2025 ASSESSMENT REPORT
BHP315116 PSYCHOLOGY

Folio Component

Overall, the quality of folios across each topic was good, with the majority focussing on gender or personality, with fewer choosing to study intelligence this year. Most folios were structured according to the recommended guide from TASC.

Criterion 1

Many students selected suitable topics, with stronger folios focusing on a single area of gender, personality, or intelligence. Attempts to combine topics often resulted in less depth. The most effectively executed folios, emphasised the main topic in both the introduction and discussion of their report, creating a distinctive and clear direction; however, sometimes this was not always done well and some folios lacked context in their introductions which led to issues around their topic choice. Acknowledgement of nature/nurture/interaction was highly recommended, with some folios making no mention of the overarching question of this topic area. It is strongly recommended to future candidates that topic selection, and the formulation of a focussed aim, is done in conjunction with the teacher, as this will lay the foundation for a successful report.

Research integration was generally effective, with most topics supported by an appropriate selection of studies. Arguments were strongest when a balanced number of specific studies were cited; excessive or insufficient references tended to undermine the justification. Psychological theories were occasionally under-utilised, as some students addressed the broader nature–nurture debate without clearly articulating their specific focus. Future candidates should ensure that theories and studies included in the introduction are directly relevant to the topic and are referenced in the subsequent analysis. While relevant terminology and real-life implications were often addressed, weaker responses frequently lacked clear definitions and failed to engage with theories related to individual differences.

Good folios demonstrated clear integration of relevant theories or models. Stronger folios provided thoughtful analysis of results, drew meaningful inferences from their data and effectively related findings to studies introduced earlier in the report. These folios also offered well-founded, real-world conclusions. The most successful folios featured introductions that established clear context and directly aligned with the research aim and hypothesis.

Overall, folios that explicitly linked their research topic to course theories, succinctly summarised secondary research in the introduction and integrated these insights to justify their investigation achieved the highest standard.

Criterion 6

Many students demonstrated strong study designs in their folios, with most using Appendix II: Guide for Writing the Report from the Psychology External Assessment Specifications (EAS) effectively. It was pleasing to see that many reports contained clear and comprehensive methodologies. A common strength was the formulation of a sound operationalised hypothesis, which was the foundation of a good folio. Most students were able to correctly identify and define independent and dependent variables, although in some small cases, clarity around this was lacking. The most effective reports contained an appropriate hypothesis that carried through into the analysis and discussion. Future candidates are reminded that all data collected should be relevant to the hypothesis, to maintain clarity and focus on the discussion. It is also recommended that the creation of an appropriate experimental design for the folio should be a focus when examining research method and appropriate formats for the folio.

Ethical Guidelines were generally well addressed. However, it was important that any ethical consideration specific to the candidate's own investigation was carefully considered and explained, rather than simply being listed. It is recommended that future candidates ensure that an exemplar consent form is always provided in the appendices and that aspects of ethical considerations, such as gaining parental or school consent for participants under sixteen years of age, is clearly stated and evidenced in their documentation. We continue to remind students and teachers to ensure that anonymity is upheld in all documentation; names of teachers, students and schools were noted throughout many reports this year. Anonymity should also be upheld when describing participants and target population in the Method, and it is recommended that participant descriptors do not include type of school, area/region of state and gender (unless relevant to design).

Successful research designs specified exactly what data would be collected and how that data was to be quantified. This was somewhat problematic for some weaker reports this year, due to the significant number of surveys undertaken. Future candidates are recommended to look closely at the format outlined in Appendix II of the Psychology EAS, which includes the use of descriptive statistics, role of table and figures, as well as ensuring raw data is always clearly labelled in the appendices.

When evaluating their investigation, weaker reports limited their evaluation to sample size issues and extraneous variables, rather than addressing deeper methodological concerns that might have had a greater impact on the results. Good reports used concepts from personality, gender, or intelligence to evaluate findings, or identified clear issues with the research tools used. It is recommended to future candidates to go beyond surface-level critiques, such as sample size, and address deeper methodological issues that affected the validity and reliability of their findings.

Criterion 8

Overall, a pleasing number of students used appropriate language and grammar, adhering to Appendix II of the Psychology EAS. Most folios had word counts in the permitted range, allowing for more detailed discussion of findings. Strong connections between primary data and secondary sources were often made, with many students giving genuine thought to experimental design complexities beyond the usual limitations that may have contributed to the hypothesis not being supported. APA referencing conventions were generally followed, with many folios integrating a wide range of relevant psychological sources into the body of the report.

Generally, word count limits were followed, though some reports slightly exceeded the limit, while others under-used it, which limited the depth and opportunities for further theoretical exploration or evaluation. Responses were mostly grammatically correct, with only a few using first person or present/future tense, which is discouraged. The balance between sections was generally fair, with discussions typically longer than introductions. However, some folios featured very short introductions and lengthy discussions, which limited theoretical justification and delayed the presentation of key ideas.

Successful folios demonstrated an effective balance of analysing various elements of their findings, effectively linking these to secondary research and methodology critiques. Good discussions went beyond simply stating results, instead making thoughtful suggestions about what their findings, and the relationship between these findings and other research, might indicate about the topic. In contrast, some weaker discussions tended to merely list their own results and restate what was found, often repeating descriptions from the introduction. To improve, it would be beneficial for students to do more than just identify whether results were similar or different; they should also consider the approaches taken in each study and reflect on how these may have influenced the outcomes.

Referencing was mainly done well, following correct APA formatting. Weaker reports had inconsistent or missing in-text references, while stronger reports clearly indicated sources, mainly from journal articles or textbooks. The quality of both introductions and discussions was often enhanced by using multiple peer-reviewed sources. Future candidates are reminded that the Appendices should include all items related to the research design and report, this includes the raw data and research instrument. This year there were several reports that did not include a full copy of their research tool and consent form and used links that could not be accessed by the marker.

Written Component

General Comments

General observations noted by markers on some exam technique issues that need attention:

- Avoid lengthy restatement of stimulus material at the expense of analysis. Responses should focus on demonstrating understanding and applying concepts rather than repeating provided information.
- Write in pen, not pencil, and ensure handwriting is legible.
- Manage time effectively to prioritise explanation and evaluation over repetition.

Section A: Psychological Processes

Question 1: Visual Perception

Overall Comment

Most students demonstrated a clear understanding of the required concepts and responded competently to the question. Responses reflected a strong knowledge of the visual perception system, with many showing impressive depth and a comprehensive grasp of psychobiological processes involved. The use of stimulus material was generally effective and both parts a) and b) were addressed satisfactorily by most students.

Criterion 2

Sound responses directly addressed the required question content, namely: top-down and bottom-up processing, perceptual set and gestalt principles, with stronger responses discussing other relevant concepts and theories explaining visual perception. Many students began their discussion with a brief explanation of visual sensation, as well as key processes of visual perception. This was generally an effective introduction, especially later connecting aspects of sensation to specific theories and perceptual principles. Although not a compulsory aspect of the unit, understanding visual sensation does enable the student to make valuable connections to the entire visual perception system. However, with that said, weaker responses spent too long on these definitions, at the expense of responding to the question. It was pleasing to see most responses included both Bottom-up and Top-down theories, with stronger responses analysing their strengths and limitations, as well as incorporating Neisser's cyclical approach. Some errors were noted regarding where concepts "fitted" within the visual perception system framework. Future candidates should review the organisation and interpretation stages of the visual perception system and the placement of concepts, theories and studies within this framework. Students are encouraged to develop deeper conceptual knowledge in their explanations. For example, stronger responses defined Gestalt principles, utilising Stimulus 1, providing everyday examples, as well as empirical evidence such as Navon, thus moving beyond rote descriptions.

Criterion 7

Most responses effectively integrated both stimulus pieces into their written work. However, weaker responses tended to merely quote the stimuli without further analysis or linking it to relevant concepts or theories. All future candidates are reminded that both stimuli must be

addressed; a small number did not reference the stimulus material at all. Stronger responses incorporated empirical evidence and provided thorough analysis of theories, as well as demonstrating an effective use of the stimuli. Additionally, most students applied their knowledge of illusions appropriately, as conceptual knowledge, evidence and in evaluating theoretical perspectives. It is important when providing additional concept knowledge or theory that it is relevant and explicitly connected to the question posed.

Question 2: Consciousness

Overall Comment

Responses to this question were well prepared and demonstrated a breadth of knowledge related to the key concepts outlined in the question and stimuli materials.

Criterion 2

Many students began their responses by explaining the characteristics of Normal Waking Consciousness (NWC) and contrasting it with Altered States of Consciousness (ASC). However, weaker responses tended to focus narrowly on the NREM and REM stages of sleep and the effects of sleep deprivation, without providing a comprehensive overview of NWC. To improve, future candidates should ensure they address a broader range of NWC characteristics, such as levels of awareness, attention (including selected and divided attention) and the distinction between automatic and controlled processes. There were several conceptual errors within some responses and it is recommended that future candidates work closely on understanding all facets of Normal Waking Consciousness (NWC) and Altered States of Consciousness (ASC). When discussing dream theories, most students referenced those outlined in the TASC course document, correctly identifying the psychologists, theory names and types (e.g., biological). For further improvement, future candidates should ensure they critically evaluate each theory, comparing their strengths and limitations, and support their arguments with empirical evidence or real-life examples.

Criterion 7

Students utilised the stimulus material effectively, with many referencing Stimulus 1. Strong responses analysed the graph to explain variations in sleep requirements across age groups, while weaker responses merely listed average sleep hours. Most responses connected the stimulus to sleep deprivation, discussing its consequences. Those addressing dream theories compared the four main theories and supported their arguments with evidence from Stimulus 2. Stronger responses used everyday examples to demonstrate the impact of sleep deprivation on awareness, attention and cognitive processes. These responses clearly distinguished between REM and NREM sleep, providing detailed descriptions and supporting their explanations with evidence from both stimuli. Empirical studies such as the Cocktail Party Effect (Cherry, 1953), the Stroop Effect (Stroop, 1935) and Neisser & Becklen (1975) were referenced. Good responses also provided detailed explanations of theories such as Oswald's Restoration Theory (1980) and Meddis's Survival Theory (1977), using evidence from Stimulus 1. Key empirical studies, including Smith & Rose (1997), Rechtschaffen (1989) and case studies of Randy Gardner and Peter Tripp (Dement, 1978, 1972), were cited to reinforce their evaluations, resulting in well-supported and insightful analyses.

Section B: Human Learning

Question 3: Conditioning

Overall Comment

A large number of students attempted this question and overall responses demonstrated a solid understanding of conditioning, often incorporating human applications. Most began with a definition of learning and referenced Pavlov and Skinner's pioneering studies. Many attempted to integrate the stimuli and key concepts from the question, with stronger responses using Stimulus 1 and 2 as the foundation for discussion particularly when explaining concepts such as negative reinforcement. These stronger responses also provided a balanced comparison of operant and classical conditioning and maintained clear structure with an introduction, body and conclusion. Weaker responses tended to favour one theory and lacked structure. The marking group recommends candidates include definitions of key terms and adopting a clear structure to support critical evaluation, noting that even responses without formal structure performed well when critical evaluation was embedded throughout.

Criterion 3

Responses for Criterion 3 showed a wide range of depth. Most students addressed key concepts from both classical (NS, UCS, UCR, CS, CR) and operant (+R, -R, +P, -P) conditioning, often mentioning processes such as acquisition, extinction, spontaneous recovery, stimulus discrimination and generalisation, as well as schedules of reinforcement. Stronger responses used these concepts to explain conditioning and link them to human applications like flooding, graduated exposure, aversion therapy, token economies, shaping and learned helplessness. Higher-level answers incorporated one-trial learning and Mowrer's Two-Factor Theory, demonstrating theory analysis and contrasting classical and operant conditioning by discussing distinctions such as learner role, timing and nature of response. Evaluation was generally limited but improved responses when included.

Part a) of the question posed challenges, particularly with shaping and conditioned emotional response. Stronger responses defined these terms clearly and tied them to stimulus items, while weaker responses omitted them or confused shaping with general behaviour modification. Negative reinforcement was often misunderstood as punishment despite the definition being provided, and some students confused "Conditioned" and "Unconditioned" with "Controlled." Most identified classical conditioning elements correctly in Stimulus 2, though some mixed up NS and UCS. Stronger responses provided accurate examples for shaping and conditioned emotional response, connected negative reinforcement to practical examples with reference to examples, such as teaching a dog to roll over or teaching children to write, and integrated concepts beyond the dot points. Weaker responses relied on quoting definitions without deeper explanation.

Criterion 7

Many responses attempted to address ethical issues in Watson and Rayner's *Little Albert* experiment, but these were generally ineffective unless linked back to classical conditioning concepts such as extinction. Stronger responses demonstrated a more balanced approach by briefly referencing foundational research from Pavlov, Thorndike and Skinner, while weaker responses relied heavily on animal studies without extending discussion to human applications.

Stronger answers made effective use of the stimuli provided. Stimulus 1 was often used creatively to illustrate operant conditioning consequences, with examples such as describing negative reinforcement as chores being removed for desirable behaviour or packing up toys to stop nagging. Stimulus 2 was integrated into explanations of classical conditioning, unpacking how it demonstrated a conditioned emotional response and connecting this to Watson and Rayner's work. These responses highlighted differences between emotional reactions in advertising (happiness) and fear responses in *Little Albert*, linking the discussion to phobia development. Many extended this analysis by referencing Mary Cover-Jones' counter-conditioning study and Sue, Sue and Sue's flooding research as alternative treatments for phobias. Matson and Ollendick was another study accurately cited in relation to shaping. Wade and Tavris also appeared in stronger responses to suggest drawbacks of token economies when these were discussed.

Additionally, stronger responses supported theoretical concepts with relevant research. For example, shaping was explained with reference to Matson and Ollendick's toilet training study and Skinner's pigeon study, reinforcing understanding of operant conditioning processes. These responses stood out for their ability to integrate stimuli, apply theory to real-world examples and support arguments with empirical evidence, whereas weaker responses tended to remain descriptive and lacked depth.

Further evidence included:

- Allyon and Azrin (1968) – token economy in prison to improve behaviour
- Cohen and Fillipzac (1971) – token economy
- Miller (1972, 1976) – token economy in share-housing to reduce rent
- Hobart-Mowrer (1947, 1960) – two-factor learning theory
- Bernstein (1978) – learned taste aversions in chemo patients
- Azrin and Foxx (1971) – operant conditioning toilet-training
- Wolpe (1958) – systematic desensitisation / graduated exposure (hierarchy of fears)
- Stampfl (1975) – flooding therapy
- Weins and Menustik (1983) – aversion to drinking alcohol
- Seligman (1972) – learned helplessness.

Question 4: Observational/Cognitive Learning

Overall Comment

Most responses to this question were sound in length and were predominantly structured as essays addressing both parts a) and b). Most students engaged with both stimulus materials and addressed all three required concepts. Strong responses utilised the stimuli to develop key ideas, integrating relevant theories and empirical evidence from human studies. In contrast, less effective responses tended to paraphrase the stimulus material or overemphasise animal studies, neglecting the human learning component.

Criterion 3

Modelling, observational learning and cognitive maps were clearly defined and thoroughly discussed, with effective integration of key processes and model attributes. Less successful responses provided only superficial coverage of these concepts, lacking depth and failing to demonstrate their interrelationships. In contrast, stronger responses offered analytical insights,

extending beyond the question to include real-life examples, such as solving complex riddles, to illustrate concepts like incubation and the ‘Aha’ moment.

Criterion 7

Many students referenced Bandura’s Bobo doll experiment to illustrate observational learning and effectively applied key elements through examples such as the Suzuki Method. Stronger responses provided balanced evaluations of theories, clearly articulating both strengths and limitations. In contrast, weaker responses lacked critical analysis, often repeating generic statements such as, “this theory does not account for all learning.”

Stronger responses leveraged the stimulus material to support their arguments with relevant evidence, including studies like Johnson’s (2007) TV viewing study and Deng’s (2024) consumer behaviour study. Additionally, some student responses broadened their evidence base by incorporating research on cognitive maps, such as Epstein’s (2017) study on human spatial navigation. Weaker responses, however, relied solely on the provided stimulus, focusing on animal studies like Tolman’s rat in the maze experiment at the expense of human examples.

Section B: Remembering

Question 5: Memory

Overall Comment

Overall, responses were often lengthy, which sometimes resulted in strong answers for Criterion 4. Many students spent considerable time covering multiple models and theories, partly due to the inclusion of “and/or” in part b) of the question. While this led to briefer explanations of individual models, it gave some candidates more opportunity to incorporate evidence.

Across the cohort, understanding of memory ranged from stimulus-dependent responses with limited additional knowledge to highly integrated essays that used theory, models and empirical evidence to construct clear psychological arguments. Many candidates correctly identified key processes such as encoding, rehearsal and retrieval, and referred to working memory. However, imprecise or incorrect definitions of memory were common and weakened responses at all levels. Stronger candidates defined memory as a set of processes involved in encoding, storing and retrieving information over time, while weaker responses either omitted a definition or described memory as a physical location.

A recurring issue was confusion caused by Stimulus 1, which combined elements of the Multi-Store Model (Atkinson & Shiffrin) and the Working Memory Model (Baddeley & Hitch), while the accompanying text described only working memory. Lower-range responses often treated the entire diagram as the Working Memory Model, incorrectly claiming it included a sensory register. Better answers used this as an opportunity to highlight differences between the models.

Criterion 4

Many students focused heavily on part b) of the question and overlooked the first two dot points. Stronger responses incorporated these within their discussion of models, providing clear definitions and linking stimulus material effectively. Furthermore, excellent responses drew explicit

connections between rehearsal and established models of memory such as Craik and Lockhart's Levels of Processing.

Most students demonstrated solid understanding of Atkinson & Shiffrin and Baddeley & Hitch, with many providing evaluation and comparison between the two. Some responses extended to additional theories such as Semantic Network Theory and distinctions within long-term memory. Weaker answers often reworded stimulus material without adding substantive knowledge, whereas better responses integrated the stimulus accurately, especially when discussing STM capacity and applying relevant sections from Stimulus 2.

Criterion 7

A notable weakness was the lack of empirical evidence. Responses that relied solely on stimulus material could not achieve higher than a C standard. Many students failed to provide evidence or struggled to link evidence to the models discussed. Some cited studies incorrectly.

Common issues included naming studies (e.g. Henry Molaison (H.M.), Peterson & Peterson) without explaining findings or misusing H.M. by failing to connect it to Atkinson & Shiffrin's Multistore Model. Stronger responses provided relevant evidence and explained how it supported or evaluated the models. Some students who discussed additional models were able to use evidence effectively, which improved their performance on this criterion. The H.M. case study was frequently used to illustrate the distinction between procedural and declarative memory, but often not applied to Multistore Model as expected.

Many students quoted stimulus material appropriately, while stronger answers elaborated and applied it to their discussion. Some responses failed to use stimulus material or referenced only one stimulus, which weakened their answers. Better responses were precise in referencing specific sections and integrated stimulus material with theoretical analysis.

Question 6: Forgetting

Overall Comment

Candidates who performed well on this question demonstrated a comprehensive understanding by addressing both organic and non-organic causes of forgetting. They were able to clearly distinguish between psychological and physiological causes and provided evaluations of interference theory alongside other relevant theories. Most responses appropriately began with a definition of forgetting. Some students referenced stimuli from both the memory and forgetting questions, likely due to the formatting issue.

Criterion 4

High-quality responses extended beyond the examples provided in the stimulus materials, incorporating additional evidence and linking concepts to other theories. In contrast, weaker responses relied heavily on the stimuli to address all concepts mentioned in the question.

There was noticeable confusion between proactive and retroactive interference, even when correct examples were given. Many students referenced mnemonic devices in relation to Stimulus 1 – *Forgetting Curve* as strategies for improving memory. However, lengthy explanations of certain experiments often limited candidates' ability to fully address the question.

Criterion 7

Some candidates provided detailed explanations of the Ebbinghaus graph (Stimulus 1) without referencing any additional evidence, while others incorrectly treated the graph as supporting evidence for Ebbinghaus' theory.

Weaker responses tended to revert to lengthy descriptions of memory theories rather than applying them effectively. Stronger answers included clear explanations of pseudo-forgetting with relevant examples and cited a variety of supporting evidence, which strengthened their arguments.

High-performing candidates were precise in referencing specific sections of the stimulus, whereas weaker responses used vague references such as "Stimulus 2."

A notable trend this year was the lack of empirical and supporting evidence, which limited many candidates to achieving no higher than a 'C' for Criterion 7. Overall, a significant proportion of candidates appeared underprepared for this topic, relying too heavily on the stimuli and failing to address the required concepts to a high standard.