

Oxford Revise | AQA A Level Psychology | Answers

Chapter 8

All exemplar answers given would achieve full marks or the top level.

1. Marks for this question: AO1 = 1

Humans are 'self-determining' and control their behaviour. Internal and external forces may exert influence, but we are not a slave to these forces.

2. Marks for this question: AO2 = 6

This question is level-marked:

Level	Marks	Description
3	5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of one socially sensitive research study from any topic in psychology is clear and generally well detailed. The possible consequences of the research to the groups represented in the study is clear and well detailed. The answer is generally coherent with appropriate use of specialist terminology.
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of one socially sensitive research study from any topic in psychology is evident. The possible consequences of the research to the groups represented in the study is evident but may be muddled. The answer lacks clarity in places. Specialist terminology is used appropriately on occasions.
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of one socially sensitive research study from any topic in psychology is limited. The possible consequences of the research to the groups represented in the study is absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity and has inaccuracies. Specialist terminology is either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible AO2 application:

An example using Bowlby's theory of attachment:

- Bowlby's work on attachment is considered socially sensitive because it had consequences to potentially discriminate against women.
- Bowlby highlighted the need for monotropy, which indicated women should not return to work.
- This could pressure women to stay at home, which could put them under financial and emotional strain.

- The research is particularly outdated today as many mothers choose to work or need to work.
- It also discriminates against fathers as caregivers. A study found that the percentage of stay-at-home dads has quadrupled in the last 25 years.

Credit other relevant material.

Note: this question could relate to any topic in Psychology, from Years 1 or 2. It may relate to the positive or negative implications of research. An example using Bowlby's theory of attachment is given above, but you could write about, for example:

- Milgram's obedience research and attitudes towards people of different nationalities.
- Diagnosis of depression, schizophrenia, etc.
- Labelling, e.g. gender identity.
- Biological research into addiction/aggression/offending – issue of who is to blame, e.g. if addiction/aggression/offending is inherited.
- Piaget's research into discovery learning – changes in education system/classroom practice.
- Implications of relationship counselling based on research into relationships.
- How research into gender might affect parenting/educational practice.
- Influences of eyewitness testimony on the judicial system.
- Explanations and treatments for mental ill health.
- Wakefield's fraudulent findings of the supposed association between vaccines and autism.

3. Marks for this question: AO3 = 3

3 marks for a clear, coherent limitation of biological determinism in explaining behaviour, using appropriate terminology.

2 marks for a limitation of biological determinism in explaining behaviour that lacks some clarity or detail.

1 mark for a brief or muddled limitation of biological determinism in explaining behaviour.

Possible AO3 evaluation:

- Concordance rates for MZ twins are never 100%, which suggests behaviour is not purely biologically determined.
- Determinism may apply accurately to animals, such as in mating behaviour. But human behaviour is more complex and involves higher cognitive factors, which can override biological impulses.
- The law rejects hard determinism, and instead assumes free will.

Credit any valid limitation.

4. Marks for this question: AO2 = 4

This question is level-marked:

Level	Marks	Description
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of environmental determinism is clear and mostly accurate. The material is applied appropriately. The answer is generally coherent with effective use of specialist terminology.
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some knowledge of environmental determinism is evident. Application is not always appropriate. The answer lacks accuracy and detail. Specialist terminology is either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible AO2 application:

- Environmental determinism claims that all behaviour is environmentally determined by external forces, such as our experiences, and classical and operant conditioning.
- Mark's phobia of flying was initiated and maintained through the two-process model.
- His phobia was initiated through classical conditioning; he associated the plane (conditioned stimulus) with the panic caused by turbulence (the unconditioned stimulus). He now associates flying with fear.
- Mark's phobia is maintained through operant conditioning. Every time he avoids flying, he feels relief, which is negative reinforcement.

Credit other relevant applications.

5. Marks for this question: AO1 = 6

This question is level-marked:

Level	Marks	Description
3	5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of cultural bias in psychology is clear and generally accurate. Specialist terminology is used appropriately.
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of cultural bias in psychology is evident but there may be some omissions/lack of clarity. There is some appropriate use of specialist terminology.
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of cultural bias in psychology is present but there may be serious omissions and/or inaccuracies. Specialist terminology is either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible AO1 content:

- Ethnocentrism refers to judging other cultures from your own point of view, and it can lead to discrimination, because other cultures may be viewed as inferior.
- Ethnocentric research leads to cultural bias. Behaviour is interpreted through the values and standards of the researchers' own culture, meaning different cultural behaviours get labelled as 'abnormal'.
- Cultural bias threatens universality, because if a theory is ethnocentric, it may misrepresent certain cultures. It might make them appear inferior or pathological, or it may not apply to them all.
- In psychology, theories tend to be developed in certain cultures (e.g. the USA). They often ignore other cultures with different cultural values and standards, resulting in cultural bias.
- Cultural relativism aims to combat cultural bias but can lead to bias. For example, Margaret Mead's investigation of aggression in Papua New Guinea assumed cultural differences that didn't exist.
- Credit answers embedded in examples. E.g. in research of attachment types, the 'Strange Situation' only viewed behaviour from a US viewpoint, and so it misjudged Japanese babies as insecure-resistant.

Credit other relevant material.

6. Marks for this question: AO1 = 2

2 marks for a clear, coherent explanation of why individuals may have free will, using appropriate terminology.

1 mark for a brief or muddled explanation of why individuals may have free will.

Possible AO1 content:

- Free will states that humans are 'self-determining' and control their own behaviour.
- Internal and external forces may exert influence, but humans are not a slave to these forces.
- Humanistic psychology claims that humans have free will and that free will is needed for personal growth because it means taking personal responsibility.

Credit other relevant material.

7. Marks for this question: AO2 = 4

This question is level-marked:

Level	Marks	Description
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of psychic determinism is clear and mostly accurate. • The material is applied appropriately. • The answer is generally coherent with effective use of specialist terminology.
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some knowledge of psychic determinism is evident. • Application is not always appropriate. • The answer lacks accuracy and detail. • Specialist terminology is either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible AO2 application:

- Something traumatic happened to Abdul during the oral stage of development, which led to oral fixation.
- Abdul's behaviour is determined by his oral fixation.
- This is seen in the orally fixated behaviours of smoking, drinking, biting his nails, and overeating.
- He doesn't want to engage in the oral habits and worries about them.

Credit other relevant applications.

8. Marks for this question: AO1 = 3

3 marks for a clear, coherent explanation of what is meant by 'socially sensitive research', using appropriate terminology.

2 marks for an explanation of what is meant by 'socially sensitive research' that lacks some clarity or detail.

1 mark for a brief or muddled explanation of what is meant by 'socially sensitive research'.

Possible AO1 content:

- Socially sensitive research investigates topics that might have consequences for the groups represented.
- The groups are usually minorities, who are vulnerable to discrimination, so it's important the research doesn't increase the potential for discrimination.
- Investigating aspects of race and gender is socially sensitive, as is the genetic basis of criminality.

Credit other relevant material.

9. Marks for this question: AO1 = 3, AO3 = 5

This question is level-marked:

Level	Marks	Description
4	7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of gender bias in psychology is accurate with some detail. • Discussion 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	5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of gender bias in psychology is evident but there are occasional inaccuracies or omissions. • Discussion is mostly effective. • The answer is mostly clear and organised but occasionally lacks focus. • Specialist terminology is used appropriately.
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited knowledge of gender bias in psychology is present. • Focus is mainly on description. Any discussion is of limited effectiveness. • The answer lacks clarity, accuracy, and organisation in places. • Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.

1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of gender bias in psychology is very limited. • Discussion 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 AO1 content:

- Androcentrism refers to things that are male-centred. Psychology developed in an androcentric world.
- Most psychologists are men, and this has always been the case, so psychological research and theories are likely to reflect human behaviour from their viewpoint.
- This leads to gender bias, where men and women are treated differently based on stereotypes, resulting in misrepresentation of one gender (usually women).
- Gender bias threatens universality – if a theory is androcentric, it may misrepresent women. It might incorrectly make them appear inferior or pathological, or it may not actually apply to them all.
- Alpha bias exaggerates the differences between men and women, to the detriment of one gender (usually women). E.g. Freud's psychoanalytic theory.
- Beta bias minimises the differences between men and women, to the detriment of one gender (usually women). It assumes that what is true for men is also true for women, or vice versa. E.g. early research into biological stress responses.

Possible AO3 evaluation:

- Negative stereotypes disadvantage women in all aspects of life, from work to expressing their emotions such as anger.
- Institutional sexism may exist within psychological research – senior researchers are more likely to be men, so questions relating to women may not be conceived; male researchers are more likely to have their work published, perpetuating a male-dominated viewpoint; laboratory experiments may place female participants in a disadvantaged position.
- Examples of gender biased research, e.g. a 1960's study found that male experimenters were more pleasant, friendly, and encouraging to female participants than to male participants, with the result that male participants appeared to perform less well on the assigned tasks. Other studies have suggested that lab experiments disadvantage women because the controlled conditions in a lab tell us little about the experiences of women outside lab conditions.
- To help combat gender bias in research, feminists recommend that women participate in research using collaborative methods, rather than being the object of it. Collecting qualitative data should reduce gender bias, because researchers would have to try to understand women's experiences rather than using a reductionist approach.

Credit other relevant material.

10. Marks for this question: AO1 = 3, AO2 = 2, AO3 = 3

This question is level-marked:

Level	Marks	Description
4	7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the nature–nurture debate is accurate with some detail. Application to the topic is effective. Discussion 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	5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the nature–nurture debate is evident but there are occasional inaccuracies/omissions. Application to the topic and/or discussion is mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised but occasionally lacks focus. Specialist terminology is used appropriately.
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited knowledge of the nature–nurture debate is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any application/discussion is of limited effectiveness. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy, and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the nature–nurture debate is very limited. Application/discussion 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 AO1 content:

- The nature–nurture debate asks the question of whether our behaviour is due to innate biological and genetic factors (nature) or due to the influence of the environment (nurture).
- Genetic explanations: behaviours can be inherited from biological parents' genes (heredity). MZ twins have higher concordance rates for many psychological characteristics, indicating a strong biological contribution.
- Evolutionary explanations: some behaviours today may be due to their adaptive advantage, caused by genes that were naturally selected for and passed on through generations – aiding survival or reproductive success. E.g. attachment.

- Behaviourists believe that all behaviour is learned through classical and/or operant conditioning, suggesting that nurture influences behaviours.
- Social learning theory emphasises the effect of nurture on behaviour; humans observe and imitate significant role models.
- The nature–nurture debate has changed to acknowledge that nature and nurture are inextricably linked. Psychologists are now likely to ask about the relative contributions of nature and nurture to explain behaviour. This is the interactionist approach.

Possible AO2 application:

Reference to any topic in Psychology from Years 1 or 2. Examples include:

- Babies attach for evolutionary reasons (Bowlby’s social releasers etc.) versus babies attach because of stimulus-response (pairing the unconditioned stimulus of food with the conditioned stimulus of the parent).
- The development of mental health issues, such as OCD, could be due to nature (faulty COMT/SERT gene) or nurture (the person learns to associate germs with fear).
- Resisting social influence could be due to an internal locus of control (nature) or social support (nurture).
- The stress response can be evolutionary, so activation of the sympathomedullary pathway occurs to aid survival (nature) but can be moderated through the hardy personality. Hardiness training (nurture) can therefore influence the stress response.

Possible AO3 discussion:

- Hebb argued that separating nature from nurture to explain behaviour was impossible. E.g. genetic diseases such as PKU (nature) can be controlled through diet (nurture).
- The diathesis–stress relationship emphasises an interactionist explanation of behaviour between nature and nurture. E.g. a person may be born with a genetic vulnerability for OCD (nature) but only develops OCD due to a stressful event in the environment (nurture).
- A person’s genes (nature) may affect their environment (nurture). ‘Niche picking’ is when a child seeks out people and environments that suit their genetic characteristics. E.g. an ‘adrenaline junkie’ will seek excitement and pick similar people to have exciting experiences with.
- Reactive gene–environment interaction refers to when a genetic characteristic causes other people to always respond in the same way. This therefore creates a similar environment wherever you go. E.g. aggression creates an aggressive environment.
- A person’s life experiences (nurture) can alter the structure and workings of the brain (nature). E.g. the London taxi drivers study showed that the intense learning required to pass ‘the Knowledge’ exams increased the grey matter in the posterior hippocampus.

Credit any relevant material.

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

This question is level-marked:

Level	Marks	Description
4	13–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation is accurate and generally well detailed. Discussion 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation is evident but there are occasional inaccuracies/omissions. Discussion is mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised but occasionally lacks focus. Specialist terminology is used appropriately.
2	5–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited knowledge of the idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation is evident. Focus is mainly on description. Any discussion is of limited effectiveness. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy, and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation is very limited. Discussion 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 AO1 content:

- The idiographic approach to psychological research focuses on the study of individuals. It uses qualitative methods to gather rich and detailed data, which gives insights into their subjective way of viewing the world. It doesn't usually aim to generate laws of behaviour.
- Examples of idiographic approaches include:
 - Humanistic psychology – concerned with studying an individual's unique subjective experience rather than observations from others.
 - The psychodynamic approach – Freud used the case study method of investigation. Freud tried to formulate general laws of behaviour from case studies, but this is still considered idiographic because it was drawn from unique individuals.

- The nomothetic approach to psychological research studies large groups of people. It uses quantitative methods to gather numerical data, for use with statistical analysis. Nomothetic approaches tend to be determinist and reductionist, and they aim to generate laws/theories of behaviour.
- Examples of nomothetic approaches include:
 - The biological approach – takes a nomothetic approach when using drug trials, to draw conclusions like serotonin causing depression.
 - Social learning theory – behaviourists experimented on hundreds of animals to develop the laws of learning theory.
 - The nomothetic approach to investigating personality – uses psychometric tests on large groups, such as Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire (which uses factor analysis to produce personality types).

Possible AO3 evaluation:

- Qualitative methods used in the idiographic approach give rich and detailed information of an individual, which may provide insights into behaviour overlooked by nomothetic methods. E.g. drug trials can determine the efficacy of SSRIs in treating depression but tell us nothing of the individual experiences of a person living with depression.
- Case studies provide the basis for nomothetic investigation. E.g. the case study of HM provided detailed information about his experiences of memory, contributing to our overall understanding of memory. But it also provided the basis for nomothetic investigation on different types of long-term memory.
- Falsification of case studies is impossible, as they can't be replicated. Generalisations are also impossible, as there are no controls to compare against.
- Case studies are open to investigator bias, e.g. Freud's interpretation of Little Hans, whom he only met once. Freud was also discriminatory towards women, considering them morally inferior.
- Nomothetic research tends to be highly scientific, often using experimentation that allows for highly controlled conditions, replication, and falsification. This helps preserve the integrity of psychology as a credible science.
- Critics argue that idiographic and nomothetic research shouldn't be mutually exclusive. E.g. the English and Romanian adoptees study used a combination of methods to investigate social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development.

Credit other relevant material.

12. Marks for this question: AO1 = 6, AO2 = 4, AO3 = 6

This question is level-marked:

Level	Marks	Description
4	13–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the reductionism and holism debate is accurate and well detailed. Application is effective. Discussion 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the reductionism and holism debate is evident but there are occasional inaccuracies/omissions. Application and/or discussion is mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised but occasionally lacks focus. Specialist terminology is used appropriately.
2	5–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited knowledge of the reductionism and holism debate is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any discussion and/or application is of limited effectiveness. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy, and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the reductionism and holism debate is very limited. Discussion and/or application 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 AO1 content:

- Reductionism believes that behaviour is best understood by breaking it down into its constituent parts.
- Holism believes that behaviour is best understood by analysing the person as a whole, and that if you reduce behaviour into constituent parts then you will miss something.
- Holism and reductionism have different ways of viewing the same behaviour, and they are demonstrated through levels of explanation.
 - Highest level: how our cultural and social groups influence behaviour.
 - Middle level: psychological explanations of behaviour.
 - Lower level: biological explanations of behaviour.

- Biological reductionism reduces complex phenomena into constituent biological parts, such as the action of genes, neurotransmitters, hormones, etc. E.g. schizophrenia is reduced to overactivity of dopamine in the basal ganglia.
- Environmental (stimulus-response) reductionism explains complex phenomena by breaking them down into stimulus-response links. E.g. attachment is explained by pairing the unconditioned stimulus (milk) with the conditioned stimulus (mother) to create a conditioned response of attachment.

Possible AO2 application:

- Svitlana uses the lowest level of explanation (reductionist) to explain why Roma is depressed. She has reduced depression into the constituent part of the low levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin in the brain.
- Svitlana recommends a reductionist therapy: using SSRIs because it will increase the time serotonin spends in the synapse, causing more serotonin to bind with receptors on the postsynaptic neuron. This will have an inhibitory effect, helping Roma feel less depressed.
- Ivor is referring to higher levels of explanation. He thinks there is a reason other than low levels of serotonin that is causing the depression.
- Ivor thinks that addressing Roma's depression holistically by investigating the social and/or cultural reasons that cause him to feel depressed will help solve his depression in the long term.

Possible AO3 discussion:

- A problem with reductionism is that by reducing complex phenomena into constituent parts, it might fail to consider how human emotion may be influential. E.g. the multi-store model of memory explains the linear processes involved in transforming sensory information into memory, but it doesn't account for the human emotion of anxiety. The Swedish bank robbery study showed how extreme anxiety led to enhanced recall of a crime.
- Biological reductionism has led to the development of drug therapies, such as SSRIs to treat depression and OCD. Since drug therapies were developed in the 1950s, there has been a reduction in institutionalisation.
- Drug therapies are criticised for variable success rates, and for treating the symptoms rather than the cause. Someone with depression might be bereaved or seeking asylum, and they would benefit from therapy and/or practical help to tackle the root cause, rather than (or as well as) drug therapy.
- A more holistic view (higher-level explanation) of the person's cultural and social experiences could be more appropriate in these cases.
- The behavioural approach was developed using non-human experiments, and critics argue it is inappropriate to extrapolate the results to humans. Environmental reductionism ignores other influences on behaviour, such as cognitive factors and intentions.

Credit examples of reductionism ignoring other influences. E.g. in addition the theory of planned behaviour identifies intention as a key component to behaviour. Intention is strongly influenced by a person's self-efficacy (their confidence in their ability to stop the addiction, even in the face of barriers), and researchers found that it's possible to enhance self-efficacy to help treat addiction.

Credit other relevant material.