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AQA
AS and A-LEVEL
Psychology

New edition

BRILLIANT MODEL ANSWERS

Clinical psycholgy and mental health

Fully revised and updated for the 2025 AQA Psychology A-level specification

- Provides the key knowledge and skills for exam success
- All types of questions covered
- Grade A model answers
- Written by examiners

Do brilliantly in your Psychology exam!

Nicholas Alexandros Savva

psychologyzone.co.uk

Proven exam success | Written by examiners | Concise, detailed and clearly written model answers

Brilliant Model Answers

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Please note: this book is not endorsed by or affiliated to the AQA exam board.

Important information

Do not skip this page!

The 'unpredictable' exam is more 'predictable' than you think

This guide is part of Psychologyzone's Brilliant Model Answers series covering A-level Psychology. Use it alongside the Psychologyzone series Brilliant Exam Notes to get the best out of your learning.

This guide covering the topic of Social Influences provides a full set of exam-style questions and model answers to help you do well in the exam. After all, your psychology exam is based on answering questions – what better than to have a book that already has the answers for you!

The exam board has deliberately developed the A-level Psychology specification so that the questions are to some extent 'unpredictable' in order to discourage students from attempting to rote-learn (memorise answers) using pre-prepared questions. This makes it difficult to predict what's going to be asked.

We have tried to make the unpredictable 'predictable'...

There are over 100 model answers in this book. We have covered most of the different types of question they can ask you for each topic on the specification. You can adapt the model answers provided to most types of questions set in the exam.

Some of your model answers seem very long. Why?

Some of the answers are much longer responses than you are expected to write in the exam to get top marks. **This is deliberate**. We have written them in this way to enable you to have a better understanding of the theories, concepts, studies and so on. If you do not write as much, don't panic; you don't need all of the content to achieve a good grade.

As you may be using this as a study book, we thought we'd write the model answers in a way that you can also revise from them, so we sometimes expand on explanations or give an example to help you understand a topic better.

Many of the model answers start by repeating the question; in the real exam you do not need to waste time doing this – just get stuck in!

Remember - in your exam, your answers will be marked according to how well you demonstrate the set assessment objectives (AOs); therefore, we have tried to provide model responses that show you how to demonstrate the required know-how for these AOs. Each example provides you with 'indicative content': in other words, the response gives you an idea of points you could make to achieve maximum marks; it doesn't mean these are points you must make. The purpose of these model answers is to inspire you and demonstrate the standard required to achieve top marks.

Exam skills

How will your answer be assessed?

Your teachers will have explained that your answers in the examination will be assessed on what examiners call **assessment objectives (AO).** If you can familiarise yourself with these AO, this will help you write more effective answers and achieve a higher grade in your exam. There are three assessment objectives called **AO1**, **AO2** and **AO3**.

By now, your teachers should have given you a lot of practice exam questions and techniques on how to answer them. The aim of this book is not to teach you these skills, but to show you how this is done – to model the answers for you.

Just to remind you, below are the AQA assessment objectives:

AO1 **Knowledge and understanding**

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures

What does this mean?

The ability to describe psychological theories, concepts, research studies (e.g. aim, procedures, findings and conclusions) and key terms. The exam questions can cover anything that is named on the specification.

Example

Explain the process of synaptic transmission. **[5 marks]**

Outline the role of the somatosensory centre in the brain. **[3 marks]**

AO2 **Application**

Apply knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures:

- in a theoretical context
- in a practical context
- when handling qualitative data
- when handling quantitative data.

What does this mean?

Application questions require you to apply what you have learnt about in Psychology (theories, concepts and studies) to a scenario (situation) often referred to as 'stem' material. A scenario will be a text extract or quote given in the question. You are treated as a psychologist and you need to explain what is going on in the situation from what you have learnt.

Example

Chris suffered a stroke to the left hemisphere of his brain, damaging Broca's area and the motor cortex.

Using your knowledge of the functions of Broca's area and the motor cortex, describe the problems that Chris is likely to experience. **[4 marks]**

AO2 **Evaluation**

Analyse, interpret and evaluate scientific information, ideas and evidence, including in relation to issues, to:

- make judgements and reach conclusions
- develop and refine practical design and procedures.

What does this mean?

Evaluation simply means assessing the 'value' (hence 'evaluation' of a theory or study you have been describing. There are many ways you can evaluate theories or studies. For students, evaluation often takes the form of the strengths and weaknesses of the theory and/or study, but evaluation can also be in a form of 'commentary' (neither strength nor weakness but more in the form of an 'analysis' – which is still an evaluation).

Example

Outline one strength and one limitation of post-mortem examination. **[2 marks + 2 marks]**

The different types of exam questions

We have grouped the exam questions into four different types:

Identification questions	Multiple-choice questions, match key words with a definition, tick boxes or place information in some order or in a box.
Short-response questions	Questions worth up to 6 marks (e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 marks). These are often questions asking you to 'outline', 'explain', or 'evaluate' a theory or a study.
Application questions	These require you to apply the psychological knowledge you have learnt (theories, concepts and studies) to a real-life scenario given in the exam question.
Long-response question	These deal with long answers worth over 6 marks (8, 12 or 16 marks). The long-response answers found in this book will be mainly for 16-mark questions.

How the model answers are structured

We have tried to structure your learning by breaking down the model answers into four distinct categories

Key terms, concepts, and **theories** that are named on the AQA specification are covered by the identification and short-response questions (e.g. explain what is meant by the term…).

Research questions asking you to outline a study, describe a theory or give an evaluation are covered by short-response questions (e.g. briefly outline one study that has…).

Application questions require you to apply your knowledge to a made-up scenario (situation) and are covered under application questions.

Essay questions 'Outline and evaluate', or 'Discuss'-type questions are covered under long-response questions. Some long-response questions also require the application of knowledge.

Specification: Clinical Psychology and Mental Health

AQA

- Definitions in the field of mental health; deviation from ideal mental health, deviation from social/cultural norms, failure to function adequately and statistical infrequency.
- The behavioural, emotional and cognitive characteristics of phobias, depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).
- The behavioural approach to explaining and treating phobias: the two-process model, including classical and operant conditioning; systematic desensitisation, including relaxation and use of hierarchy; flooding.
- The cognitive approach to explaining and treating depression: Beck's negative triad and Ellis's ABC model; cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), including challenging irrational thoughts.
- The biological approach to explaining and treating OCD: genetic and neural explanations; drug therapy.

Definition of mental health

Identification questions

Q1 Read the four definitions of mental health below (A-D)

A. Failure to function adequately
B. Deviation from social/cultural norms
C. Statistical infrequency
D. Deviation from ideal mental health

Below is a description of abnormal behaviour. Choose the definition from above that best matches the description and place the A or B or C or D in the box at the end of the statement. **[1 mark]**

Behaviour which is rare and not exhibited by many people.	

Q2 Read the four definitions of mental health below (A-D)

A. Failure to function adequately
B. Deviation from social/cultural norms
C. Statistical infrequency
D. Deviation from ideal mental health

Below is a description of abnormal behaviour. Choose the definition from above that best matches the description and place the A or B or C or D in the box at the end of the statement. **[1 mark]**

Behaviour which shows an inability to cope with everyday life.	

Q3 Read the four definitions of mental health below (A-D)

A. Failure to function adequately
B. Deviation from social/cultural norms
C. Statistical infrequency
D. Deviation from ideal mental health

Below is a description of abnormal behaviour. Choose the definition from above that best matches the description and place the A or B or C or D in the box at the end of the statement. **[1 mark]**

Behaviour which does not fit the rules of expected behaviour.	

Q4 Below, identify two examples of Jahoda's criteria for 'ideal mental health'.

Circle only two letters. **[2 marks]**

A. Being dependent on others

B. Being rational

C. Resistance to stress

D. Adaptation to the environment

E. Hardy personality

Q5 Below, identify two statements that describe the deviation from 'ideal mental health' as a way of defining mental health.

Circle only two letters. **[2 marks]**

A. Not following the expected standards set by society

B. Not being able to cope with stress

C. Causing distress or discomfort to others

D. Not achieving your full potential (self-actualisation)

E. Behaviour that is different from the way most people in society behave

F. Behaviour that interferes with everyday routine tasks

Short-response questions

Q6 Explain what is meant by 'deviation from social/cultural norms in the context of mental health. **[3 marks]**

Social and cultural norms are the expected or accepted rules of behaviour within a particular society or cultural group. According to the definition of deviation from social/cultural norms, a person is considered abnormal if their behaviour goes against these expectations. For example, most cultures view it as appropriate to remain solemn at a funeral, so someone who laughs loudly at a funeral would be seen as deviating from social/cultural norms and therefore judged as behaving abnormally.

Q7 Give two limitations associated with 'deviation from social/cultural norms as a definition of mental health.

[3 marks+ 3 marks]

1. This definition of mental health has been criticised because whether someone is abnormal or normal can depend on the social context (situation) in which the behaviour occurs. For example, going to the bathroom to urinate is considered normal behaviour, whereas urinating in the middle of a classroom during a psychology lesson would be abnormal. This suggests that under this definition, the mental health is a relative concept – it depends on the situation in which the behaviour occurs.

2. Another limitation is that social/cultural norms can change over time, which can determine if behaviour is abnormal or normal. For example, until the 1970s, homosexuality in America was viewed as a disease – these views of American society were reflected by classifying it as a disorder in the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM II). However, over time, attitudes towards homosexuality changed to be more accepting, and subsequently, the disorder was removed in the later 1980 edition of the manual (DSM-III) to reflect the social norms. This shows that defining mental health in terms of the deviation of social norms is inappropriate because it is not reliable (inconsistent), as it is dependent on the prevailing social norms and moral values, which can change.

Q8 Explain what is meant by 'deviation from ideal mental health' as a way of defining mental health.

[3 marks]

Jahoda (1958) defined mental health by looking at what ideal psychological wellbeing should look like. She suggested that there are six criteria that make up ideal mental health, and the more of these someone meets, the healthier they are. These criteria include having a positive self-attitude such as high self-esteem, being able to cope with stress, having personal autonomy (being independent), experiencing self-actualisation (reaching your potential), and having an accurate perception of reality. According to this definition, people who deviate from ideal mental health — for example, lacking self-esteem or struggling to cope with stress — are showing poorer mental health and may be more likely to develop psychological problems. For instance, someone who constantly feels low and has a negative view of themselves may be showing a lack of positive self-attitude, which could be linked to conditions such as depression.

Q9 Give two limitations associated with 'deviation from ideal mental health as a way of defining mental health.. **[2 marks+2 marks]**

1. Jahoda's six characteristics of positive mental health are unrealistic as most people would be hard pushed to achieve all six at the same time and thus would be defined as abnormal. For example, many people may never achieve 'self-actualisation' in their lives, which would suggest that many people are psychologically unhealthy.