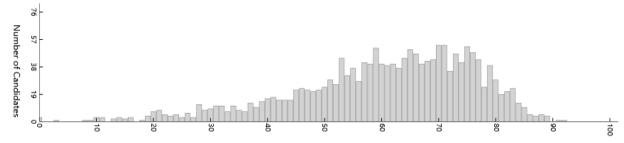


Summary report of the 2016 ATAR course examination: Psychology

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2016	1721	50

Examination score distribution



Summary

This was the first year of the Psychology ATAR course with the examination design brief being very similar to previous years. The mean of 60.46% for the examination was very pleasing. The scores ranging from 3.33% to 92.17% with a standard deviation of 15.84%.

Section means were:

Section One: Research methods	Mean 12.60(/20)	Max 20.00	Min 0.00
Section Two: Short answer	Mean 36.16(/55)	Max 53.17	Min 1.57
Section Three: Extended answer	Mean 12.05(/25)	Max 22.32	Min 0.00

General comments

Candidates who did well are congratulated on their demonstrated knowledge of the syllabus content and their ability to apply psychological knowledge to real-world behaviour. It was very pleasing that the maximum possible mark was achieved by at least one candidate for every question apart from Question 11. The length of the examination was appropriate and any non-responses appeared to be due to a lack of knowledge rather than insufficient time. As per previous years, it has been noted that in a number of instances some candidates wrote answers that appeared to be rote-learned responses to previous examination questions and did not address the current question. This was particularly the case where candidates were required to apply their knowledge to a given scenario.

Advice for candidates

- Be familiar with the content of all areas of the syllabus.
- Be able to explain concepts and apply knowledge, not just demonstrate rote recall of facts.
- Read questions carefully and answer the specific question rather than writing a prepared response. This is particularly important when you are asked to relate your response to a given scenario.
- Use the number of marks allocated to each question as a guide to the number of points required.
- Psychology is an evidence-based discipline and it is essential to have knowledge of a range of psychological theorists, theories, and research studies to provide as support for your statements in Section Three: Extended answer.

Advice for teachers

- Ensure that students have knowledge of all aspects of the syllabus.
- Ensure that students study a range of learning resources rather than relying on a single
 resource such as the Fletcher and Garton textbook. The textbook alone does not provide
 sufficient depth of content for all of the syllabus areas. Candidates 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.
- Students should be able to apply their understandings in a flexible way to novel questions and scenarios rather than providing rote-learned or generalised responses.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Research methods

Attempted by 1718 candidates Mean 12.60(/20) Max 20.00 Min 0.00

Section One consisted of three questions that covered syllabus content on planning and conducting psychological research as well as processing and evaluating psychological research. As in previous years, the overall mean for this section shows that it is the area of the examination in which students performed most strongly.

Section Two: Short answer

Attempted by 1718 candidates Mean 36.16(/55) Max 53.17 Min 1.57

Section Two consisted of seven questions covering content from Units 3 and 4: Biological influences/bases of behaviour, cognition, personality, relational influences, social psychology, communication and culture and values. As per the design brief, each question contained multiple parts generally written to be of increasing complexity. The general trend towards declining average scores across the sub questions supports this progression of difficulty.

Section Three: Extended answer

Attempted by 1673 candidates Mean 12.05(/25) Max 22.32 Min 0.00

As per previous years, the mean mark for this section was less than 50% which is of concern. Many candidates wrote very brief responses or left these questions blank. The questions deliberately sampled several different areas of the syllabus to maximise the potential for candidates to be able to demonstrate their knowledge. However, very few candidates covered all of the areas that were flagged in the scaffolding points. It is unclear as to whether this might reflect candidates not reading the entire question carefully and planning their response to ensure that they cover all required aspects, or whether it reflects candidates' limited knowledge. Some candidates wrote quite long generalised responses about particular theories but did not apply these to the scenario and therefore gained a limited number of marks. Few candidates were able to use psychological evidence to support their points but a small number of candidates did this well.