

Sample Assessment Schedule – 2025**Scholarship Psychology (93405)**

The candidate answers THREE questions. Each response is marked out of 8 against the descriptors for the Psychology Scholarship Performance Standard.

Criteria

Score		
Outstanding Scholarship	8	Response demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarity of thought • accurate and confident use of psychological evidence to explain human behaviour • judicious selection and use of and evaluation of theories, studies, methods, and findings suitable to the purposes of the question / statement • interwoven theories and findings • perception • independent thought, not necessarily representative of orthodox critical views • integrated critique of reliability, validity, and potential biases • a high-level, integrated response which demonstrates understanding of human behaviour • structured and coherent discussion, and a logical and powerful response to the question / statement.
	7	Responses demonstrates ALL the requirements for 8 as above, but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lacks consistency in one of the above performance descriptors.
Scholarship	6	Response demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarity of thought • accurate and appropriate psychological evidence to explain human behaviour • selection and use of theories, studies, methods, and findings suitable to the purposes of the question / statement • interwoven theories and findings • perception • critique of reliability, validity, and potential biases • a synthesised response • presents ideas and arguments in a clear and concise discussion and critiques any biases.
	5	Responses demonstrates ALL the requirements for 8 as above, but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may be confusing in parts or lacks clarity.
Below Scholarship	4	Response demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarity of thought • accurate use of psychological evidence to explain human behaviour • use of theories, studies, methods, and findings suitable to the purposes of the question / statement • some interwoven theories and findings • ideas showing some independent thought, not necessarily representative of orthodox critical views • some critique of reliability, validity, and potential biases • some structured and coherent discussion of the question / statement.
	3	Response demonstrates:
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited use of any psychological evidence
	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some use of psychology, with limited relevance to the purposes of the question / statement • references to theories, studies, methods and findings • some ideas showing independent thought, not necessarily representative of orthodox critical views • discussion, possibly unbalanced, of the statement.

Examples of possible approaches to Question One

Analyse how **resources A – F** highlight an issue in developmental psychology and provide insight into possible solutions to complex adolescent behavioural problems

Excerpt for Scholarship:

According to Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, during stage 5 (identity vs confusion), teenagers strive to develop a sense of personal identity (Source A). In New Zealand, there has been an increase in reports of criminal behaviour amongst adolescents. Cultural and gender biases can influence the expectations and norms placed on teenagers, making it more challenging for them to form their own identities, which may result in an increase in antisocial behaviour. There is a lot of evidence showing the influence of environmental factors such as media influencing violence (Source D). However, correlation does not imply causation. Biological factors, including the teenage brain and genetics, must also be considered (Resource C and E). However, it is important to consider the interaction of these factor (neuroplasticity) and how the brain is desensitised through watching violence. Complex interplay between biology and environment in shaping behaviours. Margaret Mead's research on coming of age in Samoa highlighted how cultural practices and societal expectations can shape the identity development process. In Samoa, where communal values and interdependence are emphasised, adolescents experience a smoother transition into adulthood compared to Western societies, where individualism and independence are prioritised (Source B). Solutions should focus on the interplay between biology and environment.

Excerpt for Outstanding Scholarship

Holistic approach: Combining insights from Erikson's theory (identity formation) with cultural perspectives (Mead's research) allows for a holistic approach that respects individual differences, while recognising the influence of cultural contexts.

Practical implementation: Solutions, such as behavioural support programmes and early intervention (Resource F), are grounded in empirical research and can be applied systematically to address adolescent behavioural issues.

Long-term impact: By fostering a strong sense of identity through exploration and cultural understanding, and by addressing behavioural challenges early, communities can positively influence adolescent development and reduce negative outcomes like school disciplinary issues and offending behaviours.

These solutions leverage psychological theories and empirical research to provide a comprehensive framework for supporting adolescents in navigating their identity development and behavioural challenges effectively. They provide individuals, schools, and communities with a coherent framework that focuses on the key stakeholders. Psychologists would have to take a cautionary approach to any solutions to ensure good intent didn't create negative outcomes for groups in society, as this a society sensitive issue.

Examples of possible approaches to Question Two

Riley, an honours candidate in psychology, used the research (**Resource G**) to undertake a study questioning its validity (**Resource H**).

Discuss realistic improvements to the research method and explore how these findings might impact future elderly care practices.

Excerpt for Scholarship:

The validity of this study is potentially confounded by sampling issues. Although the sample sizes are relatively small ($n = 56$ for nursing home residents and $n = 32$ for independently living older people), which may limit the generalisability of the findings, these sample sizes would be considered acceptable for an undergraduate thesis. More concerning are biases in the sample recruitment. The sampling of nursing home residents involved only three out of five approached homes, potentially introducing selection bias. The reasons why two homes did not participate are not provided, which could impact the representativeness of the sample. I note that both of the nursing homes that did not participate were private nursing homes, whereas the homes that did participate were public. This suggests that the sample may have a lower socio-economic status (SES) than if the sample were drawn from both public and private nursing homes. Similarly, the independently living participants were recruited through Meals on Wheels, which may not be representative of the broader population of independently living older adults. This group might have specific characteristics (e.g. higher dependency on community services) that differ from the general population, and are likely to have a lower SES than the general population.

Although it's easy to say that this focus on older people of a certain SES presents validity issues in terms of the generalisability of the findings, explaining why this is so is important. Lower SES is associated with various factors that could influence the study's variables. For instance, individuals from lower SES backgrounds may have fewer resources for maintaining health, fewer social connections, and higher stress levels, all of which could impact their

emotionally meaningful relationships and perceptions of closeness to death. Lower SES individuals might have different patterns of social support and relationships compared to higher SES individuals. They might rely more on informal support networks or community services, which could influence the number and nature of emotionally meaningful relationships. Lower SES is often associated with higher mortality rates and poorer health outcomes, which could lead to a higher perceived closeness to death. This perception might not be as prevalent in higher SES groups. Finally, SES can influence how participants respond to surveys and questionnaires. For example, lower literacy levels associated with lower SES could affect how participants understand and answer the questions.

In summary, when discussing the findings, the researcher should include as a limitation the restricted socio-economic status of the samples, and explain that whilst the findings may be true for certain populations, they may not be true for the New Zealand population of older adults as a whole.

Excerpt for Outstanding Scholarship

I have some concerns about the latent construct that the researcher has used to measure the perceived closeness of death. Whilst it is sound to use a latent construct to measure a concept such as this, which is for most of us difficult to quantify, it is risky to assume that an untested construct measures what it is intended to measure. Firstly, the construct appears to have been generated by the researcher himself and has not been validated in previous research. It would have been more assuring if the construct was known to have appropriate content validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity for various populations, as determined by factor analysis of various samples in previous research. As it stands, we can't tell if the three indicators used actually *do* measure what the researcher believes they measure. Secondly, in addition to these validity concerns, the construct has reliability issues: the Cronbach's alpha score for the construct was 0.54. This is well below the expected minimum score of 0.70, which indicates that the three indicators that make up this construct are more dissimilar than they are similar. This lack of internal consistency further calls into question the content and discriminant validity of the construct – it is possible that for the participants this construct measured more than one concept. Take for example the indicator 'I worry that I don't have long to live'. I don't believe that this indicator is a good fit with the other two indicators, as it's entirely plausible that participants may believe that they don't have long to live, but are not necessarily worried about it. Ideally, the researcher should have included more than three indicators to measure this concept and subsequently used Cronbach's alpha as a method of determining which indicators were most similar, and eliminating those that were not a good fit. However, this still does not address the fact that the construct is possibly invalid in terms of its content and convergent / divergent validity, so I would feel much more confident in accepting the assumption that it was the participants' perceived life expectancy was measured if the researcher had used a proven valid construct instead of one that he made up himself.

Examples of possible approaches to Question Three

Select ONE of the statements below. Use your own knowledge of psychology to address the statement, including links to the debate in psychology, and an analysis of different sides of the argument.

Statement 1 example

Excerpt for Scholarship:

Several studies support the critical role of early experiences. The landmark Abecedarian Project by [Craig & Ramey, 2001] demonstrated that low-income children who received intensive educational intervention during the first few years showed improved cognitive abilities compared to a control group. This highlights the impact of enriched environments on brain development. However, it's important to acknowledge that genetic predispositions also influence development. Additionally, research by Plomin suggests that identical twins' test scores also correlate highly when given assessments that measure reading, mathematics, and language skills. Plomin has shown cognitive development has a genetic component. While the first 1000 days are undeniably a crucial window, this interplay of genes and environment underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of factors shaping cognitive and emotional trajectories.

Excerpt for Outstanding Scholarship

The first 1000 days undoubtedly lay a crucial foundation for cognitive and emotional development. Research by [Nelson et al., 2006] using eye-tracking technology demonstrates that infants as young as 6 months show preferential attention to their caregiver's voice, suggesting a critical period for language acquisition. However, a purely critical lens reveals limitations. The Abecedarian Project, while impactful, focused on a specific population (low income) and may not generalise to all demographics. Furthermore, focusing solely on the 'first 1000 days' overlooks the concept of sensitive periods. Recent research by [Bunge & Wright, 2007] suggests a sensitive period for the development of the prefrontal cortex in adolescence, a brain region crucial for decision-making and executive function. Perhaps a more nuanced approach that acknowledges both earlier and later critical periods, alongside the interplay of genetics and environment, would provide a more holistic understanding of human development.

Cut Scores

Scholarship	Outstanding Scholarship
XX–XX	XX–XX