

STAGE 2 PSYCHOLOGY

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Answering extended response questions in the examination

There are three easy steps to getting a good mark for the extended-response questions in the Psychology exam:

1. Understand how the curriculum statement has been written.
2. Know how to plan an answer.
3. Understand how the questions are marked.

1. Understand how the subject outline has been written

For each of the six topics you must have a good knowledge of the 'Areas of Learning'. Make yourself familiar with the language and terms used in the 'Areas of Learning' and if you don't understand any of these then ask your teacher for help.

2. Know how to plan an answer

The Psychology exam has two extended response questions. You must answer both of these questions. Extended response questions usually consist of 2-4 parts. You must first identify the key words in each part. Then plan an answer to address each part.

For example, look at Question 20 from the 2004 Psychology Exam:

Harry is the kind of person who is not very assertive. He wants people to like him and tries hard to please his family, friends and co-workers. He is also the type of person who worries a lot. He worries about money, his health and deadlines for reports that he has to hand in at work. Sometimes he just feels anxious without knowing why.

Harry is starting to think that he cannot do anything right and that nothing will make his life better. Lately he has been unable to concentrate on anything and is worried about his shortness of breath, racing heartbeat, trembling and dizziness. He does not want to talk about any of this with his friends and family because he is worried that they might think he is weak and useless.

Discuss the symptoms of anxiety that Harry is experiencing that relate to the four levels of explanation of behaviour. Your response should include a:

- Description of biological factors that influence Harry's behaviour;
- Discussion of the role of basic processes in influencing Harry's behaviour;
- Discussion of how Harry's personal characteristics influence his behaviour;
- Discussion of how the socio-cultural context influences Harry's behaviour.

The first part of the question is a scenario about 'Harry' that sets the context for the question. Your answer must always relate to the scenario.

The second part is a statement that tells you what aspect of knowledge and understanding the task is assessing. In this case it is the 'symptoms of anxiety disorders' and the 'four levels of explanation'.

The third part of the question is the four dot points that you must respond to.

For each of the four dot points you need to find and discuss Harry's symptoms of anxiety that relate to the particular level of explanation mentioned in the dot point.

For example: for '*Description of biological factors that influence Harry's behaviour*' you could discuss '*shortness of breath, racing heartbeat, trembling and dizziness*'.

To get full marks for this dot point, you need to identify Harry's biological symptoms and then use your knowledge of Psychology, to discuss the biological factors that led to these symptoms of anxiety.



3. Understand how the questions are marked

For each extended-response question, 16 marks out of 20 are awarded for the evidence of knowledge and understanding in the answer and 4 marks for communication. The 16 marks for content are usually spread evenly over the dot points. For example, if there are four dot points, then they are each worth four marks. If there are two dot points, then they are each worth eight marks.

Each well-made point is worth 2 marks, and a partial point is awarded 1 mark. It is possible to obtain full marks for content by making eight relevant content points that address all parts of the question. In answering Question 20 from the 2004 Psychology exam you would need to make two detailed and relevant points for each of the four dot points.

The remaining 4 marks out of 20 are awarded for the communication of knowledge and the appropriate use of terminology to score full marks for communication. You should structure your information into paragraphs, use correct grammar and spelling, and clearly explain concepts, using the language of psychology. You will not receive credit for introductory or concluding paragraphs, and you may be penalised if you give irrelevant information.