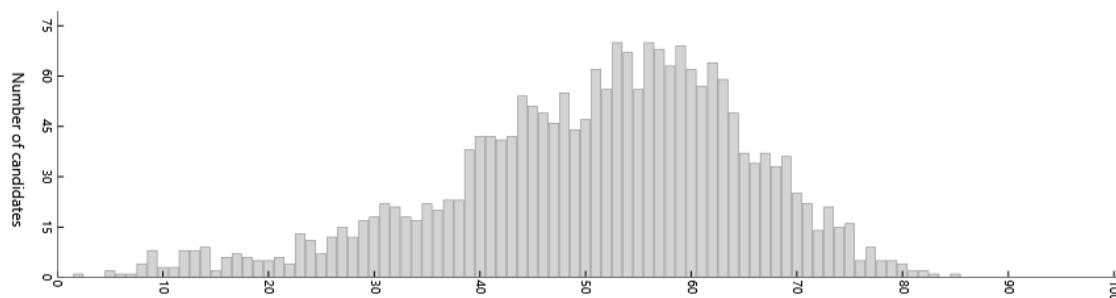




Summary report of the 2018 ATAR course examination: Psychology

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2018	2108	30
2017	1916	29
2016	1721	50

Examination score distribution–Written



Summary

The means for all three sections of the examination were lower than in 2017. This was disappointing given that each year the examination panel addresses feedback from the previous examination with the aim of further improving the mean mark. Many candidates appeared to have significant gaps in their knowledge of the syllabus and as such left questions unanswered or wrote a response based on general knowledge. There also seems to be a lack of depth to their knowledge, demonstrating a need to go beyond a singular text.

The examination complied with the design brief, followed syllabus wording and there were no changes in the types or format of questions compared to previous years. There were several areas in which fundamental misconceptions or incorrect responses continue to be demonstrated by candidates. The examination comprised a total of 174 marks, slightly less than one mark per minute of working time, and the number of marks per section were also close to a mark per minute of the suggested working time for each section.

Attempted by 2108 candidates Mean 50.88% Max 85.38% Min 1.82%

Section means were:

Section One: Research methods Attempted by 2108 candidates	Mean 49.35% Mean 9.87(/20)	Max 16.97	Min 0.00
Section Two: Short answer Attempted by 2107 candidates	Mean 57.36% Mean 31.55(/55)	Max 52.80	Min 1.47
Section Three: Extended answer Attempted by 2067 candidates	Mean 38.65% Mean 9.66(/25)	Max 22.16	Min 0.00

General comments

While disappointing to observe a decrease in the overall mean compared to 2017, it was very pleasing to note that the maximum possible mark was achieved for every question in Sections One and Two with only one exception being Question 2(g)(ii). Although Section Three averages were low, candidates were still able to score a maximum mark of 32.5 (99%) and 30 (91%). While there was a range of questions from recall to application, candidates seemed to struggle with many of the rote learnt answers and missing responses seem to be due to a lack of knowledge rather than a lack of time.

Advice for candidates

- Candidates are reminded that it is essential to prepare for the examination by having an understanding of content related to all components of the syllabus for Units 3 and 4.
- Go beyond a singular textbook, read journals and papers put forward by the theorists listed in the syllabus.
- There is an expectation that candidates can explain and apply what has been learnt, not simply recite it. Demonstrating an understanding is essential.
- Candidates need to read questions carefully and ensure that their response is aligned with what is being asked in the question.
- Use psychological terminology wherever possible.
- Attempt all questions.

Advice for teachers

- All areas of the syllabus are assessable. Ensure students are familiar with all aspects of the syllabus and are answering examinations based on this knowledge, not general knowledge or knowledge from other courses.
- Use a range of resources when teaching concepts, journal articles can be particularly useful resources. Relying on a singular text limits the depth in many areas of the syllabus.
- Students need to be taught how to write extended responses for Psychology, in particular how to refer to psychological evidence.
- Students should be able to provide the details of an experiment before explaining how this experiment and the results are relevant to the concept being discussed.
- Students need to be able to demonstrate their understanding of concepts covered, rather than simply recalling rote learnt facts or relying on general knowledge.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Research methods (20 Marks)

Attempted by 2108 candidates Mean 9.87(/20) Max 16.97 Min 0.00

Section One consisted of three questions that covered syllabus content on planning, conducting, processing, and evaluating psychological research. The average of 49% was lower than 2017. This seems to stem from a limited understanding by some candidates of the more complex statistical concepts (such as standard deviation). As Psychology is a science, it is imperative that statistics are taught as outlined in the syllabus. The role of the researcher and evaluation of and ways of improving research were also not answered well.

Section Two: Short answer (55 Marks)

Attempted by 2107 candidates Mean 31.55(/55) Max 52.80 Min 1.47

Section Two contained six questions evenly covering syllabus content from Units 3 and 4. This was the highest averaging section for the examination. Strong candidates demonstrated clear understanding of concepts being assessed and appear to have looked at research beyond a singular text. Candidates tended not to gain full marks due to generalised responses or a demonstrated lack of depth and understanding of concepts. A number of low level questions were answered poorly.

Section Three: Extended answer (25 Marks)

Attempted by 2067 candidates

Mean 9.66(/25)

Max 22.16

Min 0.00

Candidates did poorly in this section. There was a high number of non-attempts or very limited attempts resulting in a low mean. Non-attempts have a significant impact on the examination and section means. There was concern that candidates were unable to write an extended response for the Psychology setting, with many candidates providing pages of simple recaps of psychological evidence with no application or explanation of how the evidence explains the concepts being tested. Candidates need to acknowledge that experiments are separate to the theory, and that experiments are to be used to support a theory, not be a focus of their answer. Candidate answers to Question 11 demonstrated a large gap in student knowledge.