

Specimen Paper Answers – Paper 2

Cambridge International AS & A Level Psychology 9990

For examination from 2024



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Introduction

These specimen answers have been produced by Cambridge ahead of the examination in 2024 to exemplify standards for those teaching Cambridge International AS & A Level Psychology 9990. We have provided examples of high and middle-level answers for Specimen Paper 02, Section B, question 10(a).

The marks given are for guidance only and are accompanied by a brief commentary explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the answers. Comments are given to indicate where and why marks were awarded, and how additional marks could have been obtained.

The mark schemes for the Specimen Papers are available to download from the [School Support Hub](#).

2024 Specimen Paper 02

2024 Specimen Paper Mark Scheme 02

Past exam resources and other teaching and learning resources are available from the [School Support Hub](#).

Details of assessment

The syllabus for Cambridge International AS & A Level Psychology is available at www.cambridgeinternational.org

Paper 2 – Research Methods

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes, 60 marks

Candidates answer **all** questions.

This paper contains two sections:

- Section A: short answer questions based on general research methods and research methods relating directly to a core study and three short answer scenario-based questions.
- Section B: a planning question where candidates plan a study and evaluate some aspects of this plan.

The paper will focus on knowledge and application of research methods and methodological concepts and how these relate to the core studies.

For the planning question, candidates will apply their knowledge of the research methods and practical issues and methodological concepts to plan an investigation. Some aspects of the investigation will be provided for candidates as part of the question and candidates will be required to plan the other aspects of the investigation.

Question 10(a)

Dr Felix believes that adults between the ages of 55 and 65 cope less well with their job regardless of whether they stay in the same job or change jobs. Dr Felix plans to use a sample of adults aged 55 at the beginning of the study. She will re-contact the participants by telephone as she has a record of each individual's telephone number and will be following appropriate ethical guidelines.

(a) Describe how Dr Felix could conduct a longitudinal study to investigate how well adults between the ages of 55 and 65 cope with their jobs.

Do **not** describe how Dr Felix would re-contact her participants, the sample/sampling technique or ethical issues/guidelines in your answer. [10]

Specimen answer – high

Dr Felix must plan to collect data at regular intervals from age 55. She could contact her participants by email in January every year until they are 65, so 11 times in total. Each year she will use the same questionnaire. It would be online so that she can access all the same people even if they move around. Her questionnaire needs to have questions about coping and whether they have changed jobs. She also needs a way to know who is who, by giving them a number, so she can track individual changes.

Her first question will be how old are you which they answer in months and years. This is a closed question: How old are you? Years __, months __. Then there will be a set of closed questions about the job: 'Are you in the same job as last year? Yes/No', 'If no, is the new job in a similar career? Yes/No', 'Is the new job a promotion? Yes/No', 'Is the new job similar hours? More /the same / less'.

The main part of the questionnaire will be about coping.

The participants are given instructions with the questionnaire telling them to spend no more than 15 minutes answering the questions. When Dr Felix and a colleague analyse the answers, they will use a set of definitions to help them to be consistent. She should aim to work with the same colleague each year to standardise the way they analyse the answers to the open questions. For example, to interpret a question asking 'Describe a situation at work you coped with well.', there could be lots of possible answers so they could have a list of positive words such as 'effective', 'friendly' and 'productive' to look for in the responses. Another question could ask 'If you find any other employees difficult to work with, explain why'. There could be closed questions on this questionnaire too, such as 'Rate how well you feel you are coping at work'. It is important when the data is being analysed to consider whether if an individual participant is coping less well, this is because they are older than last time or because they have changed their job and the new job is harder to cope with. The findings from these

questions can be compared with the quantitative answers to the questions about how hard their job is, which can just be totalled up as 2, 1 or 0, and an average calculated for each age group, e.g. as 'same job' is easier to cope with, that's 2; if the new job is similar that's 1 as it's harder to cope but not as hard as if it's different, which score 0. Also, they may have other issues in their lives that make it harder for them to cope with their job, such as children or deaths. The questionnaire should ask about these too.

Mark awarded = 9 out of 10

Examiner comment

The 10-mark questions are marked using a levels-based mark scheme. It is worth noting the focus on required features. These features for each type of study (experiment, observation, etc.) are listed in the Cambridge International AS & A Level Psychology 9990 syllabus.

This is a very good answer, tackling each of the four required elements in detail.

The task is clearly a questionnaire in two parts, one about the job and one about coping. At the end, the candidate adds a further idea, about other factors affecting coping, which is also relevant to this. The details of the task are also good. It is identified as an online questionnaire, with open and closed questions and appropriate examples of each are given, covering both of the key ideas of the job and coping.

The suggested questions about other factors affecting coping, mentioned at the end, could have included more details or examples, and the question 'Rate how well you feel you are coping at work' needed a scale, e.g. '...from 0-10, where 0 is not coping at all and 10 is coping perfectly'.

Scoring is also tackled well, with good information about analysis of the open questions and about totalling and averaging the quantitative data. Some further details of the quantitative data would have been useful, especially as the scoring for the rating scale was absent.

The frequency of testing over time is stated, and matches the demand of the question, plus the use of the same questionnaire and co-coder for the interpretation is given. Irrelevant material is included about emailing the participants; this is not credited but also does not result in a lower mark. This is not required as the question states that Dr Felix contacted them by telephone and the rubric states 'Do not describe how Dr Felix would re-contact her participants'.

Several control/standardisation measures were described, including the testing at fixed intervals (yearly), maintaining records to identify each participant (confidentially), the use of the same colleague to help with the analysis of the qualitative data, plus strategies such as the word list to help to improve consistency between them. Also, the instruction to participants to spend no more than 15 minutes would act as a standard feature.

The response meets the requirements for Level 5; all required features are described in detail showing good application to the situation and methodological knowledge. The only thing that stops it from being awarded full marks is the lack of detail about rating scale used by participants when answering questions and there could have been more detail or examples of questions.

Specimen answer – middle

Dr Felix will interview the participants using a semi-structured interview and although she contacts them by phone she will interview them face-to-face. Face-to-face interviews are better because they give you lots more information from the body language. But there is the weakness that it might put people off talking to someone directly, so Dr Felix might end up collecting less data than if she used an online or telephone interview. She will ask them lots of questions about their job and how they cope with it, such as:

1. Do your colleagues ever annoy you? yes / sometimes / no.
2. Do you have the same colleagues as last year or different ones? If they are different ones, are they easier or harder to work with?
3. Do you ever worry about your job when you should be asleep? Never = 0, Often =5.
4. Describe your worst day at work this year.
5. Is this worse than your worst day last year? Here Dr Felix can prompt them with what they said last year if they have forgotten and ask them more questions about it.
6. When you cope well at work you probably feel good. Explain why.
7. Have you had any experiences this year that have affected how well you coped at work and how did they influence you?

These are open and closed questions producing qualitative and quantitative data. They can be analysed by counting up the scores and averaging them.

When Dr Felix interviews the participants, she needs to make sure she dresses the same each year and that she always sounds the same and smiles as much, otherwise the participants might respond differently because of her, not how well they are coping. She should also time her interviews. Question 2 is important because if they now have nasty colleagues that could explain why they aren't coping, so Dr Felix needs to take this into account in her results. Question 5 shows that it is a semi-structured interview, as it will be different for different participants.

Mark awarded = 6 out of 10

Examiner comment

This is a middle range answer which makes some attempt to tackle each of the four required elements, although not all are discussed in detail.

The task is well described, as a semi-structured interview (which it clearly is, as the response indicates with question 5) that is conducted face-to-face. However, the evaluation which follows this is irrelevant. The time spent on this would have been better used on details about the questions or a description of analysis.

The suggested questions are clear, varied and relevant, demonstrating a good understanding of both question techniques and applying them to the topic. They do indeed include 'open and closed questions producing qualitative and quantitative data' but the response does not indicate which are open/closed or which produce qualitative/quantitative data. These details would have improved this answer.

Details of scoring are very limited. The reference to questions that 'can be analysed by counting up the scores and averaging them' is correct and appropriate, but it does not indicate which questions could be analysed in this way or how this could be done. A brief reference is made with regard to how analysis might be affected by responses to question 2 ('if they now have nasty colleagues that could explain why they aren't coping, so Dr Felix needs to take this into account in her results'), but no indication is given of how this would be accounted for (e.g. by adjusting the coping scores for participants with nastier new colleagues).

The frequency of testing over time is not clear and, although it is implicit that she will interview the participants repeatedly, no detail is given of when this would happen or over what length of time. It is not clear whether the interviews could vary from year to year.

The details about control/standardisation measures are very good. Points include standardising clothing, voice and facial expression. Although reference is made to timing the interviews, this needs to be extended to say that the aim of this would be to spend the same amount of time on each interview. Finally, question 2 could also have an impact on the standardisation of scores, although this is not made explicit.

This response demonstrates features of Level 3 of the marking grid, making some attempt to tackle each of the four required elements with some detail for some features but information on frequency is implicit rather than explicit. Good detail on controls and variety of questions demonstrating good understanding of question techniques and application to the scenario give this response the higher mark in Level 3.

Common mistakes

- Unnecessary repetition which takes up too much time. Time is better spent on expanding other areas of the question.
- A lack of organisation and planning is a common mistake that candidates typically make. A few moments identifying what needs to be said for each of the 'elements' for the research method required by the question helps to give the answer direction and cohesion (these can be found in the syllabus on the grid entitled 'Planning studies for Paper 2', located after the Details of the assessment for Paper 2). It is critical that each of these research method-specific elements is covered in the response.
- It is important to follow the rubric of the question. The specimen answer – high in this booklet, correctly follows the instruction not to include information about sampling or ethics, but unnecessarily refers to how Dr Felix would re-contact her participants. This was specifically *not* required, so does not earn any credit.
- Omitting the obvious is a common mistake. This is a longitudinal study, so the response must make explicit reference to the required element of repeated testing.
- In an effort to describe choices within the candidate's plan, some responses include irrelevant evaluation.
- The listing of terminology is only creditworthy if it is anchored into the response, i.e. it demonstrates an understanding of the meaning of the terms given.
- The listing of terminology is one type of incomplete idea. Another is to make a relevant point without indicating why it is relevant. For example, the specimen answer – middle in this booklet includes the sentence 'She should also time her interviews', without indicating that this is necessary in order for her to control the length of each interview and a similar omission is made with regard to the inclusion of question 2.

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