

Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship Psychology 2025

Performance standard 93405

General commentary

This examination consisted of three questions with a central theme of cognitive psychology. Candidates were expected to demonstrate comprehensive understanding of psychological research, issues in cognitive psychology and debates within psychology.

Many candidates who demonstrated a deep understanding of cognitive psychology were able to engage meaningfully with the material in the resource booklet, and demonstrated their ability to address the questions and vary their writing style to match the requirements of the questions. It was encouraging to see that many candidates were able to produce an analytical report, an analysis of resources and a persuasive essay as these are key skills in the study of Psychology.

The study of Psychology involves the analysis of issues, debates, research methodology, and theoretical approaches. Candidates need to be familiar with how these terms are used within Psychology, as well as a breadth and depth of knowledge of the context specified, to be successful. Instead of this critical integration, research studies were often detailed in isolation without accompanying critique or reference to other psychological approaches or overarching psychological debates, such as free will and determinism, for example. Candidates who read the questions carefully and addressed all components of the question were more successful.

Each question in the examination focussed on different skills in Psychology. For Question One, the focus was on identifying the flaws in the design and suggesting improvements. This required a solid understanding of how research is undertaken in Psychology, including reliability, validity and ethics. For Question Two, some candidates tended to describe each of the provided resources rather than synthesising them to identify an issue and provide possible solutions that use the cognitive psychological approach and at least one other psychological approach. For Question Three, candidates who maintained a clear psychological focus and used psychological terminology and evidence were able to address the question effectively. Some of the topics were not well responded to due to a lack of reference to established research beyond that covered in the general context of cognitive psychology. For example, those who selected the intelligence options could be expected to know of the work of Binet, Spearman and Gardner and how these relate to the wider understanding of how cognitive psychology explains learning and memory.

Report on performance standard

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with **Outstanding Performance** commonly:

- provided a comprehensive methodological analysis with sophisticated evaluations of study design, purpose, ethics, and validity (including construct, ecological, and internal validity)
- examined how the supplied resource information related to a chosen issue within Psychology, integrating a range of relevant theories, studies, methods and /or findings with the contexts of each resource
- presented a structured and coherent discussion of how psychological approaches can be used to provide solutions

- presented interwoven theories, studies, methods, and findings to analyse debates in psychology, integrating evidence seamlessly and confidently to create a nuanced argument
- considered wider evidence from not just cognitive psychology to help give more nuanced responses in all questions
- considered how each of their responses related to human behaviour in the 'real world'.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- identified the significant flaws in the research design
- analysed the proposed psychological study, considering a combination of reliability, validity or potential biases within the method
- gave a clear rationale for how the improvements to the proposed study addressed the flaws and also linked to sound psychological research design
- examined how the supplied resources demonstrated an issue within Psychology, integrating a range of relevant theories, studies methods
- provided their own insights into possible solutions and used at least two psychological approaches
- gave a structured presentation of an overarching view of the topic and argued their own perspective by presenting interwoven theories, studies, methods and findings.

Candidates who were **not awarded Scholarship** commonly:

- did not identify the flaws in the proposed research design
- did not suggest improvements to the proposed research design
- used examples from other disciplines such statistics, English, biology and / or debating instead of psychological approaches, psychological issues and psychological debates
- presented evidence sparingly, or not at all
- provided mostly descriptive passages taken directly from the resource booklet, or only used one resource from the booklet
- included responses that relied heavily on a few rote-learned studies and theories
- gave brief general responses that included personal experience.