# Psychology Subject Assessment Advice

## Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the previous year’s assessment cycle, gives an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

# School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Investigations Folio

When viewed as a set, the two investigations should provide evidence of collaborative and individual skills, individual ideas, a clear understanding of why ethical considerations are important in research, an ability to link the data collected to the research question and an understanding of the significance of the results in relation to the research question. A qualitative investigation often has more potential for discussion.

Investigation reports should not include a detailed procedure or a literature review as these are not assessed and take up valuable word count. A very brief statement about the procedure and mention of some findings from previous research can be useful to set the context for the report. Students should be selective in the number of graphs they present as often extra graphs do not add any extra information. The presentation of raw data is often unnecessary and can make the report more difficult to read.

The more successful responses commonly:

* provided evidence to demonstrate initiative in applying constructive and focused approaches to individual and collaborative work
* appropriately displayed data in accordance with the intent described in the proposal/introduction
* interpreted results accurately and provided a systematic and in depth discussion of the evidence leading to the formulation of logical and highly relevant conclusions
* discussed a range of suggested improvements that were appropriate and provided clear explanations about how each improvement would improve the quality of the findings
* made small changes to the Introduction from the proposal, such as tense.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not use SACE approved research programs
* exceeded the word count or provided very brief discussions in sections
* repeated similar and generic ideas for both Investigations, particularly in the discussion of research ethics and evaluation of the sample used
* discussed ideas in general terms rather than relating specifically to the particular research program used
* provided too much or too little data, or repeated measures of central tendency unnecessarily, making the interpretation of the evidence and ability to form adequate conclusions difficult
* included raw data or calculations in the report unnecessarily
* discussed data that did not appear in the result section of the report
* could not clearly differentiate key evaluative terms such as reliability and validity.

Assessment Type 2: Skills and Applications Tasks

The number of tasks typically submitted in this assessment type ranged from five to seven and included a mixture of tests and assignments. This is in accordance with the subject outline, which states that students undertake at least four tasks, with at least two tasks under direct supervision of the teacher. Tasks should allow students to demonstrate a range of specific features of the assessment design criteria, including the knowledge and understanding criteria. Task design should also align with the topic descriptors in the subject outline and should consider the wellbeing of students.

The more successful responses commonly:

* appropriately acknowledged information from a wide range of sources and explicitly demonstrated how sources of information have been critically and logically selected in assignments
* provided evidence from a range of assessment design criteria, including applying psychological concepts and evidence from investigations to suggest solutions to complex problems in new and familiar contexts
* provided responses to test questions with a focus on the lead in verb.

The less successful responses commonly:

* responded to sets of tasks that were only made up of tests
* primarily demonstrated evidence of the knowledge and understanding criteria with limited evidence of the analysis and evaluation and application assessment design criteria.

# External Assessment

The subject outline states that the external examination consists of short-answer and extended-response questions. For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning in relation to all four assessment design criteria:

* investigation
* analysis and evaluation
* application
* knowledge and understanding.

It was pleasing to see that many students demonstrated the ability to handle questions in all four assessment design criteria.

Assessment Type 4: Examination

### General comments on Section A

Many students exceeded the spaces provided in booklets 1 and 2. The lines provided should be used as a guide for the suggested length of response. If answers are continued elsewhere, students are recommended to write notes to alert markers.

Students cannot lose marks for lengthy responses, provided that the additional material is relevant, correct, and understandable. Excessively long responses, however, introduce the possibility of losing marks for additional information which is incorrect. Answers that contain contradictory notions cannot receive full marks. A point cannot receive marks more than once, regardless of how many times it is stated.

It is important for students to write clearly and concisely to avoid possible miscomprehension. This also means that students should identify any abbreviations used, unless they have already been introduced in the question.

In the Subject Outline, the expectation that students demonstrate the ability to use appropriate psychological terms in their work is made clear. Hence, students should refrain from everyday colloquialisms, as the purpose of the examination is to test for Stage 2 SACE level of learning and understanding in Psychology. The use of everyday language, rather than psychological terminology, does not demonstrate knowledge of the correct terms. For full marks, appropriate psychological terms need to be used accurately.

In some questions students are required to analyse information or to apply their knowledge to a scenario (e.g., questions 1 and 2). Answers that address the theory, without application of the theory to the given scenario, cannot be credited with full marks. When questions are divided into parts, students need to recognise the relevance of each part of the question to the opening scenario.

One mark was assigned to questions where students were required to state, name, or identify information, generating unambiguous answers, which are either right or wrong.   
Questions which are allocated more marks require students to understand the meaning of the key verb used in the question, such as *describe* or *explain*. When students are asked to *describe*, it is expected they will write about *what* happens, whereas when asked to *explain*, they will write about *why* or *how* something happens. (For example, refer to 1(b), (c) and (d)).

### Question 1

Generally, students demonstrated a high level of understanding of the persuasion process.

In (a), the more successful responses tended to explain that, because the advertisement is on a billboard at a bus shelter:

* readers (e.g. passing motorists) must be able to absorb the message quickly; there is no time to read details
* an arresting slogan could be used to draw attention, and remain memorable.

The less successful responses commonly:

* stated that the peripheral route is more effective at changing attitudes
* described features of the audience and why the peripheral route was used to target them.

The more successful responses in (b) tended to:

* discuss the credibility of the Government/MAC (source).  
  For example: The Government is a credible source because its purpose is to save lives or the information provided about the penalty is factual
* explain that audience identification with the actor (e.g. an average person/young/male) could increase the effectiveness of the advertisement
* note the attractiveness of the model, gaining the attention of passing motorists, car/bus passengers or pedestrians.

The less successful responses commonly:

* referred to the actor in the advertisement as the source of the message
* only stated who the target audience is (or is likely to be).   
  For example: The target audience is people who drive.

In these less successful responses, students did not address the features of the source or audience that would make the message more or less effective.

In (c), the more successful responses commonly:

* explained that the behaviour of texting while driving could have led to a negative outcome (e.g. fine or crash) which resulted in an attitude change, from positive to negative.  
  For example: positive attitude → texting → fine → distress/financial difficulty → negative attitude to texting

Less successful responses tended to:

* define the attitude-behaviour link, without reference to the scenario
* explain how a negative attitude towards texting while driving would result in a behavioural change (not texting while driving), but did not explain why the attitude changed.

In (d), the more successful responses tended to:

* identify the direction of the comparison (upward, downward or similar), and then discuss Jane seeking to improve her driving skills (upward), feeling more confident about her ability (downward) or knowing she is fitting in with her peers (similar).

The less successful responses:

* did not identify who Jane was comparing herself to (e.g. the instructor)
* did not describe the influence the social comparison had on Jane.

### Question 2

In (a), successful responses:

* identified the posting of best moments as impression management from the scenario.

The less successful responses commonly:

* described non-verbal communication.

Many students failed to take note of the leading verb “identify” or the one mark assigned to the question. Writing beyond the space provided was superfluous, as details in this question were not required.

Successful responses in (b):

* identified the comparison of a person’s own experiences with other people’s “highlights”
* named the comparison - upward or similar.

Less successful responses commonly:

* failed to identify an upward or similar comparison
* described impression management rather than identifying the social comparison
* Did not reference the scenario.

In (c), successful answers for the identification of the independent variable:

* identified social media use

Less successful responses:

* were unable to determine the independent variable in the scenario
* identified the dependent variable (i.e. the described improvements).

Successful responses, addressing one advantage of an experimental design for the investigation tended to:

* cite one point and explain why this was an advantage.   
  Examples include:
  + - the greater control of extraneous variables means that a causal relationship can be determined between the independent variable (media use) and the dependent variable (improvements)
    - because of the controlled conditions, there is a greater possibility of replicating the findings.

*Less successful responses tended to:*

* provide half an answer, making a statement without explanation, such as:   
  The experimental design means that extraneous variables can be controlled.  
  or  
  Experimental designs allow random allocation.
* include examples that could apply to other designs, such as quantitative observational; that is, they were not experiment specific.  
  Examples include:
  + - selection of participants may have been biased (not randomly selected), therefore external validity would be reduced.
    - if the test did not actually measure the variables it was supposed to measure, internal validity would have been compromised.

Successful responses, addressing the validity of the findings tended to cite:

* the small sample size (1095) with specific reference to the millions of users worldwide
* the short time frame (one week) over which the investigation was conducted
* the sustainability of reported improvements, because of the collection of data at only one point in time
* poor ecological validity, given the potentially artificial nature of the experimental conditions in Group 2
* the lack of measures in place to ensure that Group 2 stopped using social media altogether, thereby reducing the validity of the findings.

Less successful responses commonly:

* described participant variables that would have been addressed through random allocation
* described features that were not specific to the experimental design
* described factors that were not applicable to this particular design (e.g., artificial laboratory setting).

In (d), successful responses addressing the generation of qualitative data tended to include:

* open-ended questions
* clear descriptions of how a focus group could take place.

Less successful responses commonly:

* described the process of content analysis, rather than the generation of data
* described a method of obtaining quantitative data (e.g., rating scales)
* stated, rather than described, how qualitative data could have been generated (e.g., ‘focus group’, ‘interview’).

Successful responses addressing an advantage of qualitative data tended to:

* describe the depth and richness of qualitative data (i.e., the meaning behind the responses could be obtained).

Less successful responses tended to:

* describe the designs associated with qualitative data generation, rather than the data itself.

Successful responses addressing a disadvantage of qualitative data tended to explain:

* interpreter bias when determining themes in content analysis
* the difficulty of applying reliability and validity standards
* social desirability bias in relation to focus group discussions (not just qualitative data in general).

Less successful responses commonly:

* discussed social desirability bias generally  
  (Social desirability bias can apply to any self-report assessment, and is not limited to qualitative data.)
* discussed the fact that participants may lie.  
  (This also applies to any self-report, and is not limited to qualitative data.)

In (e), successful responses addressing the collection of quantitative data commonly included:

* descriptions of scales; for example, Likert scales  
  Students went beyond naming a scale, and described the requirement of participants to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a statement, which generated numerical data.
* examples of items on the scale that related to the scenario.

Less successful responses commonly:

* stated a measure (e.g., rating scale), without any description.
* gave an example that could have been either qualitative or quantitative (e.g., ‘questionnaire’ as opposed to “fixed‑response questionnaire”).

In (f), successful responses addressing ethical implications of the experiment tended to:

* describe the detrimental impact on one’s social life, work and/or mental health if unable to use social media
* cite the fact that, even though researchers believed that “usual” social media use was harmful, they only encouraged one group of participants to stop using social media.

Less successful responses commonly:

* had generic comments about voluntary participation, informed consent, or right to withdraw.

In (g), responses addressing the structure of an attitude towards social media were generally completed well. Successful responses tended to:

* describe the tri-component (affective, behavioural and cognitive) model, and make links between each component and social media use.

Less successful responses commonly lacked detail. Some students:

* simply wrote the letters ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’.
* outlined what each letter stood for, but did not apply this knowledge to the use of social media.

Part (h), addressing two functions of using social media, was also generally well answered.

Successful responses:

* described two functions and linked each to the scenario.

Less successful responses commonly:

* named two functions, but failed to make links to the scenario.

### Question 3

Part (a) was generally answered well.

Successful responses:

* identified the ratio schedule as the most effective schedule for developing better study habits.

In the less successful responses, students:

* misunderstood the question (comparing the variable interval against the fixed interval schedules, or comparing the variable ratio against the fixed ratio schedules) or not know how to read the graph.

Part (b) was also answered well.

*Successful responses tended to:*

* use specific data from the graph  
  For example: “The variable interval schedule results in a greater number of responses (80) compared to the fixed interval (~45).”

*In the less successful responses, students:*

* showed misunderstanding of the question
* included descriptions of the schedule patterns over the entire time period, rather than at the 60-minute mark.

In part (c), the more successful responses showed that students generally understood that:

* the schedule of reinforcement in (i) was fixed interval, and in (iii) it was fixed ratio.

Students were less successful in understanding that:

* the schedule of reinforcement in (ii) was variable ratio, and in (iv) it was variable interval.

### Question 4

Generally, answers displayed a sound understanding of operant conditioning principles.

The more successful responses in (a):

* described the use of reinforcement to increase or strengthen the behaviour, and then linked the theory to the scenario (e.g., praise, acceptance from friends as reinforcers)

Examples include:

Jack enjoys playing games. Enjoyment is a positive reinforcer. Any behaviour that results in positive reinforcement is likely to be repeated.  
Jack’s gaming behaviour could be the result of negative reinforcement. Something unpleasant (boredom) is removed, resulting in increased time playing games on the phone.

The less successful responses tended to:

* explain Jack’s behaviour using classical conditioning
* use incorrect terminology when explaining operant conditioning
* define both positive and negative reinforcement without reference to the scenario.

In (b), more successful responses tended to:

* describe two observational learning factors correctly applied to the scenario  
  Most commonly, students included two of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation as factors influencing Jack’s learning via observation.  
  Examples:   
  Jack would have been motivated to play games on his phone because he could see how much enjoyment other students were getting (vicarious reinforcement).  
  In order to reproduce the behaviour, Jack would have had to have a mobile phone and the memory skills to remember all the rules.

Less successful responses tended to:

* name two or more factors without any description.
* use the name of the factor (e.g., attention) to describe it.  
  Example: Attention – Jack paid attention to the model.

In (c), more successful responses tended to:

* give well explained answers about the degree of variance about the mean for groups A and/or B.   
  Example: There was more variance about the mean in the scores for Group A compared to Group B. Scores in Group B were more tightly clustered about the mean
* highlight that, with a lower standard deviation, data are more precise, and vice versa.

Less successful responses tended to:

* give a definition of standard deviation, without reference to the data provided
* confuse standard deviation with mean.

In (d), more successful responses commonly:

* gave detailed procedural or theoretical goal-orientated responses to behaviour modification  
  An example of a procedural response:
  + - baseline data are established (i.e., time spent playing games on phone)
    - alternative, desirable behaviours are rewarded (e.g., playing sport)
    - punishment, although not advocated, is sometimes used (e.g., confiscation of phone)
    - continuous schedule is used initially, but changed to intermittent to increase resistance to extinction.
* described which schedules of reinforcement would be most effective
* correctly used appropriate psychological terms relating to operant learning.

Less successful responses commonly:

* did not provide enough detail.
* did not refer to the scenario.

### Question 5

In (a), successful responses:

* addressed the quantitative observational feature of the design by identifying age as a pre‑existing variable
* addressed the experimental feature of the design by identifying either the manipulation of the diet or random allocation into groups.

The less successful responses addressing the quantitative observational feature commonly:

* cited that the investigation was done in a natural setting.
* stated that there two groups.  
  The existence of two groups can also be a feature of experimental designs.

The less successful responses addressing the experimental feature commonly:

* misidentified age group as the random allocation
* stated that there two groups.  
  The existence two groups can also be a feature of non-experimental designs.

In (b), the more successful responses:

* demonstrated clear understanding of the lead-in verb, explain. This was done by using words such as “because”, “since”, “the reason for”.

Examples:

* + - Cannot infer cause and effect relationship because of the lack of random assignment to groups.
    - Since there is a greater chance of other variables affecting the results than in an experiment, causal relationships cannot be established.

Less successful responses tended to:

* identify extraneous variables without explanation
* cite ‘two groups’ or ‘independent variable’
* state the disadvantage without an explanation
* listed features of a quantitative observational design without any explanation.

### Question 6

In (a), the more successful responses:

* described norm referencing
* described the consistency in administration and scoring of the tests.  
  An example of one answer: “ensuring that, no matter who administers the test, the same instructions will be provided in the same way, and tests will be scored in the same way”.

Less successful responses commonly:

* described problems with self-reports
* described problems with subjective data.

In (b) the more successful responses commonly:

* explained the terms reliability and validity, and then applied those terms to the context provided
* referred directly to the context given

Examples:

* + - Contestants may be aware of the characteristics looked for in reality-show participants; they may, therefore, change the way they answer questions. This reduces the validity of the self-report inventory used.
    - Participant variables (excitement, anxiety, etc.) may affect the way participants answer. This reduces the consistency in their self-reporting, and therefore reduces reliability.

Less successful responses commonly:

* provided definitions of the terms, without consideration of the context
* confused the terms reliability and validity.

In (c), the more successful responses:

* demonstrated clear understanding of some of the advantages of assessing personality by observing behaviour.

Examples:

* + - if participants are unaware of being observed, they will show their “true” behaviour. That is, the validity of the data will be increased
    - behavioural counts have higher validity because social desirability bias is removed
    - behavioural counts have higher validity because lack of self-awareness becomes irrelevant.

The less successful responses commonly:

* stated the possibility of a natural setting without elaboration
* referred to behavioural observations as being objective, without explaining why this was an advantage
* provided information that did not address the question; for example, describing the process of observing rather than explaining the advantage.

### Question 7

In (a), most students used Freud’s psychodynamic approach to respond to this question.

Successful responses commonly identified Renata as having:

* a strong id; she is self-centred, and wants immediate gratification; she is quick to anger
* a weak ego; she struggles to understand her co-workers’ perspectives
* a weak superego; it fails to control the id's impulses
* an oral fixation: she is quick to anger, she wants immediate gratification.

The less successful responses commonly:

* indicated an understanding of a trait or humanistic approach, rather than a psychodynamic approach
* stated the components of the structure of the mind, without elaboration
* incorrectly attributed a function to a component.   
  Example: Renata is self-centred. This is because she has a strong superego.

In (b), the more successful responses:

* described the characteristics of extraverted people (good communicators, charismatic, socially active, etc.) which would be important attributes in a lead  
  Example: High scorers in extraversion are outgoing and work better than introverts under stressful conditions. Therefore, they would probably be good communicators and be better placed to resolve conflict.
* described the characteristics of introverted people (more self-aware / reflective / good listeners / sensitive to others’ perspectives), which would be very useful in reflecting on poor performance and planning for the future.  
  Example: Introverts are more attentive to their surroundings, picking up cues from people. This enables them to deal with problems and pre-empt them.

The less successful responses commonly:

* paraphrased the question
* stated one trait without explaining the connection to leadership
* contradicted information provided in the question and stated that introverts could not be effective leaders.

In (c), most students used Maslow’s hierarchy of needs to explain how Chan may be affected by his move away from home.

The more successful responses tended to:

* describe Maslow’s or Rogers’ concepts, and then apply them to relevant information in the scenario
* identify elements provided from the scenario to suggest where Chan’s needs were currently positioned
* identify Chan as having to regress and activate lower levels in the hierarchy, prior to ascending the levels again
* use terminology correctly.

The less successful responses commonly:

* described the theory only, without applying it to the scenario provided
* re-phrased the scenario provided
* did not provide details.
* confused the humanistic approach with a different one.

### General comments on Section B

It is not necessary to write extensive introductions or conclusions, which is not an effective use of time.

The best extended responses are about one and a half to two pages of student hand-writing. Answers shorter than this tend to address too few points, or do not address them in enough detail. Excessively long responses frequently contain repetition, are fragmented and disorganised.

The examination contains the advice that, in answers to the extended-response questions, “credit will be given for clear, well-expressed answers that are well organised and relevant to the questions”.

Four of the 20 marks are allocated for communication. In describing how the four communication marks are assigned, the following points have been made:

* Does the response contain correct grammar and spelling?
* Does the response clearly explain concepts using relevant and concise psychological language?
* Is the answer clear and well expressed?
* Is the answer well organised?
* Is the answer relevant to the question?
* Is the answer well structured, with information that is logical and flows easily?

### Question 8

In the successful responses, students addressing the first dot point:

* were able to name a variety of physiological responses that fluctuate during a 24-hour time period, making up the circadian cycle
* discussed the role of melatonin, and explained that its production was controlled by light
* explained that shift workers were more likely to fall asleep at work due to desynchronisation between their internal circadian rhythms and the outside environment.

The less successful responses commonly:

* referred to the shift workers’ circadian rhythms being desynchronised, or “messed up”, without explaining why
* discussed the sleep debt of shift workers without linking it to circadian rhythms
* used terms incorrectly  
  Examples include: electrical impulses are detected by the retina, light is sent to the suprachiasmatic nucleus, melatonin is a neurotransmitter.
* discussed serotonin instead of melatonin
* revealed their misconceptions about sleep/wake cycle regulation, stating – for example - that melatonin increases alertness and is released in the presence of light.

For the second dot point, some students discussed the Yerkes-Dodson Law and how the optimal level of arousal is influenced by task complexity; however, most students discussed reduced concentration and increased irritability as short-term effects that would have an impact on task performance.

The more successful responses commonly:

* gave excellent descriptions of how activation of the fight-or-flight response increases arousal levels, which would enhance performance of simple or familiar tasks.
* described how impaired concentration could lead to more mistakes being made, and gave examples (e.g., errors may be made in reading required dosages for medication).
* described how increased irritability may reduce task performance if easily-frustrated workers were required to work in teams, or serve customers.

In the less successful responses, students:

* described the activation of the fight-or-flight response, without linking this response to task performance
* stated two short-term effects of stress, but were unable to then link these to task performance
* discussed long-term effects
* discussed the same concept twice under different headings (e.g., “concentration”, “ability to focus” and “think clearly”)
* discussed sleep deprivation, rather than stress.

The third dot point was generally addressed well.

The more successful responses commonly:

* included a discussion of exhaustion as the third stage of Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome
* explained that a weakened immune system increases the probability of succumbing to infectious diseases, or cancer
* explained that prolonged increased levels of cortisol, resulting in increased blood pressure, can eventually contribute to the development of heart disease.

This question directed students to explain two long-term effects of stress on health. In the less successful responses, good descriptions were often provided.

In addition, students generally tended to:

* describe long-term psychological (rather than physical) effects of stress, such as depression and anxiety
* state that stress can cause insomnia, but then linked it to chronic fatigue syndrome
* identify two physical impacts of stress on health, but were unable to explain them
* use careless expression, such as stating that “blood pressure” is an effect of stress, rather than “increased blood pressure”.

Students are advised to read questions more carefully. Many students discussed all three stages of Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome, instead of focusing on two physical effects of the exhaustion stage.

The fourth dot point was addressed well. There was a wide variety of answers.

In the successful responses, students commonly discussed:

* having longer breaks between or during shifts
* always rotating shifts to later starting times
* having bright lights in the workplace.

Justifications for the suggested changes were needed.

In the less successful responses, students suggested some impractical strategies, such as:

* reducing or abolishing night shifts
* having shifts that are shorter in duration
* employing more people
* working in pairs so that partners can keep each other awake.

In other less successful responses, students advised:

* unethical strategies, such as medicating employees with melatonin tablets.

Coping strategies were also often cited, rather than strategies for reducing the effects of shift work. Other suggestions, although effective, were outside the control of the employers (e.g., having dark curtains in the bedroom).

### Question 9

In the first dot point, many students were able to correctly identify two sociocultural factors that could contribute to Deng’s depression, often describing them as an absence of protective factors.

The more successful responses commonly described:

* the limited social and employment opportunities, and linked this to meaningful participation
* the importance of having support, and linked this to being away from friends and family
* cultural differences (social norms, language), increasing Deng’s sense of isolation.

The less successful responses tended to:

* list socio-cultural factors given in the scenario, rather than describe two
* provide only one description of a socio-cultural factor
* describe the same socio-cultural factor twice under slightly different headings (e.g., being away from family and being away from friends).

For the second dot point, almost all students described cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT).

The more successful responses commonly:

* described the process of identifying Deng’s negative cognitions, challenging them by looking at refuting evidence, and changing them to a more realistic way of viewing the world.
* focused on the actual behaviours that are contributing to the problem. Deng could be taught new coping skills that could then be put to use in real-world situations. For example, as an immigrant, Deng could start rehearsing ways to deal with social situations that are unfamiliar to him that could potentially trigger a relapse.
* Discussed the inter-relationship between Deng’s cognitions, his behaviours and his emotions.

The less successful responses tended to:

* ignore the behavioural component of CBT
* infer that Deng’s behaviour would automatically change because of cognitive restructuring rather than because of behavioural interventions
* not discuss behaviours that could be considered congruent with the cognitive component. In these circumstances, students seemed to have a stock response relating to meditation or other stress reduction techniques
* suggest that Deng would recover from depression if his sleep improved and he lost weight
* describe medication or counselling.

For the third dot point, many students were able to describe an advantage and disadvantage of CBT.

The more successful responses commonly:

* described the advantages of CBT in terms of its effectiveness

Examples:

* + - equipping individuals with long term knowledge and skills
    - its possible application to different situations
    - its ability to treat underlying causes
    - its safety, because there are no side effects of medication, or no tolerance development, or no addiction.

The less successful responses tended to:

* identify that CBT is highly effective, but did not explain why
* restate characteristics of CBT as their advantage
* state that Deng’s depression is too severe for CBT to be effective.

When addressing the disadvantages of CBT, students generating the more successful responses commonly cited:

* its inability to treat biological causes of depression
* the required high level of effort by and commitment from the client
* Deng’s possible lack of fluency in English, and the impact this may have on his ability to undergo CBT in Australia
* limited access to a CBT-trained psychologist in a small country town
* possible lack of funding for long-term treatment, given that Deng is unemployed
* the lengthy nature of the therapy.

The less successful responses commonly:

* claimed that CBT would make the depression worse.

Some students struggled with the fourth dot point. Other students showed perceptive understanding that recent biological changes such as weight gain or sleep deprivation are unlikely to affect Deng’s personality traits (which should be stable), but that could they could affect his feelings or mood.

The more successful responses commonly:

* described how Deng’s weight-gain (biological level) would affect his self-esteem or confidence (person level).
* discussed how Deng’s sleep deprivation (biological) could influence his mood (person level); he could become more irritable or less motivated
* suggested that medication taken to treat Deng’s depression could result in mood changes (e.g., more easily angered).

Less successful responses only included identification of:

* one or two biological factors, with no linkage to the person level.
* genes contributing to personality, with no further detail.

In the less successful responses, some students also cited two biological factors, but linked these to depression.