Planning studies for Paper 2

Lesson 2.4.5 | AS research methodology

Core ideas

Paper 2 Section B contains a planning question worth 14 marks in total. Use the information given and plan the missing parts of an investigation, then evaluate practical/methodological issues, validity and reliability.

Include the procedure, how the plan supports validity and reliability, and the type of data. Give method-specific details that make the proposed investigation usable, rather than listing definitions.

For experiments, specify the operationalised IV and DV, controls/standardisation and experimental design; for a field experiment also specify the location. For self-reports, specify question format, example questions, scoring/interpretation, and questionnaire technique or interview format and technique.

For a case study, identify the participant/unit, information collected, at least two data-collection techniques and analysis/interpretation/triangulation. For observation, specify overt/covert, participant/non-participant, naturalistic/controlled and structured behavioural categories or unstructured recording.

For correlation, specify two co-variables, how each is measured and the proposed relationship/scatter graph. For a longitudinal study, specify tests/tasks, scoring, frequency/interval, how participants are re-contacted and controls/standardisation.

Paper 2 scope: aims and hypotheses are not expected in the plan. Candidates are not expected to evaluate sample/generalisability or ethics of the plan. Ethics remains required elsewhere in the course; these limits apply specifically to this planning task.

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Key terms

Planning: Describing a usable proposed investigation and explaining the choices relevant to the question.

Triangulation: Comparing information from at least two sources or techniques to check an interpretation.

Further detail and evidence

For the 2027 Paper 2 plan, give procedure, validity, reliability and data type, plus the required details of the named method. Experiments need defined IV/DV, controls and design; field experiments also need location. Correlations need both co-variables, their measures and the proposed relationship/scatter graph.

Applying the ideas

A memory plan can specify a fixed word list, timed exposure, defined delay and a correct-word recall score. State the music/silence conditions and how allocation/design works. Then explain how equal materials reduce a named confound and how standard scoring supports consistency. Follow any features supplied in the question.

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Continued

Worked example: Plan a naturalistic observation of helping in a school common area. Specify what will be recorded and explain one way to improve reliability. Use non-participant observation in the normal common area during a fixed ten-minute period. Define helping as picking up and returning a dropped object, and count each completed act using a structured checklist. Use two observers trained on the same definition to record the same period independently, then compare their records and clarify categories where they disagree. Keep observation periods and the checklist consistent.

Worked example: Plan a longitudinal self-report study of exam stress over a school term. Give the timing, measure, scoring and re-contacting procedure. Use the same short questionnaire at the start, midpoint and end of term. Include an identical item such as "During the past seven days, how often have you felt worried about school tests?" with ordered responses from never to very often, scored consistently from 0 to 4. Assign a participant code and use agreed reminders to re-contact the same participants at each interval. Keep the wording, reference period and instructions unchanged, and compare scores for the same codes over time.

Evaluation and connections

Do not add aims/hypotheses as expected Paper 2 plan features. The specific planning evaluation does not require sample/generalisability or ethics, although these remain examinable methods content elsewhere. Case studies need at least two collection techniques and triangulation; longitudinal plans need interval, scoring and re-contact arrangements.

Hint: follow the method and supplied details in the question. Write the missing procedure precisely and connect each proposed control to validity or reliability; a generic claim that a plan is reliable earns less useful explanation.