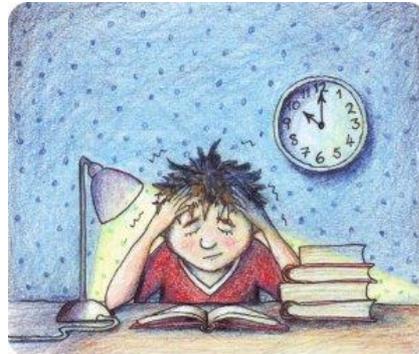# A2 PSYCHOLOGY
G543 OPTIONS PAPER
Health & Clinical Psychology
Forensic Psychology

EXAM TECHNIQUE AND TIPS

GENERAL EXAM INFORMATION

- You will be assessed for this unit in a **2 hour examination.**

- You will need to answer **four questions:** two questions from the topic of Forensic Psychology and two questions from the topic of Health and Clinical Psychology. This means you will have about 30 minutes of writing time per question. This is not a long time to maximise your marks, so there are some simple exam techniques to follow below.

- Each question will be worth 25 marks and be divided into two parts; part (a) and part (b). Part (a) asks you to demonstrate **descriptive skills** and is worth 10 marks, whilst part (b) asks you to display **evaluative skills** and is worth 15 marks.

GENERAL EXAM TECHNIQUE / ADVICE

- *Choose the right questions:*
- A mistake made by some students is answering questions on a topic they haven't studied!
- **Firstly locate the two sections of the paper** that you can answer questions on; Forensic and Health/Clinical.
- In each of these two sections, there will be a choice of four questions. Pick which TWO questions you are going to answer and cross out the others. Choosing which questions to answer may be difficult than it first appears because some questions may sound similar. You need to become familiar with the layout and wording of questions prior to your exam.

GENERAL EXAM TECHNIQUE / ADVICE

- ***Know your timings:***

- Part (a) = 10 marks (approx 10mins)
- Part (b) = 15 marks (approx 20mins)
- MB: It may be better to use 5 mins planning & then spend 15 mins on part (b)

- Try to divide your time equally between all four questions on the paper in order to maximise your marks. It is a bad idea to do two brilliant essays on Forensic Psychology and then to find you have very little time to write your two Health and Clinical answers.

Example Exam Question: Forensic

- **a) Describe relevant research which informs us about how a jury reaches its verdict. [10]**

- Candidates are most likely to draw upon Stages and influences on Decision Making (e.g. Hastie 1983), Majority influence (e.g. Asch 1953). Minority influence (e.g.Nemeth & Wachtler, 1974) but any other relevant research should be credited.

- **0 marks** – No or irrelevant answer.

- **1-2 marks** – Psychological terminology is sparse or absent. Description of evidence is limited, mainly inaccurate and lacks detail. There is no interpretation or explanation of the evidence in the context of the question. The answer is unstructured and lacks organisation. Answer lacks grammatical structure and contains many spelling errors.

Example Exam Question: Mark Scheme

- **3-5 marks** Psychological terminology is basic but adequate. Description of evidence is generally accurate and coherent, has peripheral relevance but lacks detail. Elaboration/use of example/ quality of description is reasonable but interpretation of the evidence in the context of the question is poor. The answer has some structure and organisation. The answer is mostly grammatically correct with some spelling errors.

- **6-8 marks** – Psychological terminology is competent and mainly accurate. Description of evidence is mainly accurate and relevant, coherent and reasonably detailed. Elaboration/use of example/quality of description is good. There is some evidence of interpretation and explanation in the context of the question. The answer has good structure and organisation. The answer is mostly grammatically correct with few spelling errors.

Example Exam Question: Mark Scheme

- **9-10 marks** – Correct and comprehensive use of psychological terminology. Description of evidence is accurate, relevant, coherent and detailed. Elaboration/use of example/quality of description is very good and the ability to interpret/explain the evidence selected in the context of the question is very good. The answer is competently structured and organised. Answer is mostly grammatically correct with occasional spelling errors.

Example Exam Question: Part (b)

- **b) Discuss the problems of conducting research into courtroom behaviour.   [15]**

- Candidates would be expected to know that live courtroom research is illegal and therefore, mock or shadow juries have to be used. These lead to problems as does a straightforward laboratory study. Problems could be ethics, sampling, validity, reliability, demand characteristics, etc.

Example Exam Question: Part (b)

- **0 marks** – No or irrelevant answer.

- **1-3 marks** – Few evaluative points. Range of points is sparse. No evidence of argument. Points are not organised, and are of peripheral relevance to the context of the question. Sparse or no use of supporting examples. Limited or no valid conclusions that effectively summarise issues and arguments.

- **4-7 marks** – Argument and organisation is limited, and some points are related to the context of the question. Limited evaluative points. Valid conclusions that effectively summarise issues and arguments is evident and demonstrates some understanding

Example Exam Question: Part (b)

- **8-11 marks** – Some evaluative points covering a range of issues. The argument is well organised, but may lack balance or development, and is related to the context of the question. Good use of examples. Valid conclusions that effectively summarise issues and arguments is competent and understanding is good.

- **12-15 marks** – Many evaluative points covering a range of issues. The argument is competently organised, balanced and well developed. The answer is explicitly related to the context of the question. Effective use of examples. Valid conclusions that effectively summarise issues and arguments is highly skilled and shows thorough understanding.

How to Construct an Argument

- The mark scheme for part (b) questions includes comments about the quality of argument. To get into the top band, your argument must be 'competently organised, balanced and well developed'. In addition, it should be 'highly skilled' and show 'thorough understanding'. So, what does this look like?

- **1. Firstly make your claim/state your point.**

- Samples used by researchers in the courtroom lack generalisability.

- **2. Then, give a reason for your claim/explain your point *(because…)***

- Because researchers use opportunity samples of their own students when carrying out their research.

- **3. Now, support your claim/point with evidence.**

- For example, Nemeth & Wachtler used a sample of adult students in his study into the effects of minority influence.

How to Construct an Argument

- **4. You can now provide further evaluative comment -**
- This is problematic because the students may be gaining course credit by taking part and may therefore show demand characteristics by behaving in a way they think the researchers want. As they are mainly psychology students, they may also be able to work out the researcher's aim. In this study, perhaps adult students are less open to conformity effects and so may not give responses representative of a more mixed jury.

- **5. Lastly, provide a counter argument to demonstrate a really thorough understanding *(however…)***
- However, researchers need the convenience of an opportunity sample to be able to complete their research in a reasonable time and against a limited budget.

- **6. Conclude.**
- So caution would be needed when applying the findings to an actual courtroom situation.