

# Tutorial Letter 201/2/2018

Individual differences and work performance

IOP2606

Semester 2

Department of Industrial and Organisational  
Psychology

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

This tutorial letter contains important information about your module.

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Dear Student

We hope that you are enjoying this module on individual differences and work performance and that it adds to your knowledge of and skills in industrial and organisational psychology.

The purpose of this tutorial letter is to

- provide feedback on Assignments 01 and 02 for the second semester
- provide some guidelines for the examination

You had to submit Assignment 01 and Assignment 02 in order to obtain examination admission. Assignment 01 and Assignment 02 also contribute to your year mark; **the year mark counts 20% towards the final examination mark.** Your lecturers would have written personal comments and supplied feedback on any assignments that were received on or before the due date. However, you are expected to use these same assessment criteria to assess your own answers.

### Skills used

We thought it would be a good idea if you study the central ideas and concepts of learning units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 for Assignment 01 and Assignment 02 by writing down your answers in essay and paragraph format, which is similar to answering questions in the examination. This would have also allowed you to practise summarising information and using a number of research-related skills. Examples include reading through the material, selecting and integrating content, defining the meaning of concepts and compiling written summaries to reflect certain content in a concise format. All of this should provide you with useful tools in studying and preparing for the examination, because you will have formed an association between concepts, their meanings and the relevant contents (for example, theory, specific sub-facets and research on the concepts). You might also have talked to other people about the content and experienced how these study content are applied, for example in the assessment, selection or motivation of employees.

## 1 FEEDBACK ON ASSIGNMENT 01 (SECOND SEMESTER)

### 1.1 Question 1

Describe five types of individual difference factors as indicated in the study guide and give a brief explanation of each individual difference factor. **(10)**

**Refer to IOP2606 Study Guide section 1.6 of learning unit 1 for the types of individual differences factors.**

In a general sense individual differences can be classified as either physical differences (abilities, skills, physical characteristics), psychological differences (personality, attitudes, values, interests, perceptions, emotions, learning processes, motives, needs, creativity), or other personal factors such as biographical factors and demographics. In the literature, individual differences are often associated with ability factors and biographical or

demographic factors. These are distinguished from other personality factors, like personality traits, cognitive processes, emotions, needs and behaviours (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

### **1. Cognitive Abilities**

Ability is an assessment of what a person can or cannot do. An individual's overall abilities are essentially made up of two sets of abilities, namely intellectual abilities and physical abilities:

- Intellectual abilities are those abilities that are needed to perform mental activities.
- Physical abilities are those abilities required to do tasks demanding stamina, dexterity, strength and similar skills.

The important point is to know how people's abilities differ and to use that knowledge to increase the likelihood that an employee will perform their job well (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

### **2. The trait approach to personality**

The trait approach to personality describes a person's behaviour as enduring characteristics across various situations. The more consistent the characteristics and the more frequently they occur in diverse situations, the more important those traits are in describing the individual. In an organisational context, you will find that some individuals appear to be more conscientious, hardworking, confident, independent and dependable than others.

Personality factors are also described in the five-factor model (FFM). These factors have been proved to be related to work behaviour (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

### **3. Other personality factors that influence work performance.**

Other personality factors influence work performance. We will focus on locus of control; type A, type B personality and risk-taking behaviour.

Locus of control deals with the degree to which people feel accountable for their own behaviour. Those who have a high internal locus of control believe they are in control of their own destiny. People with a high external locus of control feel that things that happen to them are because of other people or luck, among other things (Bauer & Erdogan, 2012).

In general, type A personalities are those seen to always be moving at a fast pace and highly visible, while those with a type B personality are more laid back and not driven by time (Moerdyk et al, 2015).

People differ in their risk-taking behaviour. It may be a myth that low levels of risk-taking behaviour would be appropriate for work performance. Risk-taking behaviour would be dependent on what type of job was required. Think of stockbrokers: would high or low risk-taking behaviours be appropriate (Moerdyk et al, 2015).

#### **4. Orientations**

Orientations refer to interests, values and attitudes. These orientations influence and affect employee performance.

Interests are specific action tendencies in personality that motivate people to pursue certain activities and jobs, for example to make certain career choices. It is assumed that if interests combine with abilities and other job competencies, they may explain happiness in the work context (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

Values strongly influence a person's attitudes and behaviours. An employee's performance will likely be higher if their values fit in well with the organisation. For example, a person who places a high premium on imagination, independence and freedom will be poorly matched with an organisation that seeks conformity from its employees. Values guide and stabilise an individual's career after several years of work experience and feedback. Individuals develop career anchors to avoid erratic or random decisions. If they sense that a job or job situation will not be consistent with their talents, needs and values, their anchor pulls them back into situations that are more congruent with their self-image (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

Attitudes reflect a person's beliefs about things, ideas and people. They involve intellectual, emotional and behavioural aspects. They are also influenced by situations, for example a new employee who changes their attitude after exposure to the new organisation. Work-related attitudes have been the topic of many research studies, include job satisfaction, and work commitment. These concepts relate to employee attitudes towards various personal and work-related issues, which contribute to people's feelings of happiness in their work, and to their desire to support organisational goals and to remain in the organisation (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

#### **5. Emotions or affective states**

Emotions or affective states entail the expression of feelings and how feelings affect individual performance.

Emotional intelligence has recently been highlighted in psychology. Among other things, emotional intelligence means that you have knowledge of your own emotions and you can manage them in a way that contributes to your work performance. Emotional content is implied in many personality variables, for example in intellectual functioning, personality traits, work motivation, job satisfaction and psychological adjustment (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

#### **1.2 Question 2**

In practice, personality factors as variables can be defined and measured according to various dimensions in terms of the classical personality approach. In the study guide, four of these dimensions are indicated. Critically discuss these different dimensions. **(15)**

**Refer to IOP2606 Study Guide section 2.4.1 of learning unit 2 for the classical personality approach.**

Personality measurements use concepts like specific traits and behaviours from one or more of the classical approaches as independent or predictor variables. The aim is to find the relationship with work-related dependent variables, for example training success and work performance ratings (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

In the practice of work-related personality research, the researcher will decide to use an assessment technique such as a personality questionnaire to measure the selected variables and compare it with scores on work performance measures. These include supervisory ratings of employee work performance, training success and sales volumes.

### **Classical personality approach dimensions:**

There are four classical personality approach dimensions.

#### **1. Single or multiple traits.**

This dimension entails measuring only one specific personality trait, for example self-monitoring, self-efficacy, locus of control or multiple traits in a trait system such as the three, five or sixteen traits theories.

#### **2. Cognitive and biologically based traits.**

This dimension is applied when work-related traits are measured using a cognitive approach in terms of how people think and perceive things, problem-solving and learning styles, etc. On the other hand, some personality traits (such as introversion and sensation seeking) have been verified to have a genetic, biological or physiological basis for example.

#### **3. Normal and abnormal traits.**

Personality assessment techniques, such as the occupational personality questionnaire (OPQ) are used to measure normal personality traits or behaviour, which we demonstrate in our personal and work lives. Sometimes, however, we need to use more clinically oriented assessment techniques to assess the intensity and frequency of certain abnormal or disorganised behaviour. These are used to measure depression, psychotism, anxiety-based behaviour, hypochondria, and phobias and so on.

#### **4. Dynamic versus stylistic traits:**

When we try to assess so-called dynamic traits or behaviour, we try to determine possible deep-seated needs, fears and conflicts. These are not easily determined by objective questionnaires; their assessment requires skilled psychologists and in-depth interviewing and other observation techniques (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

### 1.3 Question 3

Cognitive processes refer to all the processes people use to obtain knowledge or to become conscious of the environment. Attention and intelligence are two of the processes helping us to understand individual differences. Critically define and explain attention and intelligence in terms of individual differences. **(15)**

**Refer to IOP2606 Study Guide section 4.5 of learning unit 4 for an explanation of attention and intelligence as cognitive processes.**

#### 1. Attention

Attention refers to the process of selecting only certain stimuli in order to concentrate or focus on cognitive processes

**Two broad classes of theories have developed to explain attention, namely filter theories and capacity theories.**

**The filter theories** postulate that a bottleneck occurs in the flow of information. This bottleneck is called selectivity and occurs to prevent information overload.

Theorists differ about the moment when selectivity takes place or when the application of attention takes place. The following is different theories' description of the bottleneck:

- **The bottleneck** occurs at the perception or pattern recognition stage, and that attention is represented by a filtering process which determines what information should be recognised
- The filter tempers the unattended message, but does not completely block it out. It allows tasks to be executed without complete attention selectivity. For example, in understanding language, the occasional recognition of words can happen in an unattended channel).
- The bottleneck occurs after pattern recognition. This implies that the problem is not one of perception, but rather one of selection into memory after perception has occurred.

**Capacity theories** assume that there is a general limit on a person's capacity to perform mental work. A person has considerable control over how this limited capacity can be allocated to different activities. Consult the study guide for an explanation of how interference occurs when the demands of two or more activities exceed available capacity.

The effect of attention on the workplace is further emphasised because employees have different capacities for paying attention for shorter or longer periods. It is important to provide for optimal conditions in the workplace and work design in order to accommodate most or specific employees and their attention capabilities.

The self-regulatory mechanisms of attention are important for work performance and will be different for different employees. In this sense attention can be viewed as a process of self-consciousness, self-attention and self-monitoring in that the cognitive skills of attention are focused on specific tasks or on goal achievement. Goals have the function of focusing and

directing attention to specific elements of task execution. Targeted attention can be on both short-term and long-term goals, for example career and life goals. Individual differences affect the focus of attention on goal achievement, because employees have different attention orientations. For example, attention may be aimed at action or behaviour such as doing tasks. It may be more inward-oriented when the person needs to take some time to think about tasks.

## 2. Intelligence

Intelligence is seen as the capacity to acquire and apply knowledge and to adapt to one's environment. Intelligence is the global or aggregate ability of people to act purposefully, to think rationally and to adapt and cope efficiently in their environments.

Intelligence is however not one-dimensional see the study guide for an explanation of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and the so-called g-factors that can explain almost all types of intellectual behaviours.

### 1.4 Question 4

In employee motivation, intrinsic motivation deals with individual motivation. Apply your own understanding of self-actualisation and emotions. Give practical examples. **[10]**

**Refer to IOP2606 Study Guide section 6.7 of learning unit 6 for the concepts to address employee motivation.**

Self-actualisation is discussed in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the manifestation of self-actualisation in the workplace. Students need to discuss self-actualisation as a process and finding a balance.

The content of unconscious motivation is described and indicated under what circumstances they may occur and manifest in organisations, the conflict that may be present and unconscious motivations

Students should explain the concept of emotions

Emotions or affective states entail the expression of feelings and how feelings affect individual performance. The emotional process prepares people to deal with the stimulus and emotions in specific ways. Fredrickson (1998) asserts that positive emotions are generally alike and have an action-promoting tendency. This means that emotions (for example joy and happiness) in people with more positive affective dispositions increase and diversify their emotional social material and cognitive coping resources. The positive aspect of emotions which may be related to happiness can also be associated with the concepts of salutogenesis, fortigenesis, and psychofortology (Coetzee & Cilliers2001). These and other related concepts (for example self-efficacy locus of control stamina and sense of coherence) refer to the intrinsic coping or beneficial factors which provide people with more personal control resilience and resourcefulness to cope with life's demands and to stay healthy even in difficult circumstances.

On the other hand negative emotions (like anger aggression and fear) have distinct patterns in the above affective process and components. Take fear or anger for example. These



emotions have distinct patterns of action readiness autonomic arousal and cognitive activity changes and are often not easily regulated. People also act differently towards an unpleasant stimulus depending on whether they feel fear anger or contempt. Negative emotions and affective states are associated with poor physical and psychological health and play an important role in various psychological disorders.

**TOTAL: [50]**

## **2 FEEDBACK ON ASSIGNMENT 02 (SECOND SEMESTER)**

### **2.1 Question 1**

In facilitating effective emotive work responses, changing from negative to positive emotions involves three principles. Name and discuss the three principles of change intervention for facilitating positive affectivity. **(15)**

**Refer to IOP2606 Study Guide section 5.9 of learning unit 5** for the facilitating effective emotive work responses; change from negative to positive emotions.

#### **Change from negative to positive emotions**

An important question is whether change from negative to positive emotions is possible. Research asserts that all people are able to experience positive affectivity. For some, the outcome of prosperous environmental circumstances and growth opportunities has a larger measure of positive affective states and happiness. For others, “bad” life experiences during their life history cultivate the seeds for negative affectivity and unhappiness (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011). However, we must remember that in human history, during traumatic circumstances, there are many examples of people who succeed in developing the courage and skills to live a meaningful life. On the other hand, there are also those who we think “have everything”, yet their lives seem to be endless misery from birth to death. In terms of possible influences on happiness, most people return to their former and most stable state of happiness, especially after major life events and even more so after more short-term emotional events. Research indicates that long-term stability correlations, also for positive affectivity, are more or less in the range of 0,60 to 0,80, although some substantial changes also take place in affective stability (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

Ledimo and Matjie (2011) suggest **three principles of change intervention** for facilitating positive affectivity as the following:

- 1. Short-term mood or positive affect** is best enhanced if people are outward-focused and actively involved, for example in socialising and interpersonal relationships, exercise and other physical activities. Generally, people with high positive affectivity tend to be more active in social, mental and physical activities.

2. **Positive emotion and happiness** are best enhanced by the experiences and processes of pursuing meaningful goals, and not necessarily by only achieving goals. Emphasis is placed on the concept of flow, which explains the phenomenon that people who enjoy what they are doing in play and work situations perform optimally, because they are intrinsically and subjectively motivated to face challenges and achieve goals.
3. **Effective facilitation of positive affectivity** is best achieved if the underlying nature of affective states is clearly assessed and understood. Human emotions are determined by biological and psychological rhythms which are mostly acknowledged, but also ignored, by society and individuals themselves. All people have natural cycles of happiness and enthusiasm, and unhappiness and reduced energy. Research indicates that many people suffer from sleep deprivation, which leads to reduced levels of alertness and positive affect.

These principles have implications for policies, strategies and methods of management, job design and work execution. They should be considered in efforts to promote occupational health, happiness and positive affectivity in employees.

## 2.2 Question 2

Values are concepts used to describe employee motivation. Define values and briefly discuss six value orientations. [10]

**Refer to IOP2606 Study Guide section 6.7.7.1 of learning unit 6** for the concepts used to describe employee motivation.

### 1 Theoretical people

Theoretical people are intellectual people who value knowledge and seek eternal truths rather than the deeper meaning of things. They tend to generalise and do not notice the particular in the general. This makes them wise rather than clever where the particular is concerned. They value objectivity, which makes true or false the real criterion for truth. Criteria such as beautiful or ugly, holy or unholy, useful or useless are seen as irrelevant because they are subjective.

### 2. Economic people

Economic people are driven by a utility motive which is seldom satisfied because they are constantly striving to produce something visible. They see work and income as synonymous. Both involve utility and sustained yields or products, which are the factors by which economic people renew themselves psychologically.

### 3. Social people

Social people are selfless people who live through others. They only become a person in their own right by giving and receiving love; and when the need to receive love becomes a need to give love, their true social nature evolves.

### 4. Power people

Power people find meaning in life by experiencing themselves as powerful. Their strongest motive is to confirm this life power by being superior to other people. The power orientation can also be seen as a political orientation because it manifests itself in the context of organised collective life. In this context power people play a leading role, because they have to be in control. The power orientation is an inner compulsion that the individual has to express.

### 5. Religious people

All the facets of the religious person's life have a spiritual foundation. These people see nothing as existing in itself, because everything is part of the spiritual, God being the objective correlate. Faith is seen as the highest form of knowledge.

### 6. Aesthetic people

Aesthetic people give form to their inner being through aesthetic experience. They can transform something from any sphere of life (be it intellectual, spiritual, physical or emotional) into an experience of beauty. Through this way of experiencing, they expand their inner being and actualise their core nature. This nature is to create form and harmony according to an inherent will-to-form. The generally applicable knowledge which theoretical people value does not concern aesthetic people. They do not look at life – they experience life. They do not seek objective truth, but rather experience reality intuitively

## 2.3 Question 3

There are five influences of individual differences on occupational development. Discuss the influence of self-concept in occupational choice and self-controlled career choices. **(15)**

**Refer to IOP2606 Study Guide section 7.7,3 and 7.7.5 of learning unit 7 for the influences of individual differences on occupational development.**

### Self-concept

Self-concept relates to the psychological self which, according to Coetzee et al (2016), “constitutes the organisation of conceptions about qualities, characteristics, values and capabilities that individuals attribute to themselves”. The self-concept influences people's career behaviour, attitudes and choices. Once stabilised through the various career life stages, the self-concept functions as a stabilising force comprising the values and motives that an individual will not give up if forced to make a choice (Coetzee et al, 2016). However,

in the complexities of today's workplace, people may be forced to be flexible and to compromise in work that may not always be an optimal fit with their career preferences and capabilities.

Super developed a theory that combines self-image and developmental concepts. This theory emphasises interaction between personal and environmental variables in vocational behaviour. Super regards vocational choice as a dynamic and continuous development process where the individual forms a progressive synthesis of their self-concept, vocational concepts and the economic and social requirements of society. The individual's self-image relates to their abilities, interests, values, needs and expectations. The individual's vocational concept is the knowledge and impressions that they have acquired from experience (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

From childhood, the individual imitates their parents and other people, and identifies with them and the occupations and occupational concepts that they represent. At the same time, these experiences serve as an extension of the individual's self-image, and the child tests their self-image and vocational concepts in play, fantasy and during interaction with friends and family. The individual's vocational choices or decisions are aimed at those roles that correspond to the developing self-image concept (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

In psychological assessment aimed at placing people in certain situations or training them (e.g. for study choices, job selection and promotion of employees to higher level jobs), the level of development and readiness to act in these positions is considered. An important aspect of development is whether the individual has grown to be mature, that is, able to be independent and responsible at different stages in life. In the work context of potential assessment (e.g. in assessment centres), managerial potential is assessed for promotion – also with a view to developing managers to the next level of competence before promoting them to that level (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

### **Self-controlled**

Self-controlled occupational choices can also be related to positive psychological concepts which emphasise the intrinsic potential to develop optimally and achieve self-actualisation, as well as to concepts which emphasise personal control in life (such as internal locus of control, self-efficacy, learnt resourcefulness, sense of coherence and personal hardiness). These concepts contain the idea of self-control and also that people have (or can be taught to have) intrinsic resources to cope and to adapt, to face challenges and to deal with problems positively and meaningfully (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011).

The underlying developmental processes emphasised in these concepts are criticised for being too subjective because they do not acknowledge that many career choices are based on the objective knowledge of the person and the workplace. Another consideration is that too much emphasis is placed on the individual's subjective expectations and aspirations in vocational choice.

## 2.4 Question 4

In managerial motivation, leadership and entrepreneurial behaviour have certain characteristics. Name and explain five interpersonal characteristics of managerially motivated people. **(10)**

**Refer to IOP2606 Study guide section 8.8, Managerial motivation, leadership and entrepreneurial behaviour of learning unit 8 for a detailed description.**

The question refers to intrapersonal characteristics which include interpersonal characteristics. The interpersonal characteristics of managerial motivated individuals would be coping styles. The intrapersonal characteristics of these individuals would be their cognitive, affective, conative and interpersonal characteristics.

Students refer to the theory in section 8.8 of the study guide providing own examples.

### 1. Cognitive characteristics

Managerially motivated people follow a pragmatic approach to problem-solving. They are conventional, focus on objective realities and rely on practical judgement. They make their existence cognitively understandable and in the process are cognitively flexible to change. Because of this cognitive understanding, they remain calm and do not easily become frustrated. These people are assertive and inclined towards independence or autonomy. They probably feel that through their abilities they are able to cope independently.

### 2. Affective characteristics

Managerially motivated people have respect for authority figures, display a highly socialised power motive and prefer to interact with other people.

### 3. Conative characteristics

An important characteristic of managerially motivated people is perseverance. This is closely affiliated to manageability and therefore the ability to perceive life events as manageable, bearable and even as a challenge. These people have self-confidence.

### 4. Interpersonal characteristics

Managerially motivated people are enthusiastic, talkative and reflect the values of the group that they manage. They prefer to be in a highly visible position in the group, enjoy meeting people and display sophisticated social skills and diplomacy for the sake of social success.

### 5. Coping behaviours

A general characteristic of managerially motivated people is the ability to cope. They have their own coping strategies to buffer the hardships of life. These people might continuously

strive for success to avoid negative outcomes or to convince themselves that their fears will most likely never be realised. Owing to the organisational context of a managerial position, a strong competitive element is built into managerial work. These people should accept the challenges other managers may offer and should strive to win for themselves and their group.

The only managerial characteristic we think is entrepreneurial with regard to innovation and achievement is the more current emphasis on managerial achievement motivation. Promising aspects in this approach are the positive emphasis on aspects like flexibility, coping resources, more honest interpersonal or affiliation behaviour, and perhaps aspects that can be improved in the entrepreneurial personality (Ledimo & Matjie, 2011)

**TOTAL: [50]**

### **3 PREPARATION FOR THE EXAMINATION**

#### **3.1 Study material for the examination**

The study guide is your only prescribed source for the examination. **These guidelines, relating to study material for the examination, replace any previous guidelines given in Tutorial Letter 101/3/2018.**

The following are examination guidelines for the prescribed study guide material.

**Study the following learning units in the study guide:**

Learning unit 2:	Work-related personality research
Learning unit 4:	Cognitive individual differences and work performance
Learning unit 5:	Emotions, personality and work performance
Learning unit 6:	Individual differences, work motivation and work performance
Learning unit 8:	Individual differences, entrepreneurship and work performance

**Learning units 1, 3, and 7 will NOT form part of the examination in October/November 2018**

#### **3.2 Examination format and marking**

Please note that only those students who had submitted Assignments 01 and 02 will be allowed to write the examination. The year mark will be based on both Assignments 01 and 02. If you have met these requirements, you will be allocated a year mark, which counts 20% towards your final mark. For example, if you obtained 30% in Assignment 01 and 70% in Assignment 02, you would get a year mark of 6 (20% of 30) and 14 (20% of 70) respectively, which would give you an average year mark of 10. Your year mark will be added to your examination mark (in a relationship of 20:80) to yield a final mark. Students can expect essay and short paragraph questions with a choice between questions similar in format as set in the assignments.

<b>Duration:</b>	<b>2 hours</b>
<b>Composition:</b>	<b>four (4) questions of 25 marks each of which students choose three (3)</b>
<b>Total marks:</b>	<b>75 marks (will be converted to a percentage)</b>

## 4 CONTACT WITH LECTURERS

Please feel free to contact the course leader and lecturers with specific questions related to your studies. To contact the lecturers telephonically use the number of the Industrial and Organisational Psychology helpdesk (see Tutorial Letter 101/3/2018). The helpdesk will refer telephone calls to the first available lecturer.

We wish you success in your studies and in the examination.

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