

Psychological Explanations of Offending - Mark Scheme

Q1.

[AO1 = 2]

Possible cognitive distortions:

- minimisation explaining the consequences as less significant / damaging than they really are
- hostile attribution bias blaming other factors for behaviour, eg blaming the victim.

Credit other relevant cognitive distortions.

Q2.

Please note that the AOs for the new AQA Specification (Sept 2015 onwards) have changed. Under the new Specification the following system of AOs applies:

- AO1 knowledge and understanding
- AO2 application (of psychological knowledge)
- AO3 evaluation, analysis, interpretation.

[AO2 = 4]

Up to 2 marks for each criticism explained. 1 mark for a brief point, 2 marks for a point that is elaborated / fully explained.

Likely criticisms: oversimplification to say all offenders are of the same type - may be more than one type – Moffitt proposes at least 4 types of offender eg adolescent limited, adult starter etc; emphasises the importance of just two personality factors which conflicts with recent personality theory eg 5 factor model; inconsistent evidence that offenders have high E scores; high psychoticism not often correlated with high E and N scores; implications or saying criminality is innate.

Q3.

[AO1 = 6 AO3 = 10]

Level	Marks	Description
4	13 – 16	Knowledge of cognitive explanations for offending is accurate and generally well detailed. Evaluation is thorough and effective. Minor detail and/or expansion of argument is sometimes lacking. The answer is clear, coherent and focused. Specialist terminology is used effectively.
3	9 – 12	Knowledge of cognitive explanations for offending is evident but there are occasional inaccuracies/omissions. Evaluation is mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised but occasionally lacks focus. Specialist terminology is used appropriately.

2	5 – 8	Limited knowledge of cognitive explanations for offending is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any evaluation is of limited effectiveness. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1 – 4	Knowledge of cognitive explanations for offending is very limited. Evaluation is limited, poorly focused or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology is either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible content:

- role of level of moral reasoning (Kohlberg) with focus on pre-conventional level (punishment orientation and reward orientation)
- punishment orientation – reasoning based on whether or not the act will lead to punishment
- reward orientation – reasoning based on what is to be gained
- cognitive distortions – hostile attribution bias – misinterpretation / misreading of other people’s actions/words/expressions as aggressive/provocative
- cognitive distortion – minimalisation – belief in triviality of own offence, minimising the importance of the act.

Possible evaluation:

- use of evidence to support/contradict the cognitive explanation, eg studies supporting Kohlberg’s pre-conventional reasoning in offending populations, eg Ashkar and Kenny 2007, Hollin and Palmer 1998
- sampling issues and generalisation – Kohlberg’s focus on males
- hypothetical nature of Kohlberg’s dilemma evidence – generalisability to real-life offences
- cultural bias (Kohlberg’s Western bias) and alternative theories – Gibbs’ mature and immature levels
- cognitive distortions serve to justify offending behaviour – use of examples to illustrate
- cognitive theory explains thinking but not the primary source of the offending (nature or nurture?)
- implications: for treating offenders using cognitive therapy to change thinking/understanding; of psychological research into offending for the economy
- broader issues and debates – eg holism v reductionism
- comparison with other explanations.

Credit other relevant material.

Q4.

Marks for this question: AO1 = 6, AO3 = 10

Level	Marks	Description
4	13 – 16	Knowledge is accurate and generally well detailed. Evidence is clear. Discussion / evaluation / application is thorough and effective. The answer is clear, coherent and focused. Specialist terminology is used effectively.

		Minor detail and / or expansion of argument sometimes lacking.
3	9 – 12	Knowledge is evident. There are occasional inaccuracies. Evidence is present. Discussion / evaluation / application is apparent and mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised. Specialist terminology is mostly used effectively. Lacks focus in places.
2	5 – 8	Some knowledge is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any discussion / evaluation / application is only partly effective. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1 – 4	Knowledge is limited. Discussion / evaluation / application is limited, poorly focused or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

Please note that although the content for this mark scheme remains the same, on most mark schemes for the new AQA Specification (Sept 2015 onwards) content appears as a bulleted list.

AO1

Marks for knowledge of Eysenck's theory of criminal personality. Credit any of the following: personality is innate; we inherit a type of nervous system that predisposes us to offending; personality varies along three dimensions – neurotic – stable, extravert – introvert, psychoticism; typical criminal type is the neurotic-extravert; neuroticism leads to unstable, unpredictable behaviour; extraversion is due to chronically under-aroused nervous system which leads to sensation seeking; extraverts do not condition easily and do not learn from mistakes; high psychoticism – cold, heartless offender; high NE scores in delinquent population, eg McGurk and McDougall (1981).

AO3

Marks for discussion / analysis / evaluation. Likely discussion points include: alternative explanations used to evaluate Eysenck's theory, eg how biological explanations in part support Eysenck's theory about neurological differences between offenders and controls; alternatives to the idea of a unitary type, eg Moffitt (1993) proposed four distinct types; incompatibility with modern personality theory, eg the 5 factor model (Digman, 1990) which emphasises role of other dimensions, eg conscientiousness and agreeableness, it is possible to have a high E and N score and still not offend; basis for the model is in the EPI; reliability and validity issues re EPI; inability to infer cause and effect; determinism and the implications of Eysenck's emphasis on heritability and inevitability; reductionism and the need to consider wider influences, eg society; Eysenck's theory in the historical context as anti-liberal; relevance to eugenic ideal; links between Eysenck's traits and other explanations for offending, eg psychoticism and brain structure / function. Credit evaluation of evidence where used to discuss theory.

Credit use of relevant evidence, eg (McGurk and McDougall, 1981), (Farrington et al. 1982).