**Examiner feedback from 2010**

General

Common errors included incorrect labelling of the response in the answer booklet. It should be noted that the appropriate two digit number should be used and that whole questions must be answered, rather than a mixture of sub-sections.

The introduction of the extended questions was intended to differentiate between students and offer a stretch and challenge element to the examination. This aim was definitely achieved, as a full range of marks was evident, clearly allowing those students with an in-depth knowledge to access the higher marking bands. It must be remembered that these questions require students to achieve a percentage of the mark scheme, rather than the one point – one mark criteria applied to the rest of the questions. It is the intention to attempt to create mark-schemes containing approximately

At least 18 points are needed to be made to access the top band of marks, 12 points the second band and so on. This would be a good rule of thumb in the preparation of students. If they are aiming to achieve the top mark they should provide a minimum of 18 points, which would cover all variations in the number of points required for all questions.

Section B Question 5

08 The question required students to explain the concept of social facilitation, its impact on performance and strategies to reduce any negative impact. There was evidence of a full range of marks, but the majority of answers were not as good as the extended question in Section A, with many failing to name Drive Theory or explain others who might impact on performance. Those who did understand the concept scored well, often using the correct technical terminology and applying it succinctly to the given situation.

The strategies to overcome the effects of a crowd allowed students to demonstrate their applied knowledge and it was pleasing to see many were able to provide a wide range of techniques. Many gave in-depth answers naming a range of stress management techniques as well as attribution retraining and varying the preparation prior to an event. However, marks were lost by often being too vague, for example, blocking out the crowd rather than saying improve selective attention.

Question 6

* 09  Candidates were asked to explain the components of an attitude and give a suitable positive example. Responses varied considerably, ranging from those who gave detailed explanations of the Triadic Model with excellent examples, to those which merely gave very general comments about how a player may be seen to have a positive outlook. The least well known component was the affective element and many students gave examples of negative attitudes, which were not credited.
* 10  The question focused on the use of attributions following defeat. It was pleasing to see a large number of candidates displaying an excellent knowledge of this area of the specification, often exceeding the marks available on the paper. Many were correctly able to identify the use of specific attributions to maintain motivation and use terms such as self-serving bias and attribution re-training in the correct context. However, answers were not credited if they simply stated external factors or internal factors as this was too vague. Also, many students explained the theory correctly but did not then apply the knowledge as requested, and as a result gained no marks.

Question 7

11  The question explored the relationship between arousal and performance with specific reference to the Catastrophe Theory. There was a surprising lack of understanding concerning this area. Whilst many were able to link optimal arousal to peak performance (few correctly identified this occurred at ‘moderate’ levels of arousal) and a subsequent decline in performance caused by over-arousal, there was a clear lack of awareness that performers could recover or continue to deteriorate. Many seemed to think this was the Inverted U Theory. Very few were able to link the state of arousal to the different types of anxiety a performer would experience.

12  This section focused on the cognitive stress management techniques a performer could employ to reduce levels of anxiety. The majority of candidates were able to correctly identify cognitive techniques rather than somatic method and most were able to name and explain the basic procedures involved. However, many students failed to give sufficient depth to be awarded the final mark. Those who gave a number of techniques were only credited for the first one that was named. The most common answer was imagery or visualisation with very few mentioning attentional control.

Question 8

13  Most students were able to explain the Profile of Mood States, with many answers being supported by clearly annotated diagrams. Occasionally students lost marks by not using the correct terminology for the ice berg profile and numerous students stated a performer needed high levels of aggression and vigour, which was incorrect. Again some students provided answers that were in excess of the marks available, and whilst this is to be commended, it may hinder their ability to provide sufficiently detailed answers in other sections of the paper due to a lack of time.

14  The question required students to show their understanding of task cohesion and discuss its relevance to success. Very few students accessed the higher marks, and the majority were only credited with an explanation of the term and possibly one other for elaborating on the need for effective communication or understanding their roles. The majority did not mention social cohesion, which was a logical aspect to include in the response and make a comparison between the two.

**Examiner feedback from 2011**

General

A general weakness throughout the paper, which is similar to previous years, was the lack of application of specific theories to applied situations. Too often answers did not supply sufficient detail to gain marks and many were unable to link the relevant theory to the topic area. This should be an area of development as many students could have achieved more marks if they were able to name the correct theory initially.

There was also a repeat of the comment in relation to the essay for students to make at least 18 comments to access the higher band marks.

Section B

Question 07

The vast majority of students displayed a good understanding of ‘cohesion’ and were able to differentiate between ‘task’ and ‘social’ cohesion. However, many failed to develop the discussion into which was the most relevant and why. There was also an awareness of Steiner’s Model of Group Productivity, but many answers gave incorrect terms and did not identify the ‘faulty process’ involving ‘co-ordination and motivation’ as the main causes.

As with the Question 1, marks were lost by not explaining key terms, for example social loafing and the Ringelmann Effect. Numerous answers also included Tuckman’s Model of Group Formation, which was irrelevant. The extended questions are a challenge but students can waste a considerable amount of time if they attempt to write down everything they know about a topic area; they must attempt to develop the skill of recognising the focus of the question and the relevant theories linked to it.

The strategies to improve cohesion were generally well answered, although some responses were not creditworthy. For example, a significant number of answers merely included last year’s mark scheme, which was linked to stress management techniques. Students have to consider the question carefully.

Question 08

This question was about achievement motivation. It was not a question that many students chose to answer, with those who attempted it gaining few, if any marks. Apart from naming ‘personality’ with ‘need to achieve’, or ‘need to avoid failure’ as an alternative, the understanding of the concept being linked to the situation, taking into account the incentive value and probability of success, was evident in very few answers.

Question 09

As this question was linked to Question 8, it was also answered by a small number of students. Once again, the concept of ‘approach behaviour’ appeared to be poorly understood. It is disappointing to note the lack of understanding of a topic that has been questioned frequently on legacy question papers but still fails to produce many good quality responses. It appears that many students are unable to progress beyond Nach or Naf personality types and develop their knowledge into an applied situation to improve performance. Students should be encouraged to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical situations in order to access higher marks.

Question 10

The question focused on different types of anxiety that may occur. This was answered well by the vast majority of students, with many understanding the command words of ‘identify and explain’, both of which were required to achieve one mark. Most were able to give accurate descriptions of the type of anxiety. One area in which students often lost marks related to just stating that ‘trait anxiety’ was inherited or genetic, which did not explain how it affected the performer.

Question 11

This was the first time that ‘home field advantage’ has been directly questioned as it is a new topic on the specification. As a result the quality of the responses was mixed. Whilst many students attempted to include both perspectives in their answers, there was limited evidence of a clear understanding of the topic. Most answers included the idea that the number of home fans helped with confidence and support but the pressure or expectation to succeed could be a hindrance.

Numerous responses again included evidence from last year’s mark scheme, outlining the concept of social facilitation. Whilst this was worth credit, an in-depth answer discussing the comparison between elite and novice performers was irrelevant. Many answers included comments about ‘not having to travel’ and ‘not being tired because of travel’, which again were irrelevant. At times, it was difficult to determine whether the comments were referring to the home team or the away team.

Question 12

At times there appeared to be a limited understanding of the term ‘characteristics’, with many students stating ‘respected’ and ‘role model’ rather than points such as ‘confident’, ‘inspirational’ and ‘approachable’.

Generally students were correct in their description of a prescribed leader, although there was some confusion at times, as some indicated this was a new leader to the group who was brought in to sort out problems and improve the performance of the group. The common mistake for the emergent leader involved students merely stating the leader came from within the group rather than making the distinction that they would be elected by the group. This is quite an important difference because a prescribed leader could also come from within the group.

Question 13

Those students who knew the theories of either ‘persuasive communication’ or ‘cognitive dissonance’ did well, often obtaining full marks.

However, there are still a significant number of students who are unable to apply the correct theories to the relevant topic area. Many quoted the ‘social learning theory’, ‘attribution theory’ or ‘attribution retraining’, all of which were not credit worthy.

**Examiner feedback from 2012**

General

A repeat of the comments for the essay.

It must be noted that the use of a planner or spider-diagram to outline the points to be included in the answer is not marked by examiners. This is due to the requirements of the question to write in full prose and to put responses into the correct context.

General weakness throughout the paper was the lack of application of specific theories to applied situations. Too often answers did not supply sufficient detail to gain marks and many were unable to link the relevant theory to the topic area. Students should be reminded that if the question states 'use appropriate theories', and none are named, the answer will gain no marks. However, it is obvious that the students have been well prepared this year and staff have explained the requirements of the paper to them.

However, it must be pointed out that students must focus on ensuring their handwriting is legible. On numerous occasions examiners attempted to read the student's answer and were unable to credit marks because the writing was illegible.

Section B Question 5

07. The question required students to show their knowledge of arousal theories and the use of somatic stress management techniques. The responses produced a full range of marks with the majority answering both aspects of the question.

Large numbers were able to name and explain the various theories. The most common mistake occurred when the theory was not named and, as a result, students missed out on marks. Staff should be reminded of this point and reinforce it to students. The most popular answers were Drive Theory and Inverted U Theory, with very few including the Zone of Optimal Functioning as a separate theory. Large numbers discussed, in detail, the Catastrophe Theory, although no marks were awarded for this as it was not relevant in the context of the question. There were excellent examples and detailed knowledge of the Drive and Inverted U Theories, with the better answers discussing the impact of experience, skill level, nature of the task and personality.

Many students were able to access the somatic stress management section of the question. Good answers named the technique and gave clear descriptions concerning the methodology. Marks were not given if the technique was not named and a significant number of answers outlined a mixture of cognitive and somatic techniques. There was no credit for cognitive techniques as the question specifically stated 'somatic' methods.

Question 6

The question required students to show their knowledge of Carron's antecedents with reference to cohesion within a group. Answers fell into two broad categories; those that knew the topic and those that did not. Good responses named the factor and gave a clear explanation. However, many answers failed to name a factor and simply provided vague descriptions.

This section explored the nature of a favourable situation according to Fiedler. Whilst some students gained the higher marks, the majority only gained 1 or 2 marks, usually for naming the correct leadership style and stating favourable factors, including high ability performers, well-motivated or access to good resources. As with other parts of this paper, students often failed to be selective in their use of facts and simply wrote answers that included everything they could think of linked to the topic.

Question 7

This question required students to discuss the disadvantages of the observation technique for assessing anxiety. It produced a very mixed set of answers, with the majority only achieving one mark and very few achieving full marks. This was somewhat surprising as there were a wide range of answers which were accessible on the mark scheme. The most common answers being 'subjective' and 'performer may behave differently if they know they are being watched.

This section focused on the use of personality questionnaires as a predictor of performance. It was poorly answered by the majority of students, who often misinterpreted the question and focused their answer on the validity of questionnaires in general rather than their results being used to predict performers who possess the traits or moods to be successful. Very few were able to structure their answer in the form of a discussion, outlining the view that personality forms part of a successful performer and the counter argument that there is no definitive proof either way. Most candidates failed to achieve any marks for this question.

Question 8

The topic of goal setting has been asked in previous papers and the majority of students had a good understanding of this aspect of the specification, with many gaining maximum marks and often giving additional detail which could have been credited if the maximum had not already been reached. Those that failed to score well often listed the characteristics linked to SMARTER goals without providing an explanation. Students should be reminded that the command word 'explain' should direct them to give full descriptions and not just list key terms.

The final psychology question required students to apply their knowledge of self- serving bias to motivation. As with previous questions answers fell into two broad categories; those that knew the topic and gained credit compared to those that received no marks. The weaker answers tended to focus anecdotal responses, such as the captain giving motivational speeches, rather than making a link to the correct use of attributions.