwhelmed by how much information we receive from the environment.

Despite the irrelevance of the first sentence, which simply outlines what schema are, this response develops, in the second sentence, into a clear and coherent outline of one role of schema.

Exemplification of a less successful response



A mental representation of information that develops through experience.

This response is a typical example of one which attempts to outline what schema are rather than outline one role of schema and thus cannot be awarded any credit.

Extended writing questions

There were two extended writing questions on the paper, one in Section A: Approaches in Psychology and one in Section B: Psychopathology. Students generally performed better in Section B.

Questions where students performed well.

Section B: Psychopathology

Q10 asked students to describe and evaluate the behavioural approach to the treatment of phobias for 12 marks. Students could focus their answer on one treatment in depth or on two in less detail and it was encouraging to see both breadth and depth of knowledge across many responses. Many students also demonstrated some excellent evaluation and reassuringly their performance in this assessment objective (AO3) is improving year on year. As in Q9, it is important that students include relevant specialist terminology from behavioural treatments (likely from flooding and/or systematic desensitisation) to enable them to access the higher levels/marks.

Questions where students performed less well.

Section A: Approaches in Psychology

Q6 asked students to describe and evaluate the biological approach in psychology (8 marks). There was more variation seen in responses here compared to Q10 (the other extended writing question). Some students wrote detailed and effective responses which were clearly focused upon the question, enabling them to achieve high marks. However, there were many other responses which failed to fully address the demands of the question for example: some were muddled and confused, some were largely descriptive and contained very little evaluation, some responses were focused on OCD rather than the biological approach in general and others were not focused on the use of the approach in psychology.

Common misunderstandings

Question 6

Describe and evaluate the biological approach in psychology.

[8 marks]

Exemplification of a successful response

The biological approach views humans as biological organisms and so provides biological explanations for behaviour. The genotype of an individual refers to the 'genetic makeup' of a person, while the phenotype refers to how these genes are physically expressed as observable characteristics due to the ^{interaction} ~~interaction~~ of genes and the environment. Genes are passed down from parents and research has shown that there is a link between certain behaviours and genes, for example, the COMT gene or SERT gene in OCD. Evolution explains, through biology, how certain behaviours are passed on through generations. The nervous system also impacts behaviours. The central nervous system is responsible for controlling and coordinating physical behaviour and physiological processes in the body. ^{Hormones} ~~also~~ also impact behaviour by binding to receptors on

This section of a response demonstrates accurate and detailed knowledge and understanding of the biological approach and is clearly linked to how we can use the approach to explain behaviour (i.e. how the approach is used in psychology).

A strength of the biological approach is that it has practical applications in treatment. A greater understanding of how imbalances of neurotransmitters in the brain may cause disorders has led to effective treatments for these. For example depression has been linked to low levels of serotonin and as a result SSRIs are commonly used to treat depression as they increase serotonin levels. This is a strength as it means that this approach doesn't ~~not~~ just theorise about causes of behaviour but also provides effective, practical treatments for issues. So the biological approach has significant practical uses in treating mental disorders such as depression.

A clear and effective paragraph which explains one strength of the biological approach in psychology. This strength is not only clearly linked to psychology, but it is also developed as it goes on to explain why this is a strength.

Exemplification of a less successful response

There is also a difference between genotype and phenotype. Genotype is the genetic makeup and phenotype is the physical appearance or some characteristic that can be affected by your environment.

However, one limitation is that it is reductionist as it doesn't take into account any cognitive processes that may affect our behaviour ~~and~~ as well as ~~the~~ the environment. It may also be seen as deterministic as it doesn't

These paragraphs illustrate a common problem with many students' responses to this question. In the first paragraph, the student has attempted to explain genotype and phenotype and clearly says how the phenotype 'can be affected by the environment.' They then go onto to contradict themselves by saying how the biological approach 'doesn't take into account...the environment.' Additionally, even if the second paragraph had been accurate, it is not effective as it does not fully explain why the biological approach being reductionist is a limitation for the approach.

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