

## National Psychology Examination Sample Questions

---

December 2025

The national psychology examination will support applications for general registration and ensure a consistent professional standard of psychologists nationally.

The Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) has published a curriculum to provide guidance to candidates sitting the National Psychology Examination as part of completing the requirements to be eligible for general registration.

The Board's provisional registration standard and Professional competencies for psychologists defines the core capabilities and attributes of the internship program that must be achieved by the provisional psychologist.

These competencies are measured by four examination domains, as described below.

Domain 1 Ethics

Domain 2 Assessment

Domain 3 Interventions

Domain 4 Communication

The Board provides here an example examination question from each of the four curriculum domains to assist candidates to understand the types of questions and format of questions in the national psychology examination. Please note that a longer practice examination is able to be completed online once a candidate has registered for the examination. The following four example questions are intended to be helpful for candidates studying for the examination prior to sitting the practice exam.

Disclaimer: psychological knowledge is evolving all the time. These questions have been developed by senior practitioners and the best answer is their consensus view. However, the field is constantly developing and candidates may wish to ensure they study developments in knowledge and practice, and consult with senior colleagues and supervisors in preparing for the examination.

## Domain 1 ETHICS

*This domain focuses on legal, ethical and professional conduct, and its application to psychological practice.*

### SAMPLE QUESTION

Parents attend an initial session with a psychologist and report difficulties with each of their two children. The 14-year-old daughter is refusing to attend school, and the 8-year-old son is displaying aggressive behaviour. Over the course of the initial session, they recount a range of issues with each child and are uncertain how to manage.

Who is the primary client in this situation?

- A. The family
- B. The daughter
- C. The parents
- D. The school
- E. The son

The correct answer is C.

Explanation:

A is not the most appropriate response because the parents have presented to the psychologist seeking help on how to manage in the parenting role, rather than help with the relationships in the family system. The conditions under which the family would be the primary client would involve the parents wanting a healthier functioning family system which required active participation by all members of the family.

B is not the most appropriate response as the parents have reported difficulties in managing the behaviours of both children, rather than seeking that the psychologist work individually with their daughter. The conditions under which the daughter would be the primary client include if the parents (or school, or a third-party) specifically requested that the psychologist provide intervention for the daughter, or the daughter sought help herself.

C is the most appropriate response as the parents have sought help for their parenting/how to manage their children's behaviour. The primary client in this case is the person/people who present to the service and are the focus of the intervention. In this scenario, the parents are seeking help as they are uncertain how to manage their children's behaviours. In other cases, the primary client may be the organisation/person that is paying for the service.

D is not the most appropriate response as the school has not participated in the referral process, and the parents have not identified any issues with the school. The school would be the primary client if they have sourced the funding for the service and referred the parents/children to receive help.

E is not the most appropriate response as the parents have reported difficulties in managing the behaviours of both children, rather than seeking that the psychologist work individually with their son. The conditions under which the son would be the primary client include if the parents (or school, or a third-party) specifically requested that the psychologist provide intervention for the son, or the son sought help himself.

## Domain 2 ASSESSMENT

*This domain focuses on skills and knowledge in conducting psychological assessment, and applying this knowledge to problem formulation*

### SAMPLE QUESTION

A recently discharged client calls his psychologist stating that he recently lost his job and that his partner has left him. The client is slurring his words, saying 'It is hopeless, I cannot stand it anymore. I just want to disappear. Can you help me?'

What is the psychologist's most appropriate immediate step in this situation?

- A. Offer the client the next available appointment
- B. Advise the client to call his general practitioner (GP)
- C. End the call and request urgent ambulance
- D. Advise the client to call a crisis telephone support
- E. Continue the phone contact to assess risk of self-harm

The correct answer is E.

Explanation:

A is not the most appropriate next step as the client has made statements indicative of risk. According to the Code of Conduct all psychologists have a duty of care for client safety, and given that risk has been disclosed, the psychologist is required to assess the level of risk and develop and implement an appropriate safety plan as required. The presence of risk means that it is inappropriate for the psychologist to delay assistance until the next available appointment.

B is not the most appropriate next step as the client has disclosed a level of risk directly to the psychologist who has a duty of care to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the client. The GP would be a part of the safety plan that is subsequently developed with the client, but in this case, the psychologist would not direct the client to call their GP prior to completing a comprehensive risk assessment and completing and implementing an appropriate safety plan.

C is not the most appropriate next step as the level of risk to the client has not been determined. It would be both unsafe and unethical to terminate the call with the client without conducting a comprehensive risk assessment and developing and implementing a safety plan. An ambulance should only be called when imminent risk to the safety and wellbeing of the client, or others, has been confirmed, and they require urgent medical assistance.

D is not the most appropriate next step as the client has made statements indicative of risk directly to the psychologist who has a duty of care to conduct a comprehensive risk assessment and develop and implement a corresponding safety plan. A crisis telephone support service is available to the general public, and while helpful, the psychologist is best placed to help their client given their knowledge of the client and the level of risk with which they are presenting. Additionally, the psychologist is best placed for continuity of client care following the risk assessment and safety plan process, which a telephone crisis service could not provide.

E is the most appropriate next step as given the disclosure of risk, the psychologist is required to undertake a comprehensive risk assessment and develop and implement a safety plan with the client. Given the level of risk is undetermined, the process would begin on the phone with the client as it would be unsafe to terminate the call.

### Domain 3 INTERVENTIONS

*This domain focuses on the provision of psychological services.*

#### SAMPLE QUESTION

An 18-year-old woman is referred to a psychologist for treatment of social anxiety and insomnia. Following the initial interview, the psychologist and client collaboratively develop a treatment plan targeting social anxiety. The client attends the next session stating that she is ambivalent about addressing her anxiety and instead wants to focus on her insomnia.

What is the psychologist's most appropriate response to the client's ambivalence?

- A. Use motivational interviewing to address the client's ambivalence
- B. Acknowledge the client's ambivalence but continue with the treatment plan for social anxiety as it is the primary problem
- C. Refer the client to another psychologist because of her ambivalence about the treatment plan
- D. Change the focus of the treatment and work with the client on her insomnia problem
- E. Explore the reasons for the client's ambivalence in order to maintain a good therapeutic alliance

The correct answer is E.

Explanation:

A is not the most appropriate way to manage the client's ambivalence. This is because motivational interviewing is best used to strengthen personal motivation for, and commitment to, a specific goal - but in this case the client is unsure about what to focus on. Motivational interviewing is designed to address specific presentations within a readiness to change model, which may not address the client's reason for wanting to change the focus of treatment.

B is not the most appropriate way to manage the client's ambivalence. This option ignores the reasons for the client wanting to change the focus of treatment and fails to acknowledge that this may increase the risk of client disengagement in therapy. In line with psychologist competencies, it's important to work collaboratively with the client which may result in adjusting the treatment plan, we work to honour the client's wishes while practising from an evidence-based lens.

C is not the most appropriate way to manage the client's ambivalence. This option has the potential to invalidate the client's reasons for changing the treatment focus by assuming it is something problematic about the current therapy arrangement. This option does not suggest that the psychologist has engaged in reflective practice for themselves or explored with the client the reasons for ambivalence. The only reasons the psychologist would refer on is if the presenting issue was outside their scope of practice, another ethical/professional issue arises, or if the client requests this.

D is not the most appropriate way to manage the client's ambivalence. There is no indication that the psychologist and the client have assessed the reasons behind her desire to change, nor has the psychologist reassessed if insomnia is the appropriate treatment focus at this time. This option may simply facilitate the client's avoidance of addressing their social anxiety, which may be counter-productive to effective treatment and is not consistent with evidence-based practice on how to manage social anxiety.

E is the correct response as exploring the ambivalence will help assess the specific issues underlying the client's avoidance of directly challenging the social anxiety. Maintaining a strong therapeutic alliance is critical to strengthening client engagement and good outcome, and even more critical when a client is ambivalent. A strong therapeutic alliance is built on mutual respect, and it is the psychologist's role to hold space for ambivalence while guiding the client in line with evidence-based treatment approaches. The therapeutic alliance is not dependent on doing what the client wants when this is counterproductive to achieving their therapeutic goals.

## Domain 4 COMMUNICATION

*This domain focuses on communicating to clients, other professionals, organisations or the wider community.*

### SAMPLE QUESTION

A psychologist is required to write a court report for the first time about a client's fitness to stand trial. He consults his supervisor who explains the differences between a court report and a clinical report. He says that one difference is that the credibility of the psychologist is under legal scrutiny through the court report, so it is important to be accurate.

What should be the main focus of the psychologist in preparing the court report?

- A. Analyse all the evidence to address the questions from the court
- B. Summarise the client's history and provide a diagnosis
- C. Assess the client and explain the results to the court
- D. Assess the client and detail potential intervention
- E. Consider the client's history and provide a risk assessment

The correct answer is A.

Explanation:

A is the best response. Decisions regarding whether a client is fit to stand trial are multifaceted and require consideration of all available evidence (including interviews, psychometrics, etc.) to comprehensively evaluate the client's mental state and capacity, and address all questions posed by the court for this report.

B is not the best option. Although a clinical report and a court report focus on the formulation of a client's presentation, the court report requires answers to specific questions and may not require a diagnosis. Further, aspects of the client's history may not be relevant to the questions posed by the court, and as such, should not be included in the court report – it is important to only include information relevant to the instructions provided by the court. Further, depending on the circumstances in which the psychologist was appointed to this role, they may not have access to extensive information regarding the client's history.

C is not the best option. The psychologist was specifically instructed to write a report for the court, rather than provide an explanation of assessment results to the court. When a psychologist is involved in court proceedings, they should always provide an accurate, objective, clearly written report that addresses the questions asked of them. Providing the report may or may not result in being required to further explain the assessment results to the court.

D is not the best option. The conditions under which this was the correct answer would be if the court specifically asked for the psychologist to provide information on potential interventions for the client. In this case, the court has asked about the client's fitness to stand trial rather than an intervention plan.

E is not the best option. While the psychologist would have some access to the client's history, a comprehensive risk assessment process recognises both dynamic (i.e., changing states) and static (i.e., fixed or unchanging) risk factors. Client history alone only addresses static risk factors. Further, while a risk assessment may inform aspects of whether a client is fit to stand trial, it is not sufficient to comprehensively assess the client.