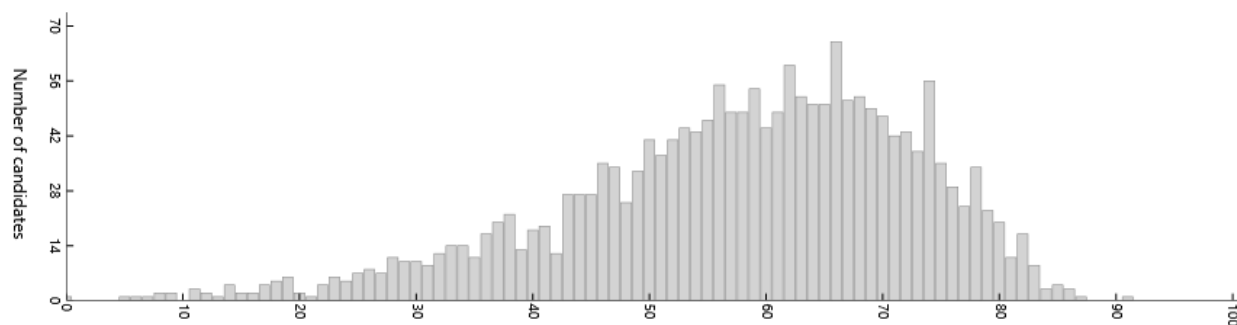




Summary report of the 2017 ATAR course examination: Psychology

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2017	1916	29
2016	1721	50

Examination score distribution



Summary

Attempted by 1916 candidates Mean 57.70% Max 91.00% Min 4.69%

The mean score for the examination was marginally lower than the average of 60.46% achieved for the 2016 examination. However, the range of scores is comparable to previous years, and appears to demonstrate the considerable variability candidates' preparedness for, and approach to, the examination. The examination complied with the examination brief and the style of questions closely resembled those used in recent past examinations. Questions related to all main areas of the syllabus, with questions related to specific areas of the syllabus that were not examined in 2016. The examination comprised a total of 180 marks, equating to one mark per minute of working time, and the number of marks per section were also commensurate with the suggested working time for each section. This represented a further decrease in marks compared to the past two examinations and was done in an attempt to ensure that candidates had sufficient time to complete all questions.

Section means were:

Section One: Research methods	Mean 58.53%		
Attempted by 1916 candidates	Mean 11.71(/20)	Max 18.89	Min 0.56
Section Two: Short answer	Mean 59.45%		
Attempted by 1916 candidates	Mean 32.70(/55)	Max 50.67	Min 1.24
Section Three: Extended answer	Mean 53.76%		
Attempted by 1895 candidates	Mean 13.44(/25)	Max 22.54	Min 0.00

General comments

While the mean for Sections One and Two were lower than the 2016 results, it was pleasing to see an increase in the mean for Section Three, with this score being over 50% for the first time. It was also very pleasing that the maximum possible mark was achieved by at least one candidate for every question in Sections One and Two, and scores of 27 out of 28 were achieved for both questions in Section Three.

The examination questions involved an appropriate balance of recall and application of knowledge, and that missing responses appeared to be due to lack of knowledge rather than a lack of time. There was evidence of candidates writing responses that related to questions in previous examinations, despite repeated advice that syllabus content is examined in a cyclical manner.

Advice for candidates

- Be familiar with the content of all areas of the syllabus. In particular, you should not rely solely on one textbook as a source of information.
- You are strongly encouraged to review previous examinations to become familiar with the types of questions that are likely to be included. However, you are advised to note that content of the syllabus is examined in a cyclical manner and previous questions will not be reused in their exact form.
- You must be able to explain concepts and apply knowledge, not just demonstrate rote recall of facts.
- You are reminded to read questions carefully, to use psychological language to demonstrate understanding of psychological concepts, and to be able to differentiate different concepts.
- You are encouraged to attempt all questions for an opportunity to obtain at least some marks for each question.

Advice for teachers

- Please ensure that students have knowledge of all aspects of the syllabus, while being aware of the cyclical coverage of the syllabus in the examination.
- Please ensure that students study a range of learning resources rather than relying on a single textbook. One textbook alone does not provide sufficient depth of content for all of the syllabus areas.
- Your students should also be familiar with a range of examples of psychological evidence related to syllabus areas, including seminal research studies and other examples of psychological research that are critical to the scientific basis of the discipline.
- Your students should be able to apply their understandings in a flexible way to unfamiliar questions and scenarios rather than providing rote-learned or generalised responses.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Research methods (35 Marks)

Attempted by 1916 candidates

Mean 20.49(/35) Max 33 Min 1

Section One consisted of two questions that covered syllabus content on planning, conducting, processing, and evaluating psychological research. The mean of 58.53% for this section was several marks lower than it has been in previous examinations. This seems to be mainly due to confusion in relation to concepts related to statistical concepts and some aspects of research designs, and participants' rights in research.

Section Two: Short answer (89 Marks)

Attempted by 1916 candidates

Mean 52.91(/89) Max 82 Min 2

Section Two consisted of eight questions covering content from Units 3 and 4. Strong candidates were able to clearly apply their knowledge to the questions and demonstrate accurate knowledge of theorists and theories. Some candidates however, lost marks for not providing quality examples related to the question or being very general in their response. In a few questions some candidates seemed to lack exposure to a particular section of the course.

Section Three: Extended answer (56 Marks)

Attempted by 1895 candidates

Mean 30.11(/56) Max 50.5 Min 0.00

Although it is pleasing that only approximately two percent of candidates did not attempt one or both of the extended responses, it should be noted that these non-attempts have a substantial impact on the examination and section means.