

Group behaviour in organisations A2

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What you need to know

Group behaviour in organisations is the third topic of the Organisational psychology option (Papers 3 and 4). You should be able to describe, apply and evaluate:

1. Group development and decision-making

- the **stages of group development**, such as Tuckman and Jensen (2010): forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning;
- **Belbin's nine team roles**, in their three categories;
- **faulty decision-making**, why it happens and how to prevent it: **groupthink** (its features, with real examples, and ways to avoid it) and **Forsyth's cognitive limitations and errors** (the three types of "sin" and the errors inside each).

2. Individual and group performance

- **social facilitation** and **social loafing**: what each means, **drive theory**, **evaluation apprehension** and **social impact theory**;
- **social loafing across cultures**: individualistic versus collectivist cultures, with a study such as **Earley (1993)**;
- **performance monitoring** of employee productivity, through the key study **Claypoole and Szalma (2019)** (experiment 1 only).

3. Conflict at work

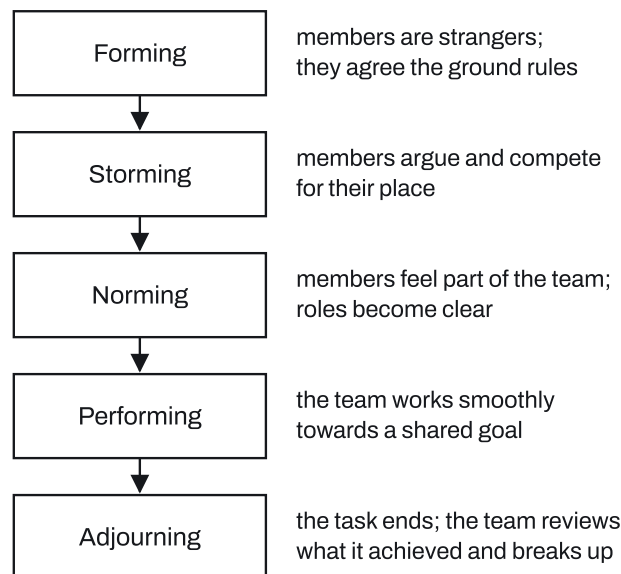
- the four **levels of group conflict** (intra-individual, inter-individual, intra-group, inter-group) and the **causes** of organisational and interpersonal conflict;
- **Thomas–Kilmann's five conflict-handling modes**;
- **bullying at work**: its types, phases and causes, with a study such as **Einarsen (1999)**.

4. The issues the syllabus lists for this topic: application to everyday life, individual and situational explanations, reductionism versus holism, idiographic versus nomothetic, generalisations from findings, cultural differences, determinism versus free will, and quantitative and qualitative data.

Understand it

Stages of group development

A new team doesn't work well straight away. Tuckman's model (four stages in 1965, a fifth added in 1977, revisited by Tuckman and Jensen in 2010) says a group passes through stages, each with its own typical behaviour.



- **Forming:** members are new to each other, polite and a little formal. They work out the task and agree ground rules (how meetings will run).
- **Storming:** once people relax, disagreements appear. Members push their own ideas, compete for status and may challenge the leader. It is uncomfortable but normal.
- **Norming:** the group settles. Members accept each other's views, agree a way of working, and roles become clear; some accept that their idea lost, for the team's sake.
- **Performing:** the group now works as one unit with a clear purpose, trusting each other to share out the work, without the earlier friction.
- **Adjourning:** the task is finished (or a set period ends), so the group looks back on what it achieved and each member's part, then breaks up.

Tuckman also gave a four-step version: **orientation to the task**, **intra-group conflict**, **development of group cohesion** and **functional role-relatedness** (getting on with the job, each in a role).

Evaluating the stages. Useful: knowing storming is normal stops a leader panicking, and leaders can support the group as it moves through them. But the model was built for **small, face-to-face** groups, so it may not fit large or remote teams (low **temporal validity**); it gives **no timescale** for each stage; some groups skip stages; and Tuckman and Jensen admitted there was little **empirical evidence**. It is fairly **holistic** but **nomothetic**, assuming every group follows one path.

Belbin's nine team roles

Belbin (1981) argued that a successful team needs members who between them cover nine **team roles**, each a typical way of contributing. A person usually has a few preferred roles.

Category	Role	What they bring
Thought (cerebral)	Plant	creative ideas; solves hard problems in unusual ways
Thought (cerebral)	Monitor evaluator	weighs up options calmly and fairly; strategic judgement
Thought (cerebral)	Specialist	deep knowledge or a rare skill in one area
Action	Shaper	pushes the team on; likes pressure and will take risks
Action	Implementer	turns ideas into practical, workable plans
Action	Teamworker	helps people cooperate and smooths out friction
People	Coordinator	chairs the team, shares out work, keeps everyone on the goals
People	Completer finisher	spots mistakes and makes sure work is finished on time
People	Resource investigator	looks outside the team for contacts, opportunities and ideas

Belbin's roles are measured with the **Belbin team inventory**, which combines a person's own ratings with ratings from colleagues (observers).

Evaluating Belbin. Strengths: **practical** (build a balanced team, or hire to fill a missing role); fairly **holistic** (a team needs thinkers, doers and people-centred members); meant to apply to any organisation. Weaknesses: a **small** team may not have nine people, and some workplaces are mostly thinkers; people may fit **several** roles or change with mood or conflict, so one label is **reductionist**; a role's style is not the job's **skills**; and the inventory relies partly on **self-report**, open to social desirability.

Groupthink

Groupthink (Janis, 1971) is faulty decision-making in a **close-knit** group: members care so much about agreeing and getting on that nobody examines the plan critically, and the group reaches a poor or irrational decision that individuals on their own might not have made. Janis's best-known examples are American government decisions: the **Bay of Pigs** invasion of Cuba and the failure to prepare for the attack on **Pearl Harbor**. Groupthink is never a good thing for decision-making.

Janis listed **eight symptoms** (features):

1. **Illusion of invulnerability:** the group feels so strong that it believes nothing can go wrong, so it takes big risks.
2. **Collective rationalisation:** warning signs are explained away instead of taken seriously.
3. **Belief in the group's morality:** "we are the good side", so ethical problems are ignored.
4. **Stereotyped views of outsiders:** critics and rivals are seen as weak, foolish or the enemy.
5. **Direct pressure on dissenters:** anyone who disagrees is pushed to fall in line.

6. **Self-censorship**: members keep their doubts to themselves because everyone else seems to agree.
7. **Illusion of unanimity**: silence is taken as agreement, so the group thinks everyone supports the plan.
8. **Mindguards**: self-appointed members who keep awkward information away from the group.

Avoiding groupthink. Janis suggested ways to keep critical thinking alive: make every member a **critical evaluator**; the leader stays **impartial** at first; appoint a **devil's advocate** to argue against the favoured option; invite an **outside expert** to challenge the group; split into **sub-groups** under different chairs, then compare; have members test the plan on colleagues in their own sections; set up a separate group under another leader on the same question; study **warning signs from rivals**; and hold a **second-chance meeting** after a decision to air remaining doubts.

Each has a weakness: a devil's advocate's objections are known to be "for show", so may be brushed aside; a senior manager sitting in changes how the team behaves.

Forsyth's cognitive limitations and errors

Deciding as a group is mentally hard work, so faulty reasoning can creep in at any point, from preparing for a meeting to acting on its outcome. Forsyth (2006) grouped the errors into three kinds of "**sin**":

Sin	What goes wrong	Errors inside it
Commission	information is misused	belief perseverance (still using information already shown to be wrong); sunk cost bias (sticking with a failing plan because of what has already gone into it); extra-evidentiary bias (using information the group was told to ignore); hindsight bias (overrating how well past knowledge predicted things)
Omission	useful information is overlooked	base rate bias (ignoring how common something generally is); fundamental attribution error (blaming a person's character and ignoring the situation)
Imprecision	mental shortcuts (heuristics) oversimplify	availability heuristic (relying on what comes to mind easily); conjunctive bias (not thinking about how events depend on each other); representativeness heuristic (relying on features that look meaningful but mislead)

Confirmation bias, looking only for information that supports what the group already thinks, also leads groups astray.

Evaluating the decision-making research. Useful, since leaders can be trained in the strategies, but these are harder to use than they sound (a rushed team won't hold second meetings). Groupthink evidence comes from famous historical cases analysed afterwards, which may not generalise to everyday business. The explanations are mostly **situational** (cohesion, pressure, a strong leader).

Social facilitation and drive theory

Social facilitation is the change in a person's performance when other people are present, either watching (an audience) or doing the same task alongside (co-actors). Usually performance **improves on simple or well-practised tasks** and **gets worse on hard or new tasks**.

Drive theory explains this through arousal. Having others present raises our general **arousal (drive)**. High drive makes us more likely to produce our **dominant response**, the response we have practised most. On an easy or well-learned task the dominant response is the correct one, so we do better; on a difficult or unfamiliar task the dominant response is often a mistake, so we do worse.

Evaluation apprehension is a different explanation: arousal comes not from others' mere presence but from **worry about being judged** by them. So a manager who will rate your work should affect you more than people who can't see what you are doing.

Social loafing and social impact theory

Social loafing is the drop in effort a person makes when working **in a group** compared with working **alone** (Latané, Williams and Harkins, 1979). At work: four warehouse staff told to unload a lorry together each work more slowly than they would if the lorry were theirs alone.

Social impact theory explains loafing by how pressure from others is shared out. The pressure on someone to act depends on how many people are applying it, how important they are, and how close they are. Give a task to one person and all the pressure falls on them; give it to a group and the pressure is **spread across the members**, so each feels less responsible and tries less. The bigger the group, the thinner each share.

Reducing loafing follows from this: make each person's contribution **identifiable** (give each a named task), ask each member directly for their view, **reward individuals** for their own part, check on individuals at **unpredictable** times, keep teams **small**, or offer a **team bonus** so everyone wants the group to succeed. Telling people to "work as a team" does nothing on its own.

Social loafing across cultures

Individualistic cultures value personal achievement and credit; **collectivist** cultures value the group's goals and harmony. So loafing should be mainly an individualistic problem.

Earley (1993) tested this. When responsibility for a task was **shared by a group**, the most individualistic people worked less well, while people with collectivist values **did better** when responsibility was shared. This supports a **cultural** explanation of loafing, warns that Western loafing research may not **generalise**, and suggests individual targets for individualists and group targets for collectivists.

Performance monitoring: Claypoole and Szalma (2019)

Watching staff through technology (webcams, screen recording, counting mouse clicks) is **electronic performance monitoring (EPM)**. Claypoole and Szalma asked whether electronic monitoring affects **sustained attention** (vigilance) the way a watching person does, producing social facilitation.

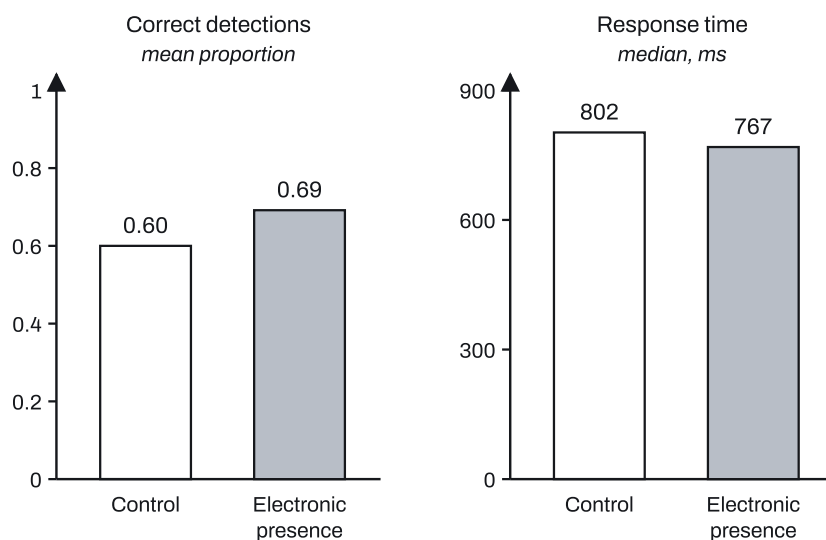
Sample. 106 undergraduates (65 female, 41 male; mean age 20.57) at a large university in the south-east of the USA. They signed up through a psychology experiment website and received course credit. They gave informed consent, their data were kept anonymous, and none withdrew.

Design. A laboratory experiment with **independent measures**: participants were **randomly allocated** to one of two conditions of the IV.

- **Electronic presence:** two devices. A **webcam** sat on top of the computer screen, and participants were told it would watch their performance and engagement during the task. A **video recorder** on a tripod (about 110 cm tall) stood **1 metre behind** them at a 45° angle, and they were told it would record their performance to be evaluated later.
- **Control:** the same task with **no** monitoring.

Procedure. After a short demographics questionnaire, each person did a **24-minute** vigilance task on the computer. Two-digit numbers appeared on screen one after another, and participants pressed the space bar for a **critical signal**: a two-digit number whose two digits differed by 0 or 1 (such as 45 or 77). Critical signals appeared at random, **five in each 6-minute block**.

DVs. The proportion of critical signals correctly detected, the proportion of **false alarms** (pressing when there was no signal), and **response time**.



Results.

- In **both** conditions vigilance fell over the 24 minutes: fewer signals were caught later in the task, response times grew longer, and false alarms became fewer.
- People who were electronically monitored **detected more signals** (mean proportion **0.69** against **0.60**), made **fewer false alarms**, and responded **faster** (median **767 ms** against **802 ms**).

Conclusion. Electronic presence can work like a real person's presence: it **facilitated** vigilance. Being told the recording would be evaluated links the result to **evaluation apprehension**.

Evaluating it.

- **Controls:** a control group as a baseline; signals at random; the same task, timing, instructions and equipment position for all. So it is **reliable** and the difference can be put down to monitoring.
- **Random allocation:** nobody chose who was monitored, so neither participants nor researchers could bias the groups.
- **Quantitative data:** objective and easy to compare; but no qualitative data, so we don't know how being watched felt.
- **Generalisations and ecological validity:** US students doing a 24-minute lab task for credit, with little work experience and possibly reacting to **demand characteristics**; monitoring over months at work might wear off or cause stress.
- **Application to everyday life:** monitoring could help jobs that need long, careful attention, such as driver-monitoring systems for long-distance drivers.
- **Determinism and nomothetic:** a general rule from 106 people predicts that monitoring raises performance, but says little about individuals who might resent being watched.

Levels and causes of group conflict

Conflict at work can happen at four levels:

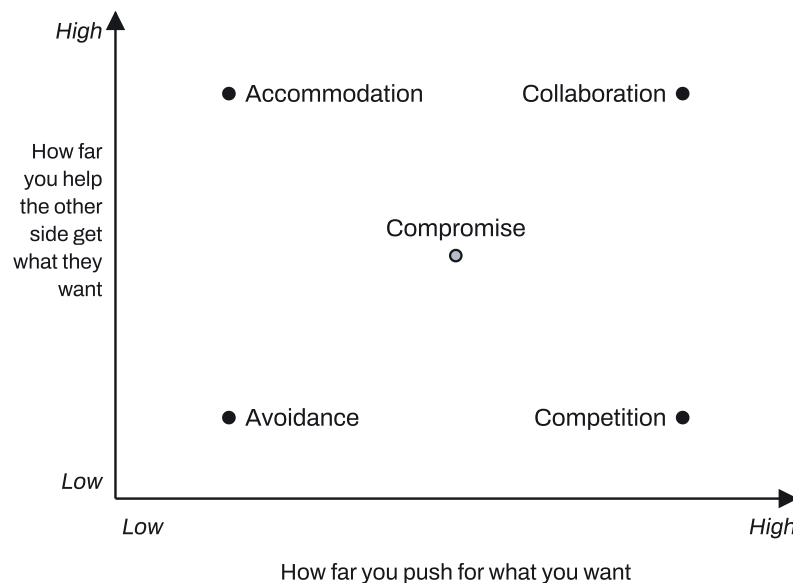
- **Intra-individual:** inside one person, for example torn between two demands (finishing a report or leaving for a family event).
- **Inter-individual:** between two or more individuals.
- **Intra-group:** between members of the same group or team.
- **Inter-group:** between two groups or departments.

Organisational causes come from how the workplace is set up: differences in **status**, disagreement about the best way to reach a goal, **scarce resources** (money, space, equipment, staff) and long chains of tasks where one group depends on another, so a hold-up becomes someone else's problem. **Interpersonal causes** come from the people: personalities that **clash**, or individuals who simply can't work together. A clash between two department heads can spread into a conflict between their departments.

Thomas–Kilmann's five conflict-handling modes

Thomas (1976), with Kilmann, described five ways of handling a conflict:

- **Competition:** each side tries to come out on top; once there is a clear winner, the dispute is settled.
- **Accommodation:** one side gives way and lets the other have what it wants.
- **Compromise:** **both** sides give up part of what they want and agree a middle way.
- **Collaboration:** the sides work together to find a solution that fully suits everyone.
- **Avoidance:** people step back from the issue and leave it alone for now; tempers may calm, but the problem itself remains.



Thomas also pointed to the **superordinate goal**: give the rival sides a shared target that neither can reach alone, and their energy goes into that instead of the quarrel.

Evaluating the modes. The model is **holistic**: conflict involves the people, the situation and the best mode, and different conflicts need different modes; but that makes one cause hard to pin down and managers hard to train. Each mode has a cost: competition rushes work; accommodation leaves the losers resentful; compromise must be organised and monitored; collaboration can be dominated by the most confident; avoidance leaves the problem in place. And private grudges may survive any solution.

Bullying at work

Workplace bullying is repeated negative treatment of a person over a period of time, where the target finds it hard to defend themselves. **Einarsen (1999)**, a review article on bullying at work, set out **five types** of bullying behaviour:

1. **Work-related**: aimed at the job itself, such as impossible deadlines, removed responsibilities or pointless duties.
2. **Social isolation**: the target is cut off, for example left out of lunches, meetings and emails.
3. **Personal attacks**: mocking the person themselves, their looks, habits or home life, or spreading rumours.
4. **Verbal threats**: hostile words used to intimidate, such as being yelled at or belittled with colleagues watching.
5. **Physical violence**: being hit or pushed, or being warned that it might happen.

Among 137 bullied workers in Norway, three experiences topped the list: being shut out by colleagues, having one's effort treated as worthless, and being made fun of.

Phases. Bullying is a process that escalates rather than a single event. It tends to begin with occasional negative acts that are indirect and hard to pin down, becomes more frequent and openly aggressive, the target comes to be seen as the problem and is less able to defend themselves, and it can end in severe stress, illness

or the target leaving the job.

Causes lie in the individuals and in the situation:

- **The bully:** protecting their own status or competing for jobs; envy; feeling unsure of their own ability. In **predatory** bullying someone uses their power over the target, as a newly promoted manager might.
- **The victim:** some personalities may provoke aggression in others, or be more vulnerable, for example being sensitive, suspicious, angry, low in self-esteem or anxious in social situations.
- **The workplace:** poorly designed work, poor leadership, low morale, low moral standards in the organisation, and a target who is socially exposed (stands out, or has little support in the group). A stressed manager may take their stress out on a subordinate.

Evaluating bullying research. The five types help firms write policy and train managers. But most data are victims' self-reports on a sensitive topic; a victim's anxious personality may be a result of bullying, not a cause; and what counts as bullying differs between **cultures**.

Key facts and formulas

There is no formula list in the 9990 exam. "Learn it" means you must remember it.

Fact	Status
Tuckman (1965; adjourning added 1977; Tuckman and Jensen, 2010): forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning	Learn it
Belbin (1981): thought (plant, monitor evaluator, specialist), action (shaper, implementer, teamworker), people (resource investigator, coordinator, completer finisher)	Learn it
Janis (1971): groupthink, eight symptoms; Bay of Pigs, Pearl Harbor; devil's advocate, outside expert, sub-groups, second-chance meeting	Learn it
Forsyth (2006): sins of commission (misuse), omission (overlook), imprecision (heuristics)	Learn it
Social loafing (Latané, Williams and Harkins, 1979); social impact theory; drive theory; evaluation apprehension	Learn it
Earley (1993): individualists loaf under shared responsibility, collectivists don't	Learn it
Claypoole and Szalma (2019): 106 US students; 24-minute vigilance task; 0.69 vs 0.60 detections, 767 vs 802 ms	Learn it
Conflict: four levels; Thomas–Kilmann's competition, accommodation, compromise, collaboration, avoidance	Learn it
Einarsen (1999): work-related, social isolation, personal attacks, verbal threats, physical violence	Learn it

How to do it

We have tagged 37 questions on this topic, from 2021 to 2026 (Papers 3 and 4; 26 different questions, as variants repeat them). 17 of them have parts of more than one type, so the counts add up to 55.

Question type	Questions
Apply group theory to a workplace scenario	13
Outline or describe a theory, term or list	11
Evaluate a theory or mode in a short answer	7
Apply research methods to the topic	7
Describe and evaluate essay	7
Plan a study on the topic and justify it	4
Recall Claypoole and Szalma	3
To what extent essay	3

Questions before 2024 used the older syllabus, so a few asked about things now dropped (such as Wedley and Field's decision-making process).

1. Apply group theory to a workplace scenario (13 questions)

A named person or team is in the stem. Each point earns 1 for the right concept and 1 for tying it to **this** workplace; without context the answer is capped (usually 2 of 4).

1. **Find the cue** in the stem: "newly formed", "checks for errors", "never worked together", "promoted to manager".
2. **Name the concept** from the theory the question names.
3. **Apply it**: what this person or team would actually do, using the stem's details. Two suggestions must clearly differ.

Variants you will meet:

- **Stages for a new group** [4]: at least **three** stages, each with what this group would be doing.
- **A Belbin role** [2]: the role plus why it fits. A checker suits a **completer finisher** (or monitor evaluator, or a specialist proof-reader); a designer suits a **plant** (or an implementer using others' ideas). Categories (thought, action, people) score 0; never reuse a role in a later part.
- **Two Thomas–Kilmann modes** [4]: each must **settle** the conflict and be **ethical**. Avoidance rarely helps, and "nobody gets what they want" is no solution.
- **Two Forsyth errors** [4]: the sin or subtype (sunk cost, belief perseverance, base rate bias, availability heuristic) and how this team might make it.

- **A monitoring method** [2] and **why it raises productivity** [2]: webcam, screen recording or counting mouse clicks; then Claypoole and Szalma (monitored people stayed more attentive) or the Hawthorne effect.
- **Why X is bullying Y** [4]: causes in the bully (status, envy, stress taken out on others, predatory use of power) and in the victim or situation (suspicious or anxious personality, poor leadership, a recent promotion), quoting the stem.
- **Reduce social loafing** [2]: a specific change (each person gets a named task to report on) and why it works. "Teamwork" alone scores 0.

2. Outline or describe a theory, term or list (11 questions)

"Identify": 1 mark per correct name. "Outline" [2]: the term (1) plus a detail or example (1). "Describe" [4]: a list of names is basic (1–2); explaining each part reaches 3–4.

- **A stage, a symptom, a strategy, a mode** [2 each]: name it, then what happens in it or how it works.
- **Tuckman's theory** [4]: the five stages named and each explained (the four-step version is also credited).
- **Belbin's theory** [4]: nine roles in three categories, a good team covers them all, a few roles explained, and the team inventory.
- **Social loafing** [2]: less effort in a group than alone, plus a **workplace** example. Ringelmann's rope-pulling study is not an organisation and scores 0.
- **A real example of groupthink** [2]: the Bay of Pigs or Pearl Harbor, and why it was groupthink.
- **Sins of commission** [2]: misusing information, plus one subtype explained.
- **Holism using Thomas–Kilmann** [2]: holism looks at the whole (1); the model combines the people, the situation and the best mode, with different modes for different conflicts (1). "It has five modes" is not enough.

3. Evaluate a theory or mode in a short answer (7 questions)

[2]: a problem (1) explained with an example from the theory (1). Older [6] versions wanted one strength and one weakness, each explained and illustrated.

- **Belbin or Tuckman**: use the evaluation points in "Understand it", each with an example (a five-person firm can't fill nine roles).
- **A mode you suggested**: tie the weakness to **that** mode in **that** workplace (competition rushes the work; accommodation leaves resentment).
- **Holism**: hard to find a single cause or train managers in every approach.

4. Apply research methods to the topic (7 questions)

Mostly Paper 4 Section A: 1 for the point, 2 when applied to this topic.

- **Behavioural categories for storming** [2]: things an observer can **see**: shakes head, raises voice, interrupts, withdraws from the discussion, forms a side group. "Presents an idea" is not a behaviour.

- **Structured observation:** strengths, categories fixed in advance so every observer records the same storming behaviours, and two observers allow **inter-rater reliability**; weaknesses, behaviour outside the categories is missed, and a group that knows it is watched may hide conflict.
- **Observing groupthink** [5]: covert gives natural behaviour; recordings can be re-watched; two observers check reliability; but a participant observer may miss things and fixed categories may miss new symptoms. End with a **conclusion** (a judgement, not a summary).
- **Another location for Claypoole and Szalma** [2]: a real workplace raises ecological validity but loses control of noise and distractions.
- **Random allocation** [4]: no participant bias and no experimenter bias in who was monitored.
- **Students as participants** [4]: easy to get, alike, a safe trial before real staff; but demand characteristics and no work experience.
- **Other monitoring** [2]: a hidden camera (covert observation) or a closed questionnaire about output.
- **Strengths of studying social loafing at work** [4]: finds who isn't pulling their weight so they can be retrained; output rises and the team trusts each other more.
- **Problems investigating group conflict** [6]: workers may not speak openly (social desirability); access to firms is hard; "conflict" means different things to different people and cultures.

5. Describe and evaluate essay (7 questions)

Paper 3 Section B, Q16 since 2024: (a) describe [6], (b) evaluate [10] with a **named issue** (2021–2022: 8 + 10).

1. **(a)** Cover **every** part the question lists. "Stages **and** Belbin" with only one caps the answer at 4. Use the subheadings in "Understand it".
2. **(b)** Start with the **named issue** (controls, application to everyday life, individual and situational), applied to each theory or the study with an example. Then two or three more syllabus issues (the evaluations in "Understand it"), each in context with a counter-point, then a short judgement.
3. Go **issue by issue**, not theory by theory, and develop each point (why it matters), rather than listing.

6. Plan a study on the topic and justify it (4 questions)

Paper 4 Section B. Use the named method only.

1. **(a) Plan** [10]: aim or hypothesis, sample and sampling, procedure, ethics, validity and reliability, **and** the method's own features (interview: technique, format, example questions, scoring; questionnaire: open or closed questions, rating scale; observation: covert or overt, categories, sampling, two observers).
2. Build questions or categories **from the theory**: one per Einarsen bullying type, one per Forsyth sin, or separate forming and norming categories.
3. **(b)** Describe the theory you used (bullying **types** means all five, not causes), then show how two parts of it shaped particular questions.
4. **(c)** A reason and a weakness for **your** question format, and a reason for **your** analysis, each linked to your plan. Choose one format.

7. Recall Claypoole and Szalma (3 questions)

Learn the facts exactly; most are 1 mark each.

- **Sample** [2]: any two of 106, 65 women and 41 men, mean age 20.57, undergraduates, a US university.
- **Recruitment** [2]: the psychology experiment website (1), a large university in the south-east USA (1), course credit (1). "Volunteer sampling" alone is the technique, not how they were recruited.
- **The two forms of electronic presence** [4]: webcam on top of the screen, told it watched performance and engagement; video recorder on a tripod 1 metre behind at 45°, recording for later evaluation. "CCTV" is too vague.
- **Describe the study** [6]: sample, IV and DV, procedure details and at least one result.

8. To what extent essay (3 questions)

Paper 4 Section C, 2021–2022 only: agree or disagree with a statement (for example that Belbin's roles are the perfect way to sort people, or that group conflict can always be managed). Argue **both sides** using research (Belbin, Tuckman, Thomas–Kilmann), then reach a reasoned conclusion. Describing the theory alone stays in the bottom band.

Worked examples

Example 1

Mateo manages a new team of four technicians, brought together from different sites to install a hospital's new computer system. In the first fortnight two of them keep arguing about whose method to use, and one has stopped speaking in meetings.

(a) Identify the stage of group development the team is in, and suggest what Mateo would see once the team reaches the next stage. [3]

(b) One technician is skilled at running meetings and dividing up jobs fairly. Suggest which of Belbin's team roles fits him, and justify your answer. [2]

(a) The arguing over methods and the member who has gone quiet show the team is **storming (B1)**. At **norming**, the technicians would settle on one installation method that all accept (**B1**), and each would know their own part of the job, such as one doing the wards and another the theatres, with less arguing in meetings (**B1**).

(b) **Coordinator (B1)**: a coordinator chairs the team and shares out tasks, so he can run the installation meetings and assign each technician a site, keeping them on the hospital's deadline (**B1**).

Example 2

A hotel chain's board keeps putting more money into a costly rebuild of an old hotel, although bookings there keep falling. Board members who have doubts say nothing, and the chair tells the board that rival hotels "don't know what they are doing".

(a) Using Forsyth's cognitive limitations and errors, explain **one** error the board is making. [2]

(b) Explain **two** symptoms of groupthink shown by the board. [4]

(c) Suggest **one** way the board could avoid groupthink, and explain **one** weakness of it. [4]

(a) Sunk cost bias, a sin of commission (**B1**): the board keeps funding the rebuild because so much has already been spent, even though falling bookings show the plan is failing (**B1**).

(b) Self-censorship (B1): members with doubts keep quiet because the rest of the board seems to agree, so the rebuild is never questioned (**B1**). **Stereotyped views of outsiders (B1)**: the chair dismisses rival hotels as incompetent, so the board ignores what rivals' success might be telling it (**B1**).

(c) Appoint a devil's advocate (B1): one board member is asked to argue at each meeting why spending should stop, so the case against the rebuild is actually heard (**B1**). Weakness: everyone knows the objections are a role being played (**B1**), so the board may dismiss them and carry on, and groupthink continues (**B1**).

Example 3

From the key study by Claypoole and Szalma (2019):

(a) The task lasted 24 minutes, with five critical signals in each 6-minute block. How many critical signals did each participant meet? [1]

(b) Using the mean proportions of correct detections, estimate how many critical signals a typical participant in each condition detected. [2]

(c) What percentage of the sample were women? Give your answer to 1 decimal place. [1]

(d) Explain why recording false alarms as well as correct detections made the measure of attention more valid. [2]

(a) $24 \div 6 = 4$ blocks, so $4 \times 5 = 20$ critical signals (**B1**).

(b) Electronic presence: $0.69 \times 20 = 13.8$ (**B1**). Control: $0.60 \times 20 = 12$ (**B1**).

(c) $65 \div 106 \times 100 = 61.3\%$ (**B1**).

(d) Someone could catch every signal just by pressing the space bar all the time, so correct detections alone could overstate attention (**B1**). Counting false alarms shows whether monitored participants were really telling signals apart, and they made fewer false alarms as well as more detections (**B1**).

Example 4

(a) Describe what psychologists have discovered about conflict at work: the levels of group conflict, Thomas–Kilmann's five conflict-handling modes, and bullying at work. [6]

(b) Evaluate what psychologists have discovered about conflict at work, including a discussion of cultural differences. [10]

(a) Levels. Conflict can be inside one person (intra-individual), between individuals, within a group or between groups, with organisational causes (status gaps, scarce resources, tasks that depend on other teams) or interpersonal ones (clashing personalities).

Thomas–Kilmann. Competition (one side wins), accommodation (one side gives way), compromise (both give something up), collaboration (a solution that suits all) and avoidance (putting it off).

Bullying. Einarsen (1999): work-related, social isolation, personal attacks, verbal threats and physical violence. It escalates from occasional indirect acts to open aggression the target can't resist, with causes in the bully (status, envy), the victim and the workplace (poor leadership, low morale).

(b) Cultural differences (named issue). Where open argument is normal, a heated debate may not feel like conflict, while in cultures that prize harmony mild criticism may. So competition may suit one workforce and wreck another, where accommodation or collaboration saves face. Einarsen's victims were Norwegian, so the commonest types may differ elsewhere, which limits use in a multinational firm.

Individual and situational. Organisational causes and most modes are situational, things a manager can change; bullying research adds causes in the individual, so changing the workplace alone may not stop a bully. But a victim's anxiety may be a result of bullying, not a cause.

Reductionism versus holism. Thomas–Kilmann is holistic (each conflict needs its own mode), but that makes managers hard to train.

Application to everyday life. The five types give firms a basis for policy, but a "resolved" conflict may leave private grudges.

Overall the research helps managers but must be adapted to the culture and the people involved.

Why it reaches the top level: the named issue first, applied to more than one theory; further issues developed with a counter-point; a reasoned judgement.

Common mistakes

- **Mixing up Forsyth and groupthink**, or calling sins of commission "groups that just agree"; commission means misusing information, so give a subtype (June 2023 report).
- **Treating groupthink as positive**: it always leads to poor decisions (November 2022 report).
- **Guessing ways to avoid groupthink** instead of using Janis's; the devil's advocate was the commonest full-mark answer (March 2023 report).

- **Naming one Thomas–Kilmann mode and describing another** (March 2023 report).
- **Impractical or unethical solutions**, such as stopping the production line or giving some workers no break; these score 0, and so does the weakness part that follows (March 2025 report).
- **A weakness not tied to the mode**: "more conflict" alone isn't enough; say why **that** mode causes it (March 2025 report).
- **Ideas instead of behaviours** in observation categories, or points not related to storming or "your study" (March 2026 report).
- **Causes instead of types** of bullying, or naming only verbal and physical (March 2026 report).
- **All five Tuckman stages** when only forming and norming are needed (November 2022 report).
- **Anecdotes or other topics** (an ideal workplace, motivation theories), and evaluation that just repeats the description (November 2021, November 2022 reports).
- **Problems conflict causes** instead of problems **researching** it (March 2023 report).

How to get the marks

- **"Identify"**: the exact term. **"Outline"**: the term plus a detail or example. **"Describe"**: every part named **and** explained.
- **"Suggest"** (a scenario): the concept from the named theory, applied to this person or team with the stem's details; two suggestions must differ.
- **"Explain" a strength, weakness or problem**: the point, then why it matters, with an example from the theory or stem.
- **Research methods (Paper 4 Section A)**: always tie the point to the topic ("so storming behaviours are recorded the same way by both observers").
- **Plans**: the named method only, its specific features, and questions or categories that come from the theory.
- **Essays**: (a) every listed part in detail; (b) the named issue first, then other issues with analysis, then a judgement.
- **"Discuss ... conclusion"** and **"to what extent"**: both sides, then a decision reached by reasoning, not a summary.

Quick check

1. A shop manager feels pulled between her head office's sales targets and her wish to give her tired staff a break. Which level of conflict is this?
2. A project team picks a supplier because a news story about it is the first thing everyone remembers. Which of Forsyth's sins is this, and which error inside it?
3. In Claypoole and Szalma (2019), by how many milliseconds was the median response time faster with electronic presence?
4. Two departments share one meeting room. Each agrees to give up two of its weekly bookings so the other gets more. Which Thomas–Kilmann mode is this?

5. A team of 12 cleaners shares one target for the whole building. Suggest one change that would reduce social loafing.

Answers

1. **Intra-individual** conflict: it is inside one person.
2. A **sin of imprecision**: the **availability heuristic** (relying on what comes to mind easily).
3. $802 - 767 = 35$ ms faster.
4. **Compromise**: both sides give up part of what they want.
5. Give each cleaner their own named floors and check each area's standard separately, so each person's work is identifiable and they can't hide in the group.

Past questions to try

- 9990/32/F/M/25 Q15: two Thomas–Kilmann modes for a lunch-break dispute, and a weakness of one.
- 9990/33/O/N/24 Q13: two of Forsyth's errors that could trouble a new project team.
- 9990/32/M/J/24 Q13: the causes of bullying, applied to a manager and her employee.
- 9990/43/O/N/23 Q4: groupthink: an example, symptoms, strategies and observing it.