

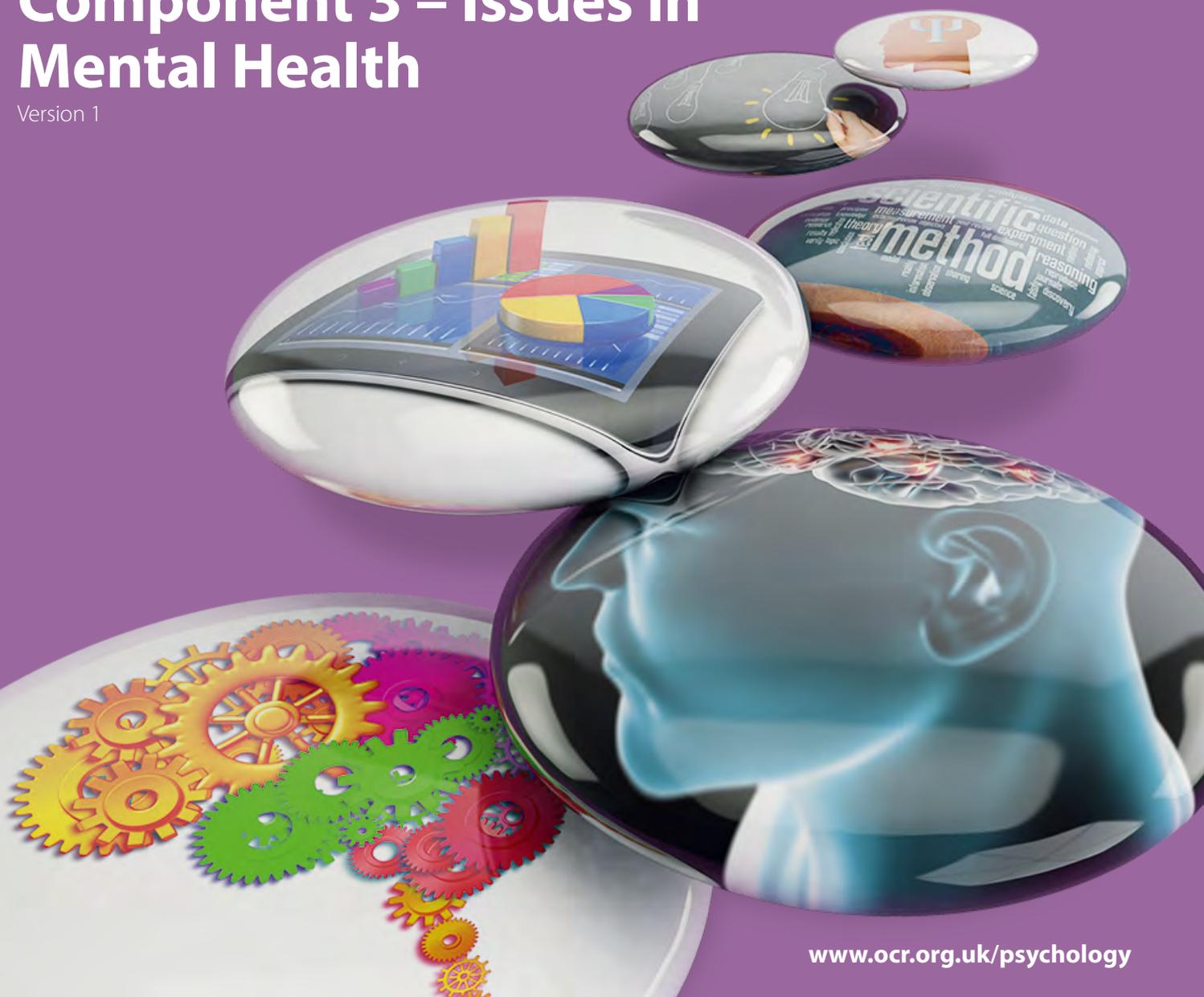
A LEVEL
Candidate Style Answers

PSYCHOLOGY

H567
For first teaching in 2015

Component 3 – Issues in Mental Health

Version 1



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Introduction

This resource has been produced by a senior member of the A Level Psychology examining team to offer teachers an insight into how the assessment objectives are applied.

As these responses have not been through full moderation, they are banded to give an indication of the level of each response.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

The sample assessment material for these answers and commentary can be found on the A Level Psychology web page and accessed via the following link:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/171772-unit-h567-03-applied-psychology-sample-assessment-materials.pdf>



Component 3 – Issues in Mental Health

Question 1(a)

Outline one definition of abnormality.

[2]

Sample answer – Level TBC

One definition of abnormality is Rosenhan's Statistical infrequency when a behaviour which is seen infrequently can be classified as abnormal. For example the majority of people do not have depression, and therefore depression could be classed as abnormal.

Marks 2/2

Sample answer – Level TBC

One definition of abnormality is Jahoda's definition of deviation from ideal mental health, where she suggested six criteria you should meet in order not to be abnormal. These are: high self-esteem, personal growth, integration, autonomy, an accurate perception of reality and mastery of the environment.

Marks 2/2

Sample answer – Level TBC

Szasz's view is that abnormality is behaviour which is termed "abnormal" but is simply judged by others to be bad or make them feel uncomfortable. It is not the result of a biological illness or disease.

Marks 2/2

Examiner commentary

Each of these answers addresses the question for full marks. They show the difference in breadth vs depth, but as the question is only worth two marks candidates should not spend too long going into detail of each of the seven features.

Sample answer – Level TBC

Abnormality can be defined as psychotic, anxiety or affective disorders, which can have different characteristics.

Marks 1/2

Examiner commentary

This answer is really from the characteristics part of the specification, but does suggest that abnormality can be defined as a disorder, so would gain 1 mark.

Sample answer – Level TBC

Abnormality can be defined as behaviour which has a biological explanation such as genetics, which causes people to be abnormal.

Marks 0/2

Examiner commentary

This only gives an explanation but doesn't tell us anything about what behaviour is abnormal (definitions); therefore this response is not creditworthy.

Question 1b

Explain why labelling people 'abnormal' could be considered unethical.

[3]

Sample answer – Level TBC

One reason why labelling people as abnormal can be considered unethical is the social sensitivity of such labelling. The stigma attached to abnormality by our society is such that people may be subject to prejudice if they have a label of abnormality and this might mean they are discriminated against in that they may be unable to get a job or promotion because of this label.

Marks: 3/3

Sample answer – Level TBC

One reason why labelling people as abnormal can be considered unethical is that once people are given the label they are unable to lose it and are victims of stigma and discrimination. This is due to the "stickiness of labels" according to Rosenhan and so they may find their behaviour judged by such a label, and others might interpret everything they do in light of this label, which can then not be lost, like Rosenhan's pseudo patients who were released with schizophrenia in remission.

Marks: 3/3

Examiner commentary

Both of these answers address the question and give clear reasons as to why labelling could be considered unethical. Although the second answer is more study focussed, both meet the requirements of the question and would receive full marks.

Sample answer – Level TBC

Social sensitivity is an area of ethics which suggests that people are affected by labelling and it is therefore not going to produce a good outcome for them, so it shouldn't be done because of stigma which is sticky.

Marks 2/3

Examiner commentary

This answer has some focus on both ethics and labels; however they are not clearly linked.

Sample answer – Level TBC

Labelling means giving someone a label which will stick with them forever.

Marks 1/3

Examiner commentary

This answer is very brief, but gains some credit as it gives a definition of labelling. However, there is no reference at all to ethics.

Sample answer – Level TBC

Rosenhan's study showed the stickiness of labels with pseudo patients, who were admitted to hospital having said they heard voices saying thud and hollow.

Marks 0/3

Examiner commentary

This answer doesn't explain stickiness of labels (which would have gained some credit as it implies the ethical problem of stickiness) and gives the parts of the study the student has remembered but with no mention of ethical problems of labelling.

Question 2

Rosenhan (1973) hypothesised that psychiatrists cannot reliably tell the difference between people who are sane and those who are insane.

With reference to the key research, discuss how classification of mental illness can result in 'stickiness of labels'.

[5]

Sample answer – Level TBC

Rosenhan's study which was carried out in 8 hospitals in the USA showed that when the patients were admitted with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, after being labelled in this way, the label stayed with them and they were treated in accordance with the label, even though they were acting perfectly sanely. Their behaviour such as writing in their diaries was classed as obsessive writing disorder, and this was seen as one more symptom of their mental illness. This shows that the label was used to explain everything they did and also they were released with the diagnosis of schizophrenia in remission which shows that the label stuck with them, even after several days (in one case 49 days) of sane behaviour, despite no longer meeting the diagnostic criteria.

Marks 5/5

Examiner commentary

This clearly has a focus on the key research, as requested by the question. It discusses the stickiness of labels, and what this means, and talks about how the classification (or diagnosis) of the disorder is shown to result in behaviours being interpreted through the label.

Sample answer – Level TBC

Stickiness of labels shows that when someone is diagnosed with a mental illness they are labelled with that illness, for example schizophrenia and this label is then used to judge all of their behaviour by, even if this behaviour doesn't exist anymore they might be labelled as 'in remission'. For example they might be writing and this could be seen as obsessive writing, or queuing might be seen as abnormal simply due to their label. This what Rosenhan found.

Marks 3/5

Examiner commentary

This clearly shows what stickiness of labels is and how it can lead to interpretation of the person's behaviour, however there is little referenced to Rosenhan's study.

Sample answer – Level TBC

Szasz's view is that abnormality is behaviour which is termed "abnormal" but is simply judged by others to be bad or make them feel uncomfortable. It is not the result of a biological illness or disease.

Marks 2/5

Examiner commentary

This answer provides discussion of parts of the Rosenhan study, but there are no links to the stickiness of labels, therefore only 2 marks can be achieved.

Sample answer – Level TBC

Diagnosis of mental illness is a result of labels being attached to normal behaviours which are seen to be abnormal. Szasz said this was due to political and medical people getting together to make mental illness labelled as a disease.

Marks 0/5

Examiner commentary

This answer is not focussed on the stickiness of labels or on the key research by Rosenhan. It is simply suggesting a criticism of labelling with some reference to Szasz's study.

Question 3

Suggest how biological treatment can be used to treat one specific disorder.

[5]

Sample answer – Level TBC

One biological treatment for depression is biochemical or drug therapy. There are clear links between low serotonin levels and depression, and one treatment is the use of SRRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) which act on the levels of serotonin, in order to increase them. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter which is transmitted across the synaptic gap, and once the neuron is stimulated the serotonin is taken back up by the original neuron, therefore leading to low levels. However, the SRRI prevents the reuptake and so the levels of serotonin in the synaptic gap remain high and therefore reduce the symptoms of depression.

Marks 5/5

Sample answer – Level TBC

Biological treatment can comprise of more than one biological therapy, for example there could be drug therapy and ECT combined to treat depression. ECT is where electrodes are placed on the anaesthetised patient's temples and an electric shock is passed into the patient's brain it can be a quick fix for reducing severe depression whilst waiting for drug therapy to become effective.

A milder form of brain stimulation is TMS where a magnetic field is created causing a much weaker electrical signal to be applied to the prefrontal cortex. Drug therapy may be drugs which act on the serotonin level whereby the serotonin levels remain high due to the drug preventing them from being taken back in the nerve cell from the synapse, and as low serotonin levels are linked to depression, increasing them can reduce the symptoms of depression.

Marks 5/5

Examiner commentary

The first answer provides good application of a clear, detailed and accurate biological treatment of depression. While the second answer gives a number of biological treatments for depression in less detail. Both answers meet the requirements

of the question well enough to achieve full marks. These demonstrate different ways in which the question could be approached, showing depth breadth trade-offs.

Sample answer – Level TBC

Drugs could be used to control the chemical level in the body, which may be unbalanced which can cause disorders such as depression. Serotonin a neurotransmitter, levels are low in people with depression so the drugs may need raise the levels of the serotonin they do this by preventing reuptake, so reducing the symptoms of depression. SRRI which do this may have side effects. If the serotonin level gets too high it may lead to aggression.

Marks 3/5

Examiner commentary

This response makes reference to a named disorder, with some reference to appropriate treatment, the impact of the treatment on both the chemicals and the disorder. However, the response lacks some details and the last part is not creditworthy as it is evaluation.

Sample answer – Level TBC

Biological treatments like drugs aim to change the biology for example in someone with a diagnosis of a disorder they might want to change chemicals or remove parts of the brain to reduce symptoms of that disorder.

Marks 2/5

Examiner commentary

There is a limited suggestion of biological treatments, although there is some creditworthy material. However, there is no reference to a named disorder.

Sample answer – Level TBC

Biofeedback is a treatment which can change the person's behaviour when they listen to their biological feedback and then try to reduce things like heart rate so they are not stressed.

Marks 0/5

Examiner commentary

Biofeedback is a behavioural treatment; it is simply using the biological response to indicate the success of the relaxation techniques. Therefore, this response is not creditworthy.

Question 4

Compare a cognitive explanation with one other explanation of mental illness..

[10]

Sample answer – Level TBC

Comparing the cognitive and biological explanations for mental illness, it can be seen that both of these explanations are falsifiable. Both the biological and cognitive explanations can be tested, experimentally and therefore they are both scientific. The biological explanation can be tested with blood tests of serotonin levels, which can then be correlated with symptoms of depression. It can also be substantiated by the fact that biological treatments such as SRRI are effective in reducing depression. The cognitive explanation of faulty thinking can also be assessed experimentally by asking about symptoms of depression and assessing faulty thinking, which Beck did, and found that the faulty thinking was more likely to be found in patients with depression than in people without that illness.

The biological and cognitive explanations differ in terms of their view on the reductionism and holism debate. The biological approach is more holistic as it considers more than one biological cause, such as genetic explanations, with research supporting the idea that depression is more common in children with parents who have depression, or biochemical explanations which suggest levels of serotonin are linked to depression. The cognitive approach simply explains mental illness such as depression by the faulty thinking patterns of the individual, however they may be caused. Beck's theory has three components, the self, their world/experiences and their future. If they think negatively about themselves – "I am useless" and their past experiences "I have made so many mistakes" and their future "I can't see anything changing for the better" the symptoms of depression can be seen as a result, for example lack of motivation as a result of the pessimistic thoughts about the future and the helplessness of not thinking anything can be changed.

Marks 9/10

Examiner commentary

This answer shows the student has a good understanding of the key assumptions of both the cognitive and biological explanation of mental illness. Two points of comparisons are

discussed - the method and the reductionist view are used, with some elaboration and effective use of examples.

Sample answer – Level TBC

The assumption of the cognitive psychologists is that mental illness is brought about by faulty cognitions, for example people thinking they are worthless due to their faulty information processing.

Biological psychologists on the other hand suggest that biology is to blame for mental illness, for example a genetic link where depression is inherited and/or low levels of serotonin being linked to depression. Both of these adopt an individual approach, in that mental illness is found within the person not dependent on the situation they find themselves in. With biological it is the person's chemicals and in the cognitive approach it is the person's faulty thoughts like Beck said.

One difference is that the biological approach would suggest it is more nature whereas the cognitive approach might suggest nurture, as it is the environment and the information being processed which cause the depression, so if a person thinks everyone is ignoring them they might be depressed when in fact everyone is just too busy to reply to a text.

Marks 6/10

Examiner commentary

A reasonable but unbalanced comparison between the cognitive and biological explanation is presented, with some detail in the reference to depression. There is a reasonable structure with two

points of comparison, but the latter is not clearly linked to the biological explanation.

Sample answer – Level TBC

Cognitive psychologists believe that the reason for mental illness such as depression is faulty cognitions or thoughts. These may lead the person to believe they are worthless and feel depressed.

This can be compared to the biological explanation which believes that people suffer from depression due to their biology, so they are likely to have less serotonin levels in their body and this can lead to depression. They would treat them differently one by using cognitive therapy and one by using drug therapy.

Marks 3/10

Examiner commentary

A limited description of the assumptions of both cognitive and the biological explanation of mental illness is included. This lacks detail and is superficial, it has some relevance, but there

are no real points of comparison other than to suggest different treatments.

Sample answer – Level TBC

The cognitive treatment is CBT which works by changing thoughts and can be used with a journal of thoughts. The biological treatment is based on drugs and ECT which can be used to stop people being depressed.

Marks 1/10

Examiner commentary

This answer is far too brief and what has been included focusses on treatments which is not required. There is a mere hint at what the explanation might be and there is an absence of comparison, which is a key requirement of the question.

Question 5

Discuss the nature/nurture debate in relation to the biological explanation of mental illness.

[10]

Sample answer – Level TBC

The nature nurture debate is one which psychologists have considered to try and explain behaviour. Psychologists who think behaviour is due to nature would consider that it had been inherited from parents and the child is born with that behaviour. This can be seen in the biological explanation of mental illness where genetic explanations for disorders such as schizophrenia can be seen. In Gottesman's research he showed that children with two parents who had been admitted to hospital with a diagnosis of schizophrenia were much more likely to be diagnosed themselves with schizophrenia and even bipolar, showing genetic similarities between these two disorders. This presents a problem of suggesting the nature side of the debate, as it could be seen as unethical if we then tried to prevent people from having babies if the parents had mental disorders. It is also a problem that it is very reductionist, in that if we say babies are born with a mental disorder due to inheritance, why is there not a 100% concordance rate between identical twins who have the same genetic makeup and the same environment, but don't always both get the same disorder.

This means that we have to adopt a nurture side of the debate, and this could be seen in things like the chemical imbalance of a person, which might be caused by the environment. People with schizophrenia have depleted levels of dopamine and this could be caused by stressors in their environment (stress diathesis theory). So it is the environment of nurture of the person that causes the schizophrenia. This has less ethical considerations as it suggests we can actually do something to help prevent the disorder, other than gene therapy, and means that we can make a difference. However it does then put the onus on the person to help themselves, whereas the nature side might give someone the excuse "it's not me it's my genes". The nurture side also adopts a more holistic explanation, as it suggests there are numerous factors in the environment which could affect the biological make up of a person suffering from a disorder such as schizophrenia.

As you can see there are arguments for adopting a nature and nurture side of the debate in the biological explanation, and it is probably an interaction between genetic disposition and environmental factors which result in a person having a disorder, to the extreme that a person without a genetic disposition can still have a disorder due to environment and a person with a genetic disposition might not have any environmental factors and therefore will never show the disorder.

Marks 10/10

Examiner commentary

This has a good explanation of the debate, with clear links to the biological explanation, and specific mental disorders, and some empirical evidence in support. It also has a well-developed line of reasoning and logical structure, looking at one side of the

debate then the other, and finally bringing the interactionist suggestion at the end. There is a good discussion of the implications of adopting either side of the debate. Remember, based on a mark a minute this answer will only have just over 10 minutes time allocated.

Sample answer – Level TBC

The nature nurture debate considers whether behaviour is innate, ie born with it, or nurture which means the environment is the cause of the behaviour, in this case mental illness. The biological explanation can take the nature side in terms of genetics, with the disorder such as depression being inherited from a parent. It can also take the nature side of the debate by saying that if something happens such as a brain injury or a trauma which causes chemicals such as serotonin to reduce these could result in a diagnosis of mental disorders.

The problem is trying to prove that the levels of serotonin actually cause the illness or is it the illness causes the serotonin levels to lower. If we assume it is something the person is born with, ie nature, then we could argue there is no point in trying to alter it as it is the person's nature, but we could look at treatments such as gene therapy to avoid babies being born with a disposition to a disorder. If we say it is nurture then we can try and make sure that someone's environment doesn't contain things which might cause the disorder, such as stress, or toxins.

The nature nurture debate is one which can apply to the biological explanation of mental illness and it might be both nature and nurture.

Marks 5/10

Examiner commentary

This answer is a reasonable application of the debate to the biological explanation of mental illness. It does actually consider the issues of applying the debate, evaluating the problems of considering something nature or nurture, and so does attempt

to address the injunction to discuss. It is a good idea to link back to the question at the end of the answer but this is done in a limited, way, and to show good application of the debate to the explanation.

Sample answer – Level TBC

The nature nurture debate suggests that there are two extremes of explanations, ones which think that mental illness is due to natural causes, for example genetic explanations, which may impact on the levels of serotonin. This is the nature position. The biological approach tends to take a nature view of mental illness, suggesting that it is part of the biological makeup of the person.

However, in some illnesses there are factors such as dopamine levels in schizophrenia which could be triggered by the environment of the person such as the stress diathesis model. Therefore the biological approach cannot be thought of as entirely adopting a nature view, and in some cases the interaction of the nature and nurture can result in the explanation for mental illness. The nurture position is that the environment is the cause of the mental illness, for example the society or situation that the person finds them self in. For example Seligman's Theory of Learned Helplessness suggests that people may become depressed if they find that there is no way out of a situation and they just give up attempting to escape. His research on dogs showed that when they were repeatedly shocked and unable to escape their cage, when they were shocked but could have escaped they didn't even try. They had learned to be helpless.

Marks 4/10

Examiner commentary

It is easy in a pre-prepared essay on nature nurture debate to lose sight of the question. This answer shows that the nature/biological view has been learned in comparison to the cognitive/nurture view and whatever the question there is going to be

the prepared answer, however the part about the cognitive approach is not creditworthy. There is also limited discussion (describe and evaluate) of the nature/nurture debate in relation to the biological explanation.

Sample answer – Level TBC

The biological explanation is reductionist in its beliefs that the cause of mental illness is due to genetics and nothing else. It would be better if it took a holistic approach like the humanistic approach which suggests there is a whole range of reasons for a mental illness like no unconditional positive regard, or lack of self-actualisation. If the biological explanation was holistic it would look at more than one explanation rather than biology.

The biological explanation also uses the experimental method which is objective and falsifiable and so makes it more scientific unlike the humanistic approach which is much more subjective and less falsifiable.

My final point is that the biological explanation is deterministic as it says your genes determine your behaviour such as mental illness whereas the humanistic explanation says it is your own fault if you are ill and you should do something about it, so you have a choice (freewill).

Marks 0/10

Examiner commentary

This answer demonstrates good knowledge of the biological explanation, but is a typical example of a pre-prepared comparison answer that is going to be used whatever the question. It has nothing creditworthy, therefore no marks are awarded.



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