



National Psychology Examination Sample Questions

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

The Psychology Board of Australia 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 defines the core capabilities and attributes of the internship program that must be achieved by the provisional psychologist are:

- a) knowledge of the discipline
- b) ethical, legal and professional matters
- c) psychological assessment and measurement
- d) intervention strategies
- e) research and evaluation
- f) communication and interpersonal relationships
- g) working within a cross-cultural context
- h) practice across the lifespan.

These eight 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 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

A psychologist has been treating a client for a driving phobia following a traffic accident when she was driving a work car. During the course of therapy, the client discloses that she has recently submitted a worker's compensation claim for bullying. The psychologist then receives a valid subpoena to provide all his client records from the workers compensation authority.

What is the most appropriate response to the subpoena?

- A. The psychologist is not obliged to release any information as client records are subject to professional privilege
- B. The psychologist should only release information about the client that you judge to be in their best interests
- C. The psychologist should release a summary of the client records but retain a more detailed set of notes
- D. The psychologist must release all information that is requested as there is no professional privilege
- E. The psychologist must not release the client records as it constitutes a breach of confidentiality

The correct answer is D.

Explanation:

A is not the most appropriate response. Psychologists are obliged to provide all information, documents and other data from their client records specified in a valid subpoena. In this case psychologists are not protected by professional privilege.

B is not the most appropriate response. Psychologists are obliged to provide all information, documents and other data within their client records specified in a valid subpoena. All records listed in the subpoena must be provided; there is no discretion in this matter.

C is not the most appropriate response. Psychologists are obliged to provide all information, documents and other data within their client records specified in a valid subpoena. All records, documents and information or other types of records kept (e.g. electronic records) listed in the subpoena must be provided; there is no discretion in this matter.

D is the most appropriate response. Information, documents, data and any other records gathered in the course of a psychological service are not subject to professional privilege. You are required to release all information, documents and other types of records specified in a valid subpoena. This is one of the cases where a legal obligation overrides the normal protection of confidentiality of client records. The psychologist is at liberty to communicate their concerns about releasing this information to the court or relevant authorities, but nevertheless is required to act on a valid subpoena.

E is not the most appropriate response. Legal obligations such as a valid subpoena override normal confidentiality requirements.

Domain 2 ASSESSMENT

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

SAMPLE QUESTION

A 10-year-old boy is referred to a psychologist at the suggestion of the school because of the boy's behaviour difficulties. His teacher has completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).. The Total Difficulties scale score on the SDQ is at the 91st percentile.

What would be the most appropriate next step?

- A. Work with the school to develop positive behaviour plan
- B. Work with the parents to better understand this high score
- C. Work with the parents to build on the high strengths of this child
- D. Work with the school to better manage this conduct disordered child
- E. Work with the parents to develop a positive behaviour plan

The correct answer is B.

Explanation:

A. This is not the most appropriate next step as there is no evidence that the child would benefit from a gifted and talented program. A score that is at the 91st percentile indicates difficulties which may be due to a number of reasons.

B. This is the most appropriate next step as the SDQ is a broad screening test for emotional and behavioural strengths and difficulties which commonly occur in childhood, and a more comprehensive assessment is required to inform treatment options. It would be helpful to work with the parents you as part of the comprehensive assessment, including asking them to complete the parent form of the SDQ.

C. This is not the most appropriate next step as there are no indicators that the child is gifted and the psychologist have not yet done a comprehensive assessment to inform possible interventions.

D. This is not the most appropriate next step as the SDQ is a broad screening test for emotional and behavioural strengths and difficulties during childhood and a more comprehensive assessment is required in order to inform intervention options.

E. This is not the most appropriate next step as the SDQ is a broad screening test for emotional and behavioural strengths and difficulties during childhood and a more comprehensive assessment is required in order to inform treatment options.

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 negotiate 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. Utilise 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 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.

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.

D is not the most appropriate way to manage the client's ambivalence. There is no indication that you and the client have assessed the reasons behind her desire to change, nor have you 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.

E is the correct response as exploring the ambivalence will help assess the specific issues. Maintaining a strong therapeutic alliance is critical to strengthening client engagement and good outcome and even more critical when a client is ambivalent.

Domain 4 COMMUNICATION

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

SAMPLE QUESTION

A psychologist is providing psychological consulting services to a manager of an international mining company about his strengths and effectiveness within the organisation. The manager is required to travel to remote areas of the world and consulting sessions have become irregular due to his work. Nevertheless, the manager is motivated to continue and he suggests that email could serve as a means for maintaining regular contact. The psychologist has some concerns about communicating electronically.

How should the psychologist best address her concerns regarding electronic communication?

- A. Ensure the latest encryption protocols are installed on the psychologist's email
- B. Include a disclaimer in every electronic communication with the client
- C. Discuss the issue of confidentiality before engaging in email consulting
- D. Insist that the client obtain the psychologist's permission before forwarding any email communication to a third party
- E. Keep copies of all electronic communications with the client

The correct answer is C.

Explanation:

A is not the best option as email encryption, whilst important, is not sufficient to ensure protection of confidentiality, nor does it directly address all issues or foreseeable risks of breaches of confidentiality in this situation.

B is not the best option. The use of a disclaimer is only one method of attempting to address the confidentiality issues around the use of electronic means of communication and therefore does not directly address all issues or foreseeable risks of breaches of confidentiality in this situation.

C is the best response. Client confidentiality must be protected. The psychologist should proactively address all issues if there are foreseeable risks of breaches of confidentiality and seek appropriate solutions. Discussion of this matter should happen before commencing psychological consulting by email, and can include both data security and the privacy provisions with regards to who may have access to the emails.

D is not the best option as the issue of confidentiality of the psychologist's emails is less important here than the security of the client's emails. In this instance client confidentiality is the primary concern.

E is not the best option. The psychologist should keep records of all electronic communications, but this alone does not directly address all issues or foreseeable risks of breaches of confidentiality.