

# PS201: Individual Differences

## Assessment Guidance

*(or 'How to shine in your Individual Differences Assignment')*

Academic Year:  
2019/20

**WARWICK**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

# Overview

- ▶ Assessment Format
  - The Basics (questions, format, check!)
  - Rationale for the new format
- ▶ General Guidance
  - Marks & Feedback
  - Applying Feedback Sheet criteria
- ▶ Specific Guidance
  - Things to think about...
  - In text citations & Reference lists



**NB PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU READ THE NOTE SECTIONS FOR EACH SLIDE. LOADS OF EXTRA INFORMATION THERE!**

# ASSESSMENT FORMATTING STUFF...



# What is your **NEW** Assignment?

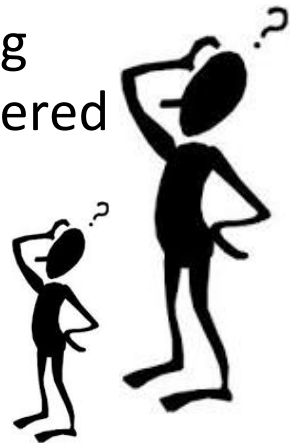
- ▶ Essay in Action: 3 Sections
  - Essay plan
  - Sample paragraphs
  - Reference list
  
- ▶ Structure:
  - Choose 1 question. Personality or Intelligence*
  - Essay Plan (500 words- 2 sides of A4)
  - 2 sample paras (500 words in total)
  - References (no word limit)



# PS201 Assignment Qs 2019/20

## Personality Questions:

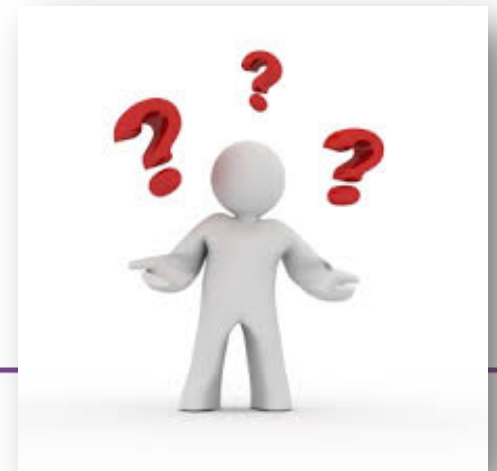
- 1) What is Personality good for? Given the broad consensus on why Psychologists study Personality, explore the purposes Personality may have for the individual. Ensure you differentiate these purposes from the aims and objectives Psychologists have in exploring the construct.
- 2) “Understanding the underlying causes of behaviour enables behaviour change”. Evaluate the statement above, including both the role of Personality Psychology in explaining disordered and/or dysfunctional behaviour, and its contributions to therapeutic approaches.



# PS201 Assignment Qs 2019/20

## Intelligence Questions:

- 1) Discuss the misconceptions or misunderstandings that the general public may have about intelligence. How do you think these develop and what is the potential impact of such misconceptions? Discuss with reference to theoretical and empirical literature.
- 2) "Happiness in intelligent people is the rarest thing I know." Ernest Hemmingway. Do you agree with this statement? Evaluate the research on the association between happiness and intelligence to illustrate your answer.



# Why have WE decided to CHANGE the assignment?

- ▶ Previous format = 2000 word essay
- ▶ Deadline- close to Methods II exam
- ▶ Student fatigue/time pressure
- ▶ **Increasing student stress levels!**
- ▶ 20 day marking turnaround
- ▶ Increase in student cohort numbers
- ▶ Potential compromise of feedback quality
- ▶ **Increasing staff stress levels!**



# Why **THIS** Format?

- ▶ Students get a *shorter, more focused* task
- ▶ Less temptation to 'waffle'  
(e.g., if time is pressured etc.)
- ▶ *Task targets key skills* we believe most important for your *academic development...*
  - Coherent answer to an essay question
  - Clear, effective structure
  - Good evidentiary support/knowledge of literature
  - Scientific writing ability/style/format
  - Ability to 'match' sample text to essay plan





# In a **NUTSHELL**....

- We can give you feedback and support on the skills we think you will need most in your degree
- Your time and workload will be acknowledged
- Our workload and aim for high quality feedback will work with the 20 day turnaround



# Just to **check** if you were really **paying attention...**

- ▶ How many questions are there to choose from?
- ▶ Do you have to do both Personality & Intelligence assignments?
- ▶ How many PS201 assignments do you need to do overall?
- ▶ Which is your favourite module of all time..?  
(well, worth a try! ;-)



# GENERAL ASSESSMENT STUFF



# Marks & Feedback

- ▶ Marking Guidelines
- ▶ University 20-point mark scheme
- ▶ Details of the scheme are on moodle...
  - [UG Guide \(Psych Dept Information\)](#)
- ▶ Feedback
- ▶ Department feedback form
- ▶ Details can be found on moodle...
  - [UG Guide \(Resources & Guides\)](#)



Work ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

## FEEDBACK

### A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

I. Does the work address the question at hand?

|               |  |  |  |  |              |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|
| Not<br>at all |  |  |  |  | Very<br>much |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|

Comments / Suggestions:

II. How convincing is the work?

1. Is there a clear, well-justified conclusion?

|               |  |  |  |  |              |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|
| Not<br>at all |  |  |  |  | Very<br>much |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|

Comments / Suggestions:

2. Does it present a strong, logical argument?

|               |  |  |  |  |              |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|
| Not<br>at all |  |  |  |  | Very<br>much |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|

Comments / Suggestions:

3. Does it make appropriate use of evidence to support the argument?

|               |  |  |  |  |              |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|
| Not<br>at all |  |  |  |  | Very<br>much |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|

Comments / Suggestions:

4. What are the sources from which information / evidence has been drawn?

- Lecture / seminar content only
- Lecture / seminar content plus 'suggested reading' lists or similar
- Module-based sources plus appropriate, independently discovered sources

|  |
|--|
|  |
|  |
|  |

Comments / Suggestions:

Work ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

III. Is the presentation clear and concise?

|               |  |  |  |  |              |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|
| Not<br>at all |  |  |  |  | Very<br>much |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|

Comments / Suggestions:

IV. Does the work meet formal requirements (e.g., grammar, citations)?

|               |  |  |  |  |              |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|
| Not<br>at all |  |  |  |  | Very<br>much |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|

Comments / Suggestions:

### B. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

### C. FEED-FORWARD: FURTHER ADVICE TO IMPROVE FUTURE WORK:

Mark

(provisional until confirmed by the exam board)

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

Here's one we prepared *earlier...*

# How does this map onto *Your Assignment...?*

## A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

These are requirements that apply to **all** essays across modules.

### I. Does the work address the QUESTION AT HAND?

*Does the work deal with the **relevant** aspects of the topic as given by the title?*

### **What do we want to see...?**

- ▶ Strong focus on the Q all through
- ▶ A clear interpretation of the Q
- ▶ Justification of your chosen approach

### **What might go wrong...?**

- ▶ Not really answering the Q
- ▶ Only answering part of the Q
- ▶ Interpretation that hasn't been explained/justified



# How does this map onto *Your Assignment...?*

## II. How **CONVINCING** is the work?

### 1. Is there a clear, well-justified CONCLUSION?

*This is the first and foremost issue, because this is what scientific writing is about: **communicating an opinion or idea to the reader, and convincing the reader of its validity.** Thus:*

- *has the student formed an opinion about the issue at hand, and*
- *is the work a recognizable attempt to communicate this opinion, or is it mostly an attempt to communicate, for instance, how much the student knows about the topic?*

### 2. Does it present a strong, logical ARGUMENT?

- *Is the reader led to the conclusion through **reasoning** (rather than through logical or rhetorical fallacies like “argument from authority” or similar unsuitable devices)?*
- *Does the argument take **counter-arguments** into account, and is it strong enough to **refute** them?*

## *What do we want to see...?*

- ▶ An answer to the Q
- ▶ A clear ‘pathway’ to your answer
- ▶ Well-reasoned arguments, rather than description or assumption
- ▶ Use of evidence for/against your points

## *What might go wrong...?*

- ▶ Description (i.e., summary) only
- ▶ Weak links from essay into conclusion
- ▶ Weak structure for arguments
- ▶ Lack of counter-argument



# How does this map onto *Your Assignment...?*

## II. How CONVINCING is the work?

### 3. Does it make appropriate use of EVIDENCE to support the argument?

*"What is asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence."* (Hitchens, 2003)

- **Accuracy:** Is the evidence reported **accurately**?
- **Reliability:** Does it come from **reliable sources**?
- **Relevance:** Are the **implications** for the argument at hand both **clear** and **important**?

### 4. What are the SOURCES from which information / evidence has been drawn?

- Lecture / seminar content **only** (*poor!*)
- Lecture / seminar content **plus** 'suggested reading' lists or similar (*ok*)
- Module-based sources plus **appropriate** independently discovered sources (*good!*)

## *What do we want to see...?*

- ▶ High level (and quality) of support for each point you make
- ▶ Use of evidence that shows understanding of core material, wider reading & independent study

## *What might go wrong...?*

- ▶ Lack of support (evidence/examples)
- ▶ Unreliable sources/overgeneralization
- ▶ Reliance on core material
- ▶ No demonstration of wider reading/independent research





# How does this map onto *Your Assignment...?*

## III. Is the presentation **CLEAR** and **CONCISE**?

*Recall: the aim of scientific writing is to **convince**, not to **impress**!*

## IV. Does the work meet **FORMAL** requirements?

*E.g., spelling, grammar, citations, word-count, etc.*

### **What do we want to see...?**

- ▶ Clear, focused text & structure
- ▶ Appropriate use of technical language
- ▶ Good quality formal academic style, that follows normal spelling, grammar, punctuation (etc.) conventions
- ▶ APA formatting for citations/references

### **What might go wrong...?**

- ▶ Wordy or unstructured sentences and/or paragraphs
- ▶ Reliance on jargon or over-complex language
- ▶ Lack of care in proofreading & format
- ▶ Inconsistent or non APA citations



# SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT STUFF



# NEW ASSIGNMENT: Challenges & Opportunities

- ▶ Meeting general assignment criteria in a very succinct format
- ▶ Sticking to word limit & making every word count!
- ▶ Developing your essay plan sufficiently to show critical thinking behind points
- ▶ Ensuring the essay plan converts effectively into sample text
- ▶ Linking sample text into your plan effectively (i.e., your imaginary full essay)



# In-text Citations & Reference Lists

- ▶ Evidence for points in essay plan & sample paragraphs needed/expected!
- ▶ Full references list (in APA style) required for last part of assignment task
- ▶ In-text citations & reference lists will be NOT counted towards your word limit
- ▶ Please make sure you exclude these from your word count. A DECLARATION WILL BE REQUIRED FOR EACH SECTION!



# *Bringing this all together...*

- ▶ **Essay Plan:** Concentrate on your main arguments, & plan the order/structure really carefully.
- ▶ **Sample Text:** Stay clear and focused in your style, remember that these sections should reflect what you specified in your essay plan.
- ▶ **Key Points:** Make these clear from the start of each section & ensure you support them with evidence
- ▶ **Sources:** Make good use of suggested readings, & go beyond using core materials to demonstrate your understanding/independent study skills



# How can we *help*..?

- ▶ Ask questions about the assignment Qs
- ▶ Send us brief essay plans\* for feedback
- ▶ Use our suggestions for wider reading as starting points for your research
- ▶ Check accurate understanding of key module content with us



\* For these, we suggest **an A4 mindmap**- so that we don't risk commenting on drafts (NOT ALLOWED!)

# Any Questions...?



Please contact  
**Gemma** ([g.gray@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:g.gray@warwick.ac.uk))  
or **Liz** ([e.l.blagrove@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:e.l.blagrove@warwick.ac.uk))  
if you have any queries..

