

Definitions of Abnormality - Mark Scheme

Q1.

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.

AO1 = 3

AO2 = 3

Failure to function adequately (FFA) refers to abnormality that prevent the person from carrying out the range of behaviours that society would expect from them, such as getting out of bed each day, holding down a job etc. Rosenhan & Seligman suggested a range of criteria that are typical of FFA. These include observer discomfort, unpredictability and irrationality among others.

1 mark for a basic outline of FFA and a further two marks for elaboration.

Evaluation of FFA:

- Cultural relativism – what is considered adequate in one culture might not be so in another.
- FFA might not be linked to abnormality but to other factors. Failure to keep a job may be due to the economic situation not to psychopathology.
- FFA is context dependent; not eating can be seen as failing to function adequately but prisoners on hunger strikes making a protest can be seen in a different light.

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

- Difficulty of meeting all criteria, very few people would be able to do so and this suggests that very few people are psychologically healthy.
- The criteria are subjective and not operationalised, so being defined as abnormal is not objective.
- These ideas are culture-bound, based on a Western idea of ideal mental health: cultural relativism.

One mark for identification of each weakness and a further mark for elaboration.

Q3.

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.

AO1 = 1

AO2 = 2

The definitions on the specification are:

- Deviation from social norms
- Failure to function adequately
- Deviation ideal mental health.

However, other definitions are also credit-worthy (eg statistical infrequency).

AO1 = 1 mark for correct identification of a definition of abnormality.

The limitation must be appropriate to the definition given. For example, one limitation of the deviation of social norms definition is that norms can vary over time. This means that behaviour that would have been defined as abnormal in one era is no longer defined as abnormal in another. With failure to function adequately, there is a cultural limitation in that the definition does not take account that 'adequate' behaviour varies from one culture to another.

The main limitation with ideal mental health is that the criteria are so demanding that very few people will be able to meet all the criteria.

AO2 = 1 mark for identifying the limitation and a further mark for elaboration.

Q4.

[AO2 = 6]

Award marks for **each** way of defining abnormality applied to Bina as follows:

2 marks for a clear and coherent explanation which directly addresses the question of whether or not Bina's behaviour should be considered abnormal

1 mark for a limited explanation which vaguely or partially addresses the question.

Possible applications:

- statistical infrequency - the doctor says depression is quite common therefore Bina's behaviour should not be considered abnormal.

- failure to function adequately – Bina is neglecting personal hygiene she also takes lots of time off work therefore her behaviour could be considered abnormal.
- deviation from ideal mental health - Bina is miserable therefore her behaviour could be considered abnormal.
- deviation from social norms – Bina has temper tantrums/is rude to customers which is not the norm for adults in a work environment therefore her behaviour could be considered to be abnormal.

Q5.

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.

Although the essential content for this mark scheme remains the same, mark schemes for the new AQA Specification (Sept 2015 onwards) take a different format as follows:

- A single set of numbered levels (formerly bands) to cover all skills
- Content appears as a bulleted list
- No IDA expectation in A Level essays, however, credit for references to issues, debates and approaches where relevant.

AO1 = 6

AO2 = 6

There are three definitions of abnormality named on the specification: deviation from social norms, failure to function adequately and deviation from ideal mental health. However, other definitions are also credit-worthy. Candidates could offer several definitions in less detail or two definitions but in more detail, breadth / depth trade off.

However, approaches or models are not credit-worthy.

The commentary could consider the strengths and / or limitations of each definition, eg the problems associated with cultural relativism or it could include a generic discussion of the problems of defining abnormality. One limitation of the deviation from social norms definition is that social norms change with time; this is illustrated by the changing views on homosexuality. With the deviation from ideal mental health, there is the problem of cross-cultural variations. A further problem is that the ideals are so demanding that almost everyone would be considered abnormal to some degree. The 'failure to function adequately' definition has the advantage of a more objective measuring scale (eg the GAF). However, it can be criticised as not differentiating sufficiently between abnormal behaviour and unconventional or eccentric behaviour.

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| AO1 Knowledge and understanding | AO2 Application of knowledge and understanding |
| 6 marks Accurate and reasonably | 6 marks Effective evaluation |

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| <p>detailed Accurate and reasonably detailed description that demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of at least two definitions of abnormality. There is appropriate selection of material to address the question.</p> | <p>Effective use of material to address the question and provide informed commentary. Effective evaluation of research. Broad range of issues and/or evidence in reasonable depth, or a narrower range in greater depth. Clear expression of ideas, good range of specialist terms, few errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.</p> |
| <p>5 – 4 marks Less detailed but generally accurate Less detailed but generally accurate description that demonstrates relevant knowledge and understanding. There is some evidence of selection of material to address the question. Partial performance: if only one definition is given, accurate and reasonably detailed, max 4 marks.</p> | <p>5 – 4 marks Reasonable evaluation Material is not always used effectively but produces a reasonable commentary. Reasonable evaluation of research. A range of issues and/or evidence in limited depth, or a narrower range in greater depth. Reasonable expression of ideas, a range of specialist terms, some errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Partial performance: max 4 marks.</p> |
| <p>3 – 2 marks Basic Basic description that demonstrates some relevant knowledge and understanding but lacks detail and may be muddled. There is little evidence of selection of material to address the question.</p> | <p>3 – 2 marks Basic evaluation The use of material provides only a basic commentary. Basic evaluation of research. Superficial consideration of a restricted range of issues and/or evidence. Expression of ideas lacks clarity, some specialist terms used, errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling detract from clarity.</p> |
| <p>1 mark Very brief/flawed or inappropriate Very brief or flawed description demonstrating very little knowledge. Selection and presentation of information is largely or wholly inappropriate.</p> | <p>1 mark Rudimentary evaluation The use of material provides only a rudimentary commentary. Evaluation of research is just discernible or absent. Expression of ideas poor, few specialist terms used, errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling often obscure the meaning.</p> |
| <p>0 marks No creditworthy material.</p> | <p>0 marks No creditworthy material.</p> |

Q6.

[AO1 = 6 AO2 = 4 AO3 = 6]

| Level | Marks | Description |
|-------|---------|--|
| 4 | 13 – 16 | Knowledge of failure to function adequately and deviation from ideal mental health is accurate and generally well detailed. Application is effective. Evaluation is thorough |

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| | | 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 failure to function adequately and deviation from ideal mental health is evident but there are occasional inaccuracies/omissions. Evaluation/application 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 failure to function adequately and/or deviation from ideal mental health is present. Focus is mainly on description. Application/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 failure to function adequately and/or deviation from ideal mental health is very limited. Application is limited, poorly focussed or absent. 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. |

AO1 content

Failure to function adequately:

- abnormality judged as inability to deal with the demands of everyday living
- behaviour is maladaptive, irrational or dangerous
- behaviour causes personal distress and distress to others.

Deviation from ideal mental health:

- absence of signs of mental health used to judge abnormality
- description of (Jahoda's) criteria – accurate perception of reality; self-actualisation; resistance to stress; positive attitude towards self; autonomy/independence; environmental mastery
- the more criteria someone fails to meet, the more abnormal they are.

Accept other valid points.

AO2 possible application

Failure to function adequately:

- evidence that Rob is not coping with everyday tasks – cannot complete homework; he is untidy
- Rob is causing others' distress – his parents and teachers
- personal distress – feelings of anxiety, he is frightened.

Deviation from ideal mental health:

- Rob's perception of reality is not accurate – hearing voices

- voices are preventing Rob from fulfilling potential/achieving self-actualisation – may affect his chances of going to university.

Accept other relevant application points.

AO3 possible evaluation/discussion points

Failure to function:

- recognises the patient's perspective
- judging person as distressed or distressing relies on subjective assessment
- not all abnormal behaviour is associated with distress/failure to cope eg psychopathy
- not all maladaptive behaviour is an indicator of mental illness.

Deviation from ideal mental health:

- positive, holistic approach to diagnosis
- criteria for mental health are too demanding/unrealistic
- culture bias in some criteria, eg value placed on independence/autonomy
- use of evidence to support/challenge definitions
- comparison/overlap with other definitions – deviation from social norms, statistical infrequency.

Accept other relevant evaluation points.