As in previous years, the 2013 examination report provides feedback for candidates about performance on this examination and indications for how future candidates may improve performance in relation to examiners’ expectations of material covered and criteria addressed. It is recommended that this report for external assessment is read in conjunction with previous reports of 2008 – 2012, available on the TQA website at [http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/1119](http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/1119)

WRITTEN EXAMINATION PAPER

The following remarks necessitate some repetition of report comments from previous years. Candidates are advised to read all previous reports carefully, and to utilise advice and direction given. Examiners iterate the importance of showing understanding of material for each unit of the course.

- For the vast majority of candidates information was communicated clearly, precisely and flowed well.
- All questions directed candidates to refer to the stimuli to demonstrate understanding of concepts.
- Again, to analyse and evaluate ideas and information, candidates need to demonstrate skill in analysis and evaluation of the evidence, explanations and concepts they are dealing with.
- There was evidence of pre-planned essay responses. Candidates need to take care to answer the specific question, in particular, to cover the necessary concepts. A ‘formula’ response often seemed to lack depth of understanding in relating evidence and examples to the key concepts in the question.
- Candidates would benefit enormously from spending a little time planning their answer in terms of structure and being able to clearly articulate their thoughts and knowledge.
- Some candidates used the full referencing details each time the stimulus was discussed rather than referring to stimulus 1 and stimulus 2.
- Some responses seemed contrived as the candidates forced all concepts on both stimuli, which was unnecessary.
- Avoid using ‘proves’ or ‘it is obvious that’ or ‘indeed’ as this often is not the case.
SECTION A – LEARNING

Question 1

Conditioning

- This question was completed to a strong standard by most candidates who displayed well prepared and thorough knowledge of the concepts relevant to conditioning.
- Candidates explored how classical conditioning operates, the generalisation of fear, the possibility of one-trial learning and extended discussion to include ways to treat a classically conditioned fear (systematic desensitisation, aversion therapy, flooding).
- Most candidates identified the connection to positive reinforcement and used this stimulus to discuss different aspects of operant conditioning, reinforcement (positive and negative) and punishment (positive and negative).
- Many candidates organised their response around the four key concepts, weaving in discussion of the stimuli and some empirical evidence.

Criterion 3

- Stronger responses included brief, relevant discussion of classic research (Pavlov, Watson and Rayner, Thorndike, Skinner) and extended the discussion to include other examples of human learning from the plethora of studies in the texts (CER, systematic desensitisation, flooding, aversion therapy for Classical Conditioning and Behaviour Modification, token economies, shaping and rarely, learned helplessness/punishment for Operant Conditioning) and had a variety of human studies on both types of conditioning.
- Stronger responses then related studies back to the stimuli.
- Stronger responses identified the difference between continuous reinforcement (evident in this study) and the possibility of the parents using schedules of reinforcement to maintain learning.
- Weaker responses did not provide empirical evidence and were vague about studies, or failed to include human studies.
- Candidates needed to take more care reporting studies accurately (‘Little Albert’ study was frequently misreported).
- Some candidates included Observational Learning (including Bandura). The information provided was strongly linked to modelling, but was not related to vicarious conditioning, therefore not connecting or relating strongly to the question.

Criterion 5

- Strong candidates were able to clearly define each concept and relate the terms to the stimuli and develop this into a full analysis including key processes associated with classical and operant conditioning. Some included detailed diagrams of how the stimuli related to these key processes.
- When defining the terms candidates needed to show deeper understanding, e.g limited real-life examples of how the terms are used by humans.
- Stronger answers gave detailed examples of all types of schedules of reinforcement, and included all types of reinforcement.
- When discussing CS and CR, stronger answers discussed the NS and how it was changed into a CS through the process of association.
- Weaker responses used terms incorrectly, particularly negative reinforcement and negative punishment and conditioned and unconditioned stimulus.
Question 2

Observational/Social/ Cognitive Learning

- Majority of candidates who chose this question had prepared for Observational/Cognitive learning.
- Candidates did not use the stimuli in a particularly sophisticated way. Miniature/child-sized tools in Stimulus 1 could have been linked to reproduction. Better candidates differentiated between ‘violence’ and ‘aggression’ when discussing Stimulus 2.
- Most responses provided real life examples which were within the life’s experience of the candidate.

Criterion 3

- Most candidates provided a reasonably constructed viewpoint, with stronger responses providing both greater argument and relevant evidence.
- A good range of evidence was provided by most candidates with Tolman, Harlow, Kohler animal evidence used as a basis to explain how learning occurs.
- Using commonly referred to research, the vast majority of candidates supported their answers with relevant evidence.
- There was sometimes disproportionate specific detail about the studies used, up to half the written response.
- There was evidence that candidates had prepared thoroughly but lacked the ability to clearly link knowledge with the stimuli and discussed insight learning with the detail needed for latent learning.

Criterion 5

- Generally criterion 5 was well addressed, however Cognitive processes needed to be addressed more directly.
- Stronger responses linked research evidence to the stimuli, drawing in psychological concepts as part of their discussion, resulting in an integrated answer.
- Weaker responses listed research, commented on stimulus material, and made little to no connection between the two.
- Stronger candidates used definitions of concepts and ideas presented in a sequential way.
- Weaker responses defaulted to listing concepts and ideas under headings, then providing a “text book” definition. This was viewed as evidence of the psychological concept but does not show a deep conceptual knowledge or ability to apply knowledge of that concept to the question.
- Candidates often did not make it clear they understood the processes of attention, retention, of social learning and that latent learning and insight learning are/ or use cognitive processes.
SECTION B – REMEMBERING

Question 3

Memory

- This question was pleasing as it provided an opportunity for most candidates to demonstrate their knowledge while at the same time challenged the more able candidates.
- Many candidates were well prepared for this topic and could provide lengthy, detailed responses.
- Stronger responses answered the question, and continually referred to both criteria and the questions asked, integrating information successfully and applying their knowledge to the stimuli in some detail.

Criterion 3

- Stronger responses included a though discussion of at least 2 theories of processes involved in encoding and storage of information. These included working memory (stimulus 1), multi store and levels of processing models, reconstructive (schema) theory, semantic network and others, supported by relevant examples and research studies, such as the serial position effect.
- Stronger responses presented much evidence to support the views presented, and had a detailed knowledge and understanding of the topic area.
- Stimulus 1 appeared to present few problems to most candidates, who were able to explain the roles of and relationships between most of the components of working memory.
- More able candidates were also able to explain stimulus 2 in terms of flashbulb, episodic and false memory, providing relevant research evidence.
- Weaker responses merely re-wrote the stimulus pieces, providing little other reference to theories or psychological research. This was particularly apparent in relation to stimulus 2.
- There appeared to be a significant number of candidates who were less well prepared for false memory and struggled to provide explanations for this, some resorting to references to forgetting theories such as interference, amnesia and retrieval cue failure as possible explanations.
- Weaker responses provided insufficient and generalized information.

Criterion 4

- This criterion was challenging for many candidates.
- Many could explain the components of working memory in relation to other theories of memory, some making insightful and well prepared evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of each theory, with research findings to illustrate these, especially in relation to stimulus 1.
- This was less true for stimulus 2, where weaker responses which referred to the stimuli gave little or no explanation of them, or restated the stimuli but did not analyse the information, interpret it or compare these with supporting evidence.
- A number of responses were able to explain false memory in terms of flashbulb memory, the debate about false memory syndrome, the role of emotional factors in memory and reconstructive memory, with references to research and case studies such as Bartlett and Loftus on eye witness testimony and implanting a false memory. These answers were well rewarded and some were excellent.
Question 4– Forgetting

- Most candidates had prepared well for this question and demonstrated a very good knowledge of the theories of forgetting.
- However, some were a little confused by the wording of question (a) thinking they needed to link state-dependent forgetting to stimulus 1 which was not the case.
- Candidates do not need to include information not asked for in the question. Pre-learned answers were obvious as these included a section on techniques to enhance memory (which was not required information by the question).
- Care needs to be taken with the information included from the memory section of this module.
- Check with the course guide for the theories of forgetting.

Criterion 3

- There was a real range in the use of empirical evidence.
- Some candidates wrote generally about examples.
- Stronger responses were much more specific and explained the theory, provided the research and the names of the theorist/s.
- Stronger answers related their explanations of forgetting back to the stimuli.
- Weaker responses generally drew on the stimuli more extensively and used these as evidence rather than extrapolating.

Criterion 4

- Most candidates were able to discuss a number of forgetting theories.
- Many candidates provided more than what was asked for in the question, demonstrating a very comprehensive knowledge.
- Stronger responses were able to acknowledge there is not one theory to explain forgetting and this provided them with the scope to evaluate each theory.
- Stronger responses gave evidence of some kind relating to theories, research and examples.
- Weaker responses merely described the stimuli and had little relevant specific content rather than any actual analysis or evaluation.

SECTION C

PSYCHOBIOLOGICAL PROCESSES

Question 5

Perception

- Many responses started with a detailed explanation of sensation at the expense of other elements more directly related to the question.
- Some candidates were able to explain the given concepts but were unable to apply these to the stimuli.
- Many gave a factual account of each concept but made no attempt at analysis and evaluation.
- Many confused which part of the question required them to refer to the stimuli.
• Some candidates indicated they were going to answer both part (a) and (b) together but only answered part (a).
• Many weaker candidates chose this question even though they displayed a limited understanding of the topic.

Criterion 4

• The majority of responses referred to both stimuli; however, there tended to be repetition of the information provided in stimulus 1 – perhaps because so much was already explained about size constancy in this stimulus.
• There was quite a variety of interpretations of stimulus 2; in general, it was not utilized as thoroughly as it could have been.
• Some candidates made little or no reference to the stimuli.
• Some candidates were able to analyse processes well and provide some evaluation of those processes in allowing an individual to view the world.
• Stronger responses supported the existence of processes with empirical evidence to evaluate their relevance.
• Often too much detail was given about the processes in a way that did not analyse, evaluate or apply to the question.
• Some candidates took a top down/bottom up approach here and provided an excellent answer, while others were confused about the processes that applied in each category.
• Strong responses referred to the stimuli periodically in assisting their explanations of the various concepts including the role of the various psychological factors which establish a perceptual set and the impact of this on an individual’s perception.
• Stronger responses evaluated these processes and ‘Top-Down’ theories by comparing to ‘Bottom-Up’ theories of perception as well as Neisser’s ‘Interactionist’ view.
• Strong responses also analysed the stimuli in evaluating each of these theories of perception.

Criterion 5

• Stronger candidates were able to define and show detailed understanding of psychological concepts and ideas, supported by relevant real life examples, reference to the stimuli and empirical evidence.
• Some candidates tended to list relevant information and not show a deeper understanding of concepts required.
• Real life examples added to the quality of many responses.
• Stimulus 1 was used well and leant itself to provide better quality answers. Candidates struggled more to use stimulus 2 effectively and many tried to apply it where it was not relevant.
• Many responses did not describe all aspects of perceptual constancies, or depth cues (i.e., some elements were not discussed or mentioned).
• Majority of responses did refer to/ explain top-down and bottom-up processing in their explanation for Part (b) of the question; as well as discussing perceptual sets, although not explicitly asked to do so.
• Many responses merely provided ‘rote’ definitions of the concepts with no application of these to real-life situations or the stimuli.
Question 6

Consciousness

• Most candidates were able to answer the question competently, with some excellent and detailed responses.
• Candidates are, however, reminded they need to address the question that is actually asked and not throw in irrelevant material, e.g. sleep theories when these were not asked for.

Criterion 4

• Some candidates had obviously been prepared very well for this question and demonstrated an excellent knowledge of the dream theories.
• Stronger candidates gave a detailed analysis of the stimulus material and integrated this with other information on the topic.
• Stronger responses were able to analyse and evaluate the theories of dreams.
• Most candidates were able to give some explanation of dream theories.
• Weaker candidates found analysis and evaluation of dream theories challenging.

Criterion 5

• This was not an easy question given the nature of the first stimulus.
• Candidates are reminded they must refer to the stimuli as directed.
• Most candidates displayed a good level of knowledge of NWC, ASC and the characteristics of sleep as an ASC.
• The concepts/terms were generally dealt with very well.
• Many candidates had been prepared for the measurements of consciousness and were able to include the various measures, as well as demonstrate an understanding of the stimulus into their responses.
• Some candidates did not give sufficient detail on measurements of consciousness and merely referred to the continuum of consciousness.
• In NWC discussion of levels of awareness, attention and delineation of selected and divided attention showed depth of understanding.
• The majority of candidates were able to mention one or two measurements and made good reference to the stimuli.
• Weaker candidates ‘dumped’ discussion of sleep theories in this section.
Investigation Project 2013

Individual Differences

Candidates and teachers are referred to previous Examiners’ reports as comments were again very similar to past findings.

- Overall the Investigation Projects were quite pleasing, covering a broad range of topics, from all 3 options - personality, intelligence and gender. Most also were of good quality, following the suggested format and meeting the word count limit.
- Candidates need to be aware that complicated does not mean better; often the simple projects are more manageable.
- Some candidates neglected to make the links between or even acknowledge psychological concepts such as individual differences, nature-nurture/genetic and environmental influences.
- Candidates appeared to have benefited from the exclusion of the method in the word count as this enabled a more detailed analysis and discussion.
- A variety of methodologies were used, the most popular being experiment, survey or observation studies.
- Quantitative data was predominately collected.
- Some studies collected very subjective data (like opinions or self-rating scales) which candidates attempted to use to support factual or more objective hypotheses.
- Better studies made genuine and valid attempts to explain the results, i.e. explain the reasons to account for why the results came out the way they did.
- Do not type entire document in bold print.
- There is no need to include planning document.
- Aim and hypothesis should be at the end of the Introduction, not in Methodology.
- It is not necessary to start each section of the IP on a separate page.
- All raw data sheets do not need to be included; tables and summaries of this in the Appendix are sufficient.
- Do not back pages.
- Staple the document onto the folder in the top LEFT corner ONLY, NOT across the top as this makes it hard to read.
- Candidates and teachers need to be familiar with and adhere to the guidelines for the Independent Project folio.

Criterion 1

- In general projects that had a more specific focus topic (eg. spatial ability and gender difference) had better quality and more detailed specific results as well as a more thorough analysis/discussion.
- Some topics/hypotheses were too broad and generalized to adequately quantify in terms of results and had difficulty drawing appropriate conclusions in a small scale research study.
- Introductions should not be longer than the Discussion.
- Avoid dumping and listing of irrelevant definitions in the Introduction.
- Quotes are included in the word count.
- Objective third person point of view should be used.
- Methodology needs to be written in past tense.
• No need to include secondary sources in the Methodology.
• IV and DV need to be stated in experiments.
• Selection of subjects need to be clearer or stated. The incorrect use of ‘random’ selection/ sample was common. Studies need to stipulate how this was done.
• Do not graph raw data.
• Graphs/ tables in Results section need a brief descriptor underneath.
• There is no need to include all 3 of mean, medium and mode unless there is a spread that could be useful.
• Summarizing the “key findings” in the analysis section was clearer where there were complicated results.
• Limitations should not be the focus of the Discussion and should be reasonably short.
• Some projects suffered as they presented lengthy bibliographies with virtually no in-text referencing. Only references used and referred to in the report are to be included in the References list.
• Personal Investigations need to be included in the reference list and all sources of stimulus material for the research task acknowledged with this.
• Reputable Psychology references are preferable to Wikipedia, general dictionaries and general websites.

**Criterion 7**

• A trend with a reasonable number of projects was a question about the appropriateness of the topic selected. Some projects set very broad hypotheses, often which attempted the impossible.
• Choice of methodology for what was being investigated produced a mismatch between the design and the independent variables. Consequently the research design used was often not the best method for obtaining results to test the hypotheses and the variables.
• Survey instrument – some did not acknowledge the source (i.e. whether they had replicated it or modified it) or on what they had based their survey instrument. Sometimes surveys included leading questions which would have influenced the responses of their subjects.
• Matching design with hypothesis and independent and dependent variables is important. IV and DV are required for experiments.
• Generally investigations were satisfactory in terms of ethics; however some did not adequately address the sensitive nature of their topic. A small number of projects did not adequately address ethical considerations, mainly through the use of deception in their research design.
• The number of participants used needs to be determined carefully in order to gain valid results.
• In the Discussion/analysis there was, generally speaking, not enough (or any) linkage to the unit of the syllabus; i.e., individual differences and nature/nurture.
• Limitations were generally acknowledged
• Students should be aware of mis-using statistical terms like ‘highly significant’ or ‘positive correlation’. These can really only be used if the appropriate statistical analysis has been conducted (which the guidelines stipulate is not necessary).
• As Methodology is not counted for word count, ensure that the process used is explained clearly so it is clear what processes were used in the study.
• Compare results with the secondary references used.
• Make sure there are references to the secondary sources in analysis /discussion sections.
# Award Distribution

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# Student Distribution (SA or better)

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