Worksheet 5.4

Additional practice questions for Chapter 5

1 Examine the concepts of normality and abnormality. [22 marks]

2 Discuss reliability and validity of diagnosis. [22 marks]

3 a Describe symptoms and prevalence of one disorder. [6 marks]

b Contrast two different approaches to treatment (biomedical, individual or group) for this disorder. [16 marks]

Answer guidelines

1 This is a question that requires you to examine the basis of different approaches to explaining normality and abnormality with reference to research and theory.

Consider the idea, for example, that deviation from social norms constitutes abnormality and is therefore a symptom we might be interested in treating. It is a good idea to use examples of behaviour connected with the disorders you have studied; so, for example, if a person refuses to eat with other people or plays with their food a lot, these are often taken as signs of an eating disorder. Address the problems with defining abnormality this way and where possible make reference to research. Any research that addresses cultural differences in abnormality will be extremely useful for you to make your point.

Don’t forget that you need to consider normality as well, so you will want to make reference to Jahoda’s (1958) explanation of ideal mental health. You could link this to symptoms of phobia, depression and anorexia nervosa to make your explanation clear.

2 There are several approaches you could take to answering this question. The best way to start is by addressing what reliability and validity are and why they are important ideas. Following this explanation, you should explain how validity and reliability can be tested.

The main body of your essay should include specific reference to studies that have addressed reliability and validity such as Caetano (1973), Rosenhan (1973) and Nicholls et al. (2000).

The problems of diagnosis and labelling highlighted by Rosenhan can be related to the diagnostic criteria provided for the disorders you have studied. Consider how any items might cause concern about the validity of diagnosis, such as the note for depression that bereavement should be considered a better explanation for symptoms as long as it is within a specific time period.
You should also include reference to culture and gender issues in diagnosis where these are known to interfere. For example, if women are over-represented in depression statistics, does this mean that women are more vulnerable or that the diagnostic criteria are wrong?

At the end of your answer to this question you should be able to provide a brief conclusion that summarizes your main arguments for or against validity and reliability.

3 This is a two-part question and the parts are marked separately. Make sure you answer them separately as this makes a big difference to the examiner marking your paper. The two command terms used are describe and contrast.

a This requires you to describe. No analysis or evaluation is necessary: some simple factual information for one disorder is sufficient.

b Contrasting two approaches does need evaluation in order to demonstrate your critical thinking skills. There are several choices you could make to answer the question, for example biomedical vs individual CBT for depression. Focus on:

- level of analysis and its principles
- empirical evidence
- type of research possible
- efficacy of treatment
- limitations of the approach.

There is little need for a conclusion for this answer if you have made evaluative comments throughout your answer.