PSY2042 Personality and social psychology

PSYCHOLOGY · MONASH UNIVERSITY · LEVEL 2

Full guide + ask Sia about PSY2042

SIDE 1/2 WHAT MUST BE IN YOUR HEAD · define → distinguish → apply → limit CLOSED-BOOK MEMORY SHEET S2 2026 · Examination 30%

0 Exam map COURSE DATA · BRIEF

CASE 35% | ESSAY 35% | EXAM 30%

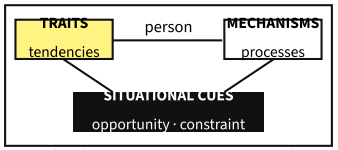
ASSESSMENT	WEIGHT
Case study report: Personality assessment	35%
Essay	35%
Examination	30%

PERMITTED-MATERIALS TRUTH

"Closed book and remotely invigilated" — PSY2042 Exam Information page, Moodle 2026 (MD_Exam_Information.md).

Exam format: multiple-choice, short-answer and extended-answer questions. Recall the discriminating feature, then apply it to the decisive scenario detail.

1 Personality explanation WK 1



Traits and mechanisms meet cues, opportunities and constraints.

RECITE

Personality = organised, relatively enduring traits and mechanisms influencing interaction with and adaptation to intrapsychic, physical and social environments.

★ *Trait*: a continuous, relatively enduring tendency, not an invariant act or natural type. *Mechanism*: an internal process through which information, motivation or regulation contributes to behaviour.

Aggregation combines multiple relevant observations; it reduces occasion-specific noise. Strong situations impose clear rules/incentives/constraints and can compress visible individual differences; weak situations leave more room for dispositional expression.

OUTCOME INFERENCE

Outcome links are probabilistic pathways, not destiny. Name the process; keep reverse direction and confounding visible. A group association does not determine one person.

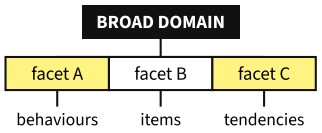
EXAM MOVE *Name the tendency, the psychologically meaningful cue, the behavioural sample and a probabilistic conclusion.*

2 Explanatory levels WK 1

human nature	trait signature	char. adapt.	life story	cultural context

McAdams–Pals layers describe different kinds of explanation.

3 Trait structure WK 2



Choose domain or facet level to match the criterion's breadth.

Trait approaches describe people on continuous dimensions. Broad domains efficiently summarise; facets preserve narrower differences and may predict narrow criteria better. A person-specific configuration keeps information that group taxonomies omit.

TRADITION	DISTINCTIVE CONTENT	DO NOT CLAIM
Allport	cardinal, central, secondary; nomothetic + idiographic	all people fit types
Murray	needs + environmental press; alpha objective, beta interpreted	setting has one meaning
PEN	Psychoticism, Extraversion, Neuroticism; biological emphasis	perfect translation to FFM
Five Factor	E, A, C, N/Emotional Stability, O/Culture	factor proves cause
Tellegen	Positive/Negative Emotionality, Constraint; Absorption	identical breadth

COMPARE *Breadth → construction method → overlapping content → unique content → criterion fit.*

4 Factor reasoning WK 2

item pool | shared variance | retain + rotate | candidate factors

Factor solutions depend on item pool, sample, retention and rotation.

WHAT FOLLOWS?

Covariation → a factor may summarise shared variation. It does **not** by itself establish a biological mechanism, causal entity or universal taxonomy.

CLAIM	NEEDED EVIDENCE
Structure	replication of the pattern
Meaning	content + response-process evidence
Prediction	criterion-specific validity
Cause	design that tests mechanism/direction
Fair use	norms, subgroup functioning, consequences

5 Profile rules WK 2

- A profile is relative to a ***reference group***; a percentile is rank position, not percentage of a trait.

6 Measurement chain WK 3

construct definition | observed items/acts | scoring rules | inference + use

A score inherits every decision in the operationalisation chain.

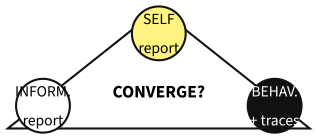
CORE DISTINCTION

Reliability = precision/consistency. Validity = evidence for a particular interpretation and use, in a population and purpose. Reliability is necessary evidence, never sufficient.

RELIABILITY FORM	QUESTION
Internal consistency	Do intended items cohere?
Test–retest	Stable across an interval when construct should persist?
Alternate form	Equivalent versions agree?
Inter-rater	Judges applying the rules agree?

VALIDITY EVIDENCE	TARGET
Content	indicators represent domain
Criterion	relation to relevant concurrent/predictive outcome
Convergent	relation to similar construct
Discriminant	distinction from different constructs
Factorial	expected internal structure
Incremental	adds prediction beyond existing information

7 Methods see different parts WK 3

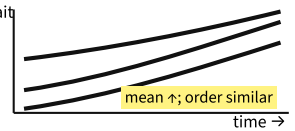


Seek convergence; explain method-specific information rather than average it away.

METHOD	ACCESS	THREAT
Self-report	beliefs, feelings, private experience	insight, memory, response style
Informant	observed behaviour across some settings	limited access, own reference point
Observation	specified conduct	reactivity, narrow sample
Experience sampling	states/context near occurrence	missed events, compliance, brief items
Digital trace	recorded behaviour	platform/context artefact, fairness

DISAGREEMENT AUDIT *Who saw which settings? What was private? Which reference standard? Is each score precise? Then seek behaviour.*

9 Four change questions WK 4



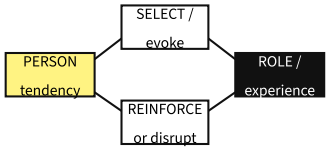
Shared movement can change the mean while relative order persists.

QUESTION	WHAT IT ASKS	TRAP
Mean level	Does group average move?	not every person
Rank order	Do relative positions persist?	not unchanged levels
Individual trajectory	Who departs from average?	flat mean can hide change
Invariance	Same construct/meaning over time?	score shift may be measurement

Young adulthood often shows average Neuroticism decreasing and Agreeableness/Conscientiousness increasing. These are population patterns with varied timing and magnitude, not a timetable for each person.

ORDER *Report the observed score pattern first; then test the mechanism.*

10 Transaction pathways WK 4



Repeated reciprocal paths can stabilise a pattern or generate change.

ROUTE	MECHANISM	EVIDENCE NEEDED
Selection	prior trait guides entry/persistence	pre-entry standing
Evocation	characteristics elicit responses	others' response over time
Reaction/appraisal	same event interpreted differently	measured meaning
Social investment	role demands reinforce behaviour	commitment + mediation

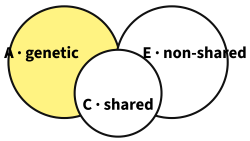
Reciprocal language requires repeated measures of both person and environment. A single association cannot establish temporal ordering.

11 Routes to change WK 4

ROUTE	CHECK	RIVAL
Life event	experienced demands, timing, agency	selection; event label ≠ dose

EVIDENCE FOR GENUINE CHANGE

12 Heritability without destiny WK 5



ACE partitions population variance; E also absorbs measurement error.

DEFINITION

Heritability = trait variation associated with genetic differences in a defined population and environment. It is not a percentage of one person, a fixed constant or proof of immutability.

Estimates depend on population, environment, age, phenotype and measurement. Environmental change can shift the mean even when existing variation is heritable.

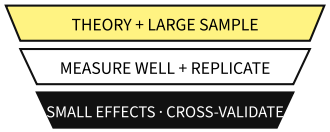
DESIGN	INFERENCE	ASSUMPTION/THREAT
Twin	MZ–DZ resemblance pattern	environmental similarity, comparable measure
Family	resemblance by relatedness	genes and shared setting confounded
Adoption	separates rearing from relatedness	placement/contact not random

13 Correlation ≠ interaction WK 5

CONCEPT	VERB	DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION
Passive rGE	caregivers **provide**	inherited tendency + correlated setting?
Evocative rGE	person **elicits**	do characteristics draw responses?
Active rGE	person **selects**	chosen/created compatible setting?
G×E	effect **changes**	does one effect differ across the other?

BOUNDARY *Correlation explains non-random exposure; interaction explains sensitivity across conditions.*

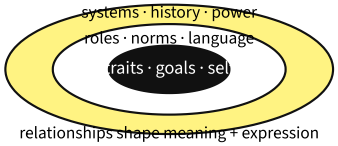
14 Molecular + neural claims WK 5



As a molecular claim narrows, evidential standards rise.

Candidate-gene plausibility failed under tiny effects, low power and selective publication. Genome-wide work supports highly polygenic architectures and portability limits; replication still does not supply mechanism.

15 Culture is a process WK 6



Nationality is sampling information, not the cultural mechanism.

PROCESS	CLAIM	DISCRIMINATING EVIDENCE
Evoked	conditions elicit from shared repertoire	environmental condition changes response
Transmitted	beliefs, norms, practices learned socially	learning/transmission pathway
Universal	recurrent structure/capacity	diverse contexts + meaningful measures

Self-construal and individualism/collectivism are dimensions, not national essences. Measure the named norm, ecology, institution, language or relationship process.

16 Etic ↔ emic WK 6

ETIC: common compare | EMIC: local meaning

integrate; revise the framework

Comparison needs equivalence; discovery needs local meaning.

QUESTION	REQUIRED CHECK
Same structure?	factor/construct comparability
Comparable scores?	measurement equivalence, response processes
Locally complete?	emic content and omitted domains
Fairly interpreted?	sampling, within-group diversity, governance

17 Governance + gender WK 6

Indigenous-led work centres relational wellbeing, community, culture, Country and spirituality. ***Data sovereignty*** means collective authority over collection, access, interpretation, benefit and future use. Governance is a condition of valid knowledge, not an administrative add-on.

GENDER AUDIT

define sex/gender/grouping → test equivalent meaning → show distributions and overlap → preserve within-group diversity → separate stereotype, observed difference and mechanism → limit causal claim.

Cross-sectional averages cannot establish a fixed causal essence. Translation requires conceptual and pragmatic equivalence, not word substitution alone.

PSY2042

Self-test drills · answer paths · judgement cards

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SIDE 2/2 RETRIEVE BEFORE RE-READING · state the rival · finish at the evidence strength

CLOSED-BOOK MEMORY SHEET

5 worked drills · MCQ traps · exam-morning plan

19 The answer engine

COURSE STRATEGY

1 DEFINE	2 APPLY	3 TEST	4 LIMIT
construct	detail	rival	conclude

Use the same four moves for short and extended applied answers.

1. **Define** the construct independently of the outcome.
2. **Apply** it to the decisive cue, method, time point or group.
3. **Test** the strongest alternative explanation and name evidence that separates them.
4. **Concluded** probabilistically, limited to the sample, setting and use.

MCQ DISCIPLINE

Say why the true option follows; then name the single word that makes each rival false: *always, cause, individual, type, objective, culture*.

20 Worked drill 1 · quiet student

WK 1 WORKED

Prompt. Quiet in a formal seminar; animated with close friends. "Traits do not exist."

SAME PERSON · DIFFERENT ACTS

seminar:	friends:
eval. + norms	familiar + safe

test repeated conditional pattern

Context variability can be systematic evidence, not trait refutation.

Path. Trait = probabilistic tendency → settings differ in familiarity, evaluation pressure and norms → two selected acts are an inadequate sample → repeatedly observe comparable strong/weak settings.

Answer. The claim confuses tendency with invariant act. The contrast is compatible with a person–situation signature: sociability may be expressed when psychological safety is high. Both person and situation belong in the explanation.

SELF-CHECK *Did you name the cue, rather than merely write "context matters"?*

21 Which is true?

WK 1

STATEMENT	JUDGEMENT
One act strongly reveals a broad trait.	**False:** situational + measurement noise.
Aggregation eliminates context.	**False:** it estimates a tendency; contexts still matter.
A trait label is a mechanism.	**False:** label summarises; process must add prediction.
A strong situation can reduce visible differences.	**True:** clear rules constrain expression.

NEAREST-RIVAL SPRINT

22 Worked drill 2 · mixed profile

WK 2 WORKED

Prompt. Average broad domain, high achievement facet, low orderliness facet. Predict project completion.



A domain mean can conceal criterion-relevant facet divergence.

Path. Domain aggregates facets → achievement may support persistence; low orderliness may impair scheduling/checking → match facets to project criteria → check reliability, norms and uncertainty → seek task behaviour.

Answer. The average is insufficient. Facet-level hypotheses are more informative for this narrow criterion, subject to reliable differences and behavioural corroboration.

RULE *Choose the hierarchy level from the criterion: broad outcome ↔ broad domain; narrow outcome ↔ facet.*

23 Trait-model traps

WK 2

IF YOU SEE…	DO THIS
"either extravert or introvert"	Replace type with continuous standing.
factor "causes" behaviour	Say it summarises covariance; ask for mechanism.
PEN = Five Factor	Compare overlap without forcing translation.
high score = good	Name criterion, demands and possible costs.
T-score/percentile = amount	Name norm group; interpret relative standing.

WHAT IS THE CLAIM?

structure	prediction	mechanism

use evidence that matches this target

Structural replication, prediction and cause are separate achievements.

24 Factor-analysis retrieval

WK 2 DRILL

Q: What does a factor establish? **A:** It summarises shared variance among included variables under specified item, retention and rotation choices. It supports descriptive structure, not automatically cause or universality.

Q: Why different factor counts? **A:** Different breadth, item pools, languages and theoretical choices; compression trades against narrower distinctions.

HISTORICAL DISTINCTIONS

25 Worked drill 3 · selection scale

WK 3 WORKED

Prompt. An online scale is internally consistent and predicts supervisor ratings in its development sample. Use it to select trainees?

HIGH-STAKES USE?

construct	evidence	external

norms + fair | decision limit

Internal consistency plus in-sample prediction is only part of the argument.

Path. Define job-relevant construct/content → reliability in target applicants → independent, reliable criterion → held-out prediction + incremental value → norms, subgroup functioning, accessibility/fairness → response incentives.

Answer. Promising but insufficient for operational selection. External and fairness validation, appropriate norms and incremental value are missing; the score should not determine the decision yet.

SELF-CHECK *Did every requested evidence source match the intended use?*

26 Match evidence to claim

WK 3 DRILL

OBSERVATION	CORRECT LABEL	NOT YET SUPPORTED
items cohere	internal consistency	construct validity
same people, later occasion	test–retest	mean unchanged
two coders disagree	weak inter-rater	real behaviour difference
correlates with similar scale	convergent evidence	content/criterion/fairness
predicts outcome beyond current data	incremental validity	causal mechanism

27 Reporter disagreement

WK 3

SELF ≠ INFORMANT

visibility + opportunity	reference points	precision + bias

TEST WITH BEHAVIOUR/ESM

Disagreement may be error or meaningful context specificity.

DO NOT

Average immediately: that can erase specificity. Do not select a preferred reporter without evidence: that relocates bias.

28 Score traps

WK 3

29 Worked drill 4 · professional role

WK 4 WORKED

Prompt. Conscientiousness scores rise after demanding professional placements. Compare social investment with selection.

POST-ENTRY SCORE ↑

SELECTION	INVESTMENT
prior C → entry	role → repeated acts

pre-entry trajectory + mediator + generalisation

Timing motivates two pathways; it does not choose between them.

Path. Describe score rise → selection predicts already conscientious students enter/persist → social investment predicts demands and repeated reliable action produce change → use pre-entry scores, within-person trajectories, commitment and daily behaviour → test invariance, attrition and generalisation.

Answer. Both routes may operate. Reciprocal selection and investment remain plausible unless the longitudinal design discriminates them.

30 Trajectory cards

WK 4 CASES

IF YOU SEE…	SAY…
everyone rises similarly	mean change; rank order may remain high
average flat, people diverge	individual change cancels in mean
high retest correlation	relative standing persists; levels may shift
same event, different outcomes	exposure/demands/agency differ; traits may select
therapy score change	test symptom relief, recalibration, persistence, generalisation

31 Evidence for real change

WK 4

score	invariant measure	persists + multi-method	general-ises

Score movement becomes stronger evidence when meaning, persistence and reach hold.

VOLITIONAL TEST

Replace "be more conscientious" with an observable behaviour, feasible cue, repeated action and persistence criterion.

TEMPORAL DESIGN TEST

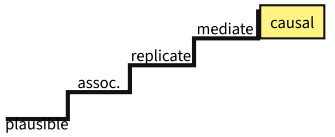
Measure personality and environment repeatedly. Test earlier tendency → later exposure, then exposure → later trait-relevant behaviour. A one-occasion association cannot establish reciprocal ordering.

32 Which is true?

WK 4

33 Biology judgement cards

WK 5



Do not borrow certainty from a higher rung than the design reaches.

IF CLAIM SAYS…	CORRECTION
"heritability percentage = same percentage of this person"	population variation, not individual partition
"highly heritable = cannot change"	environment can shift means/trajectories
"non-shared = outside family"	sibling-differentiating influences, including differing family experiences + error
"candidate gene is plausible"	require power, correction, replication, phenotype consistency
"one region explains trait"	distributed systems; guard against reverse inference

WORDING *Preserve supported genetic contribution while rejecting individual destiny.*

34 rGE or G×E?

WK 5 DRILL

SCENARIO CUE	ANSWER PATH
Parents provide books and inherited tendency	**Passive rGE:** provide both.
Child's behaviour draws teacher response	**Evocative rGE:** elicits environment.
Person chooses high-stimulation peers	**Active rGE:** selects compatible setting.
Genetic association differs under stress	**G×E:** effect changes by condition.

FAST TEST

Exposure patterned? → correlation. Effect changes across conditions? → interaction.

rGE	G×E
genes associated with exposure	effect changes across conditions

Correlation patterns exposure; interaction changes an effect.

35 Family-design inference

WK 5

Which is true? Greater MZ than DZ similarity can support genetic influence *if* equal-environment and measurement assumptions are defensible. It does not identify a variant or mechanism.

Adoption design? Helps separate rearing setting from genetic relatedness, but non-random placement and continuing contact remain rival explanations.

37 Worked drill 5 · imported scale

WK 6 WORKED

Prompt. Translate an inventory, find a national mean difference, conclude culture caused it.

MEAN DIFFERENCE OBSERVED

local	equiv.	sample

mechanism | emic revise

A descriptive contrast becomes explanation only through comparability and process.

Path. Define target construct → local content/response-process evidence → measurement equivalence → sampling and within-group diversity → measure a specific norm, role, language or ecology → use emic evidence for omissions.

Answer. Translation and a score difference do not establish equivalent measurement or cultural cause. Until comparability and a measured process are shown, the contrast is a limited description.

REPLACE *"because of culture" with the specific process the design measures.*

38 Context traps

WK 6

CLAIM	REPAIR
Back-translation is enough.	Test conceptual/pragmatic meaning and response processes.
Nationality is the mechanism.	Measure norm, role, language, ecology or relationship process.
Etic is universal truth.	Common comparison can impose imported categories.
Emic cannot inform comparison.	Local constructs can revise a shared/decentred model.
Average gender difference defines members.	Show overlap, diversity, equivalence and causal alternatives.
Community participation is enough.	Ask who governs questions, data, interpretation, benefit and reuse.

39 Fast-recall matrix

ALL SUPPORTED WEEKS

NEAREST RIVALS	DISCRIMINATOR
domain vs facet	breadth matched to criterion
rGE vs G×E	exposure association vs changing effect
etic vs emic	common comparison vs local construction
difference vs mechanism	description vs tested causal process

40 Exam-morning plan

COURSE STRATEGY

1. Blank-page retrieval: write the six rival pairs above from memory.