

# Achievement Standard 91876

## Analyse a significant issue in psychological practice

Psychology

# 3.5

Externally assessed 3 credits

Achievement Standard 91876 (Psychology 3.5) requires you to develop a critical response on a specified topic, using evidence. The response will be in essay form.

### Before you begin: Key understandings for success in Level 3 Psychology

What level of thinking do I need to show in my answers?

The progression of what is expected from Level 1 to Level 3 Psychology is from lower-order thinking skills to higher-order thinking skills:

Level 1 Psychology	Describe	Lower order ↓ Higher order
Level 2 Psychology	Explain	
Level 3 Psychology	Analyse	

### Achievement criteria

Achieved	Merit	Excellence
Analyse a significant issue in psychological practice	Analyse, in depth, a significant issue in psychological practice	Comprehensively analyse a significant issue in psychological practice

Achievement Standard 91876 (Psychology 3.5) is based upon your ability to **analyse**.

#### 'Achieved'

*Analyse* involves a detailed discussion on a significant issue in psychological practice.

#### 'Merit'

*Analyse, in-depth*, involves critiquing how a significant issue is evident in psychological practice. The critique includes descriptions of, or references to, psychological theories, concepts and/or studies from published works.

#### 'Excellence'

*Comprehensively analyse* involves a detailed critique focusing on how a significant issue has an effect in psychological practice. The detailed critique discusses how the issue could be addressed with references to psychological theories, concepts and/or studies from published works.



## The assessment format

The AS91876 exam instructions require you to write an essay response. You are well advised to aim for at least 600 words (about 5 pages of the exam booklet).

Writing too little or too much can be to your disadvantage.

- If your essay is too short, there is not enough length to respond critically in the depth required.
- If your essay is too long, you run the risk of rambling and may lose a sense of control and conciseness.

Your essay must include the following.

- An introduction, stating the focus and scope of your argument.
- A range of appropriate points and explanations, supported by accurate and relevant evidence.
- A reasoned conclusion.

## What will the AS91876 exam questions be like?

There will be a number of essay statements provided. Essay topics will include opportunities to answer on a range of issues in psychology. In the 2018 examination, four statements were provided, and students were instructed to choose one; in the NZQA sample assessment (2017), there were four statements provided and students were instructed to choose one.

You will need to choose one essay statement and discuss the extent to which you agree with it. You are expected to *write an essay*. In other words, you need to choose one statement that you can successfully develop an argument for, providing evidence and analysis from the theories, concepts and published studies that you have studied.



The essay statements will encourage you to show your detailed knowledge and understanding of some of the following aspects.

- Gender bias (including androcentrism and alpha/beta bias).
- Religious bias.
- Cultural bias (including ethnocentrism and cultural relativism).
- Socially sensitive research.
- Ownership of knowledge.
- Use of children and animals in psychological research.

## Task Two: Revise key issues in psychology by completing an essay plan for each topic

A **significant issue** refers to concerns within psychology that are of an enduring or emerging nature (as opposed to *trending issues*, which are issues yet to be confirmed – such as the growing use of digital therapies) and that have an impact on psychological research practice and psychological discourse. The definition of issues that are significant is taken from the explanatory note in AS91876 as being biases (gender, religion, culture), socially sensitive research, ownership of knowledge or the use of children and animals in psychological research.

Read the following exemplar of a generalised essay plan for the issue of cultural bias.

Use this exemplar as a guide to help you revise the significant issues in psychology and to complete an essay plan for each significant issue.

These essay plans can be used to build your confidence by practising how to summarise and communicate your knowledge as a structured examination response.

### Exemplar – Cultural bias essay plan

What is the social/historical context for one example of published research you have studied?

The specific context for this issue is *mental health admissions*.

Identify the cultural bias in the published research you have studied.

Speaking to ancestors and/or hearing ancestors speak to you is considered being within the range of normal experiences in te ao Māori (the 'Māori world view'). Speaking to ancestors and/or hearing ancestors speak to you is seen by western medicine as a symptom of *schizophrenia*.

Why could this cultural bias be a problem? What could this cultural bias lead to?

Research into mental illness may be ascribing what is normal te ao Māori as symptoms of schizophrenia. This could explain to some degree why Māori are significantly more likely to be admitted to an inpatient mental health setting.

How could this cultural bias be addressed?

Researchers will undertake cultural competency training.

Regular review of admissions and peer review of research proposals.



**Gender bias**

Key features:

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What is the social/historical context for one example of published research you have studied?

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Identify the gender bias in the published research you have studied.

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Why could this gender bias be a problem? What could this gender bias lead to?

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How could this gender bias be addressed?

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## What does a 'cultural bias' essay look like?

Following are three annotated essays – 'Excellence', 'Merit' and 'Achievement' – to show the level of response needed. The essays are based upon the aspect of *cultural bias*.

The essays are written in response to the statement:

'Culture bias in psychological practice is unavoidable.' (2018 exam)

### 'Excellence' essay

Culture bias is a very significant issue in the field of psychology. The problem of culture bias can not only be present in research but may occur even before the research has begun, in terms of choosing what to study. Many biases are based on Western assumptions from the past and the present. These Western biases can be found in intelligence testing and health research. Bias is detrimental to the results of such studies, as bias will often produce invalid and/or inaccurate data. One way to challenge the issue of bias is through cross-cultural psychology, which applies different and unique approaches to individual cultures.

Introduction provides a clear response to the statement by distinctly identifying which statement is being responded to, setting out what the problems around cultural bias are, stating where these biases can occur and stating the writer's viewpoint (that it is unavoidable). It also covers how many of the problems of cultural bias can be overcome.

Culture bias occurs when a researcher applies their own cultural constructs to their study – this is known as ethnocentrism. Culture is a very complex idea and is often misinterpreted. However, cultural constructs can be broadly categorised into sections known as etic and emic constructs. An emic construct is a belief specific to a culture, e.g. beliefs about death or about family ties. The ideas and practices that a Māori family have compared with those of a Pākehā, Asian or Pacific family are all very different and complex in their own way. An etic construct is one which is universal and can be applied to all cultures. There are not many examples of etic constructs, but one is emotions (such as love, hate and sadness), because all humans throughout every culture experience emotions. Because there are not as many etic constructs, many researchers mistakenly classify an emic construct as etic because of a lack of understanding or knowledge. This bias is called an imposed etic. There are a few solutions to helping cultural bias but, as stated earlier, it is not possible to avoid cultural bias completely because of predisposed opinions and independent research.

Key terms of culture, ethnocentrism, etic and emic are defined clearly and appear early in the response.

Clear examples, in the writer's own words, are provided – which support definitions.

Closing sentence of paragraph gives a clear link back to the statement by restating that cultural bias is avoidable, and refers to solutions.

Cross-cultural psychology is one way in which cultural bias can be controlled. This occurs when psychological research is reviewed by other researchers to check and look for any bias or discrepancies. This method is not foolproof – if both researchers suffer from ethnocentrism, then any cultural bias in the study/research may not be recognised. The second solution to this issue is through the teaching of cultural relativism. This idea involves an awareness that, in order to understand a behaviour, the cultural background must be considered. Cross-cultural psychology and the teaching of cultural relativism are fairly new ideas and show the progression of psychological research over time.

States a way to avoid cultural bias in psychology.

States a second way to avoid cultural bias in psychology.

## 2018 questions

### TASK

Write a concise essay on ONE significant issue that you have studied, in response to ONE of the statements below.

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with your chosen statement.

Your essay should include:

- an explanation of the significant issue you have selected
- descriptions of, and references to, psychological theories, concepts, or studies from published works
- a discussion of how the issue may be addressed.

### STATEMENTS (Choose ONE)

1. The benefits of psychological research findings and discoveries outweigh discomfort to the participants.
2. The male perspective has negatively dominated psychological research.
3. Psychology cannot be considered truly scientific.
4. Culture bias in psychological practice is unavoidable.

# Answers and explanations

## 2018 questions

**STATEMENT 2:** 'The male perspective has negatively dominated psychological research.'

Gender bias is a significant issue in the field of psychology. The problem of gender bias can appear across many areas – including what to research, methods used in research, and how to interpret findings. Many biases in psychology are based on assumptions from the past that, along with many other fields within science, are historically male-dominated and use lab-based research. The male-dominated perspective in research can be damaging for research, as this bias will often inadvertently produce invalid and/or inaccurate data. For example, efforts to control as many variables as possible (including only testing on one gender – men), can actually limit understanding of psychological concepts and issues. Ways to challenge the issue of gender bias are through feminist psychology, which applies a different perspective to the historical idea of what well-controlled experimental research looks like. A feminist participatory approach to research can offer data from real-life settings and/or hard-to-reach populations, and attempts to increase the diversity of gender perspectives in psychological research. Feminist psychology does not assume men and women respond in the same way to research situations.

Introduction provides a clear response to the statement by identifying which statement is being responded to, setting out what the problems around gender bias are, stating where these biases can occur and stating the writer's viewpoint (they agree that it is negative). The introduction also touches on how the problems of gender bias can be overcome.

Gender bias occurs when one gender is looked at less favourably than the other. Outside the field of psychology, it can also be called sexism. A basic example of gender bias is psychological theories that do not show accuracy or equality when documenting the experiences of women and men. There are two different approaches to gender bias – alpha bias and beta bias. Alpha bias occurs when the differences between men and women are exaggerated; for example, in stereotypes of what men and women are 'supposed' to be. One of psychology's more famous theorists, Freud, developed concepts that had a clear alpha bias. Freud emphasised the differences between men and women in his theories around how personality develops. His theories around psychosexual development included that women develop 'penis envy' when they realise their anatomy differs from that of men. His ideas led to stereotypes about women – which included that this unconscious jealousy towards males meant women's personalities were not as well developed as men's were. To Freud, these differences were weaknesses that made women more prone to mental illness and immorality. This example of alpha bias shows how the male perspective dominated psychological research (Freud did not consider that men could have vagina envy!) and how it had consequences for both men and women.