**Exemplar 1**

What really fascinates me is the human brain and an individual’s behaviour. How does the brain work? Why do differences in the structure of one’s brain effect their life? What is more important, nature or nurture? Why do individuals behave in certain ways? The list of questions goes on. These questions, and more like them, frequently come to mind in my everyday life, whether it be when I am watching documentaries that attempt to answer these questions, or when I am just observing people. I am fascinated to increase my knowledge of psychology and, in particular, mental illness as well as consider the causes and impacts of crime on today’s society.

Currently, I’m studying Psychology along with crime and deviance as a section of my Sociology A-level. The attachment, psychopathology and forensic psychology topics in Psychology, alongside the Sociology, have expanded my knowledge about criminal behaviour and how factors like the structure of one’s brain and an individual’s upbringing, can greatly affect the chances of them becoming an offender. My interests go beyond the course syllabus. In my spare time, I watch documentaries that link to crime and psychology, examples being: Abducted in Plain Sight, the Ted Bundy Tapes, Babies and Jeffrey Epstein: Filthy Rich, and More. Watching these documentaries, stimulates many questions, what if Ted Bundy and Jeffrey Epstein had a better childhood and were nurtured more, would they have become sex offenders or murderers, or would that nurture not have made a difference? Is it biological factors, like the structure of their brain that made them criminals? I also think about the effect the crimes of these individuals had on their victims, and what is needed to help the victims live a normal, pain-free life again. I enjoyed reading ‘The Psychology Book’, which includes work by the many psychologists that I have studied and others I am less familiar with. A particular interest was the section on attachment, which provided more information on psychologists works like Ainsworth’s strange situation, which added to my knowledge of the subject. All three of my A-levels have developed skills that will be transferrable to my chosen degree course. My essay writing skills have improved and I am much more confident in critically analysing the information I bring together from my research and case studies.

Throughout my time at school, I have held positions of responsibility including Junior and Senior Prefect. I have been a responsible role model for younger pupils in the school and developed my leadership qualities. This often takes me out of my comfort zone such as the annual House Music competition. We all had to work together to choreograph a dance for the sixth form students in our House. This developed my team working and negotiating skills in order to ensure we could get everyone together for a tight rehearsal schedule as well as supporting others who were nervous about performing the dance in front of a large audience. Taking part in school Open Days annually since Year 7 have further taught me to have confidence and be professional, setting a good example for my school.

Outside of school, keeping fit and healthy is crucial for good mental health while balancing my workload. My jobs have developed communication and teamwork skills, because I have to work with a different person every shift, whilst consistently providing high standards of cleaning and customer care. Work experience in an infant school taught me patience and leadership, when working with the Reception pupils who were really energetic and I often helped the teacher with classroom control.

To conclude, I am excited about the prospects of being able to extend my knowledge of Psychology and Criminology. I believe I have developed the skills necessary to be successful on your degree course and I am really looking forward to getting started.

**Exemplar 2**

Since GCSE, I have had an interest in psychology which developed into an absolute passion during my A level studies. In particular, my greatest interest surrounds the characteristics of mental health conditions such depression and schizophrenia. Through both personal experience, as a good friend of mine was affected with these conditions, and from my studies in psychology I know studying psychology at degree would allow me to develop my knowledge around these subjects and allow me to eventually achieve my dream career choice-to be a psychotherapist. Watching my friend in hospital receive support from medical professionals cemented my desire to work in this area to help others find strategies to cope with the conditions they may have. I know I display many qualities which make me the ideal candidate for this course, such as my ability to work independently, leadership skills, confidence in working as a team and a drive to solve problems to benefit those I may be working with.

Watching a TED talk by Phillip Zimbardo on "The psychology of Evil" was fascinating as it looked into the circumstances in which people would commit acts of violence or aggression, found through the abuse of soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison and Milgram's 1963 shock experiment into obedience. In addition to this, I have been reading around schizophrenia, with one study taking my interest in particular by Yamazaki (2020), which linked schizophrenia to the ACAB7 gene, prevalently found in Alzheimer's. I have also researched around depression, completing a FutureLearn course on helping young people overcome depressive symptoms throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This has also presented some benefits for myself, as I have learned about coping routines such as effectively managing your day.

As well as academics, I pride myself on being involved in both sporting and musical achievements, one in particular reaching the National Cup Plate semi-finals in rugby, becoming the only comprehensive school to reach that far in the competition. This demonstration of solidarity and effort is also reflected in my music, which is a major part of my lifestyle. My band (The Balance) regularly perform at open mics, which I think we can all agree can be both eye opening and entertaining to say the least! In addition to this, I am currently working at a grade 6 standard on piano, but regularly challenge myself by working through repertoire that is to Grade 8 standard or higher, in order to attain my progress at the instrument.

As previously stated, I pride myself on my ability to work with others and gain success in a common goal. One way I have demonstrated this is through my drive in working with my sister in her gym routines, aiming to relieve the effects of her cerebral palsy. Regularly supporting her through these has taken stress off my parents, and I have seen immense progress in a short amount of time! The knock on effect to her mental health and wellbeing has been profound reinforcing the importance of considering both mental and physical health in psychotherapy.

Throughout my time at my school, I have regularly taken part in the leadership opportunities available, becoming a senior prefect and currently co-captain of my school house. I savour these opportunities of leadership and the collaboration with others, as I know a psychotherapist depends on these to gain success and aid a person to the best of their ability.

Now, I know you must read similar things to this over and over, and I understand that it can be boring and monotonous. I can assure you that I have a genuine will to improve the lives of people through therapy; I am committed to bettering myself through the course, making a psychology degree the perfect route for me to pursue my career in psychotherapy.

**Exemplar 3**

My interest in psychology stemmed from my love of biology and also how much I enjoy analysing characters in books, from my English literature class. When I took psychology at A Level it showed me that this subject was so much more than just how we think; it’s about our emotions, how our hormones betray us and can cause mental illnesses, combined with strange but wonderful theories from Freud, who believes we’re somehow attracted to our opposite gender parental figure. The most gripping part of psychology for me is analysing psychopaths, learning how their brain/mind works which can result in them committing such horrific crimes. This started when watching documentaries on serial killers. I researched and read the “Psychological Assessment of Ted Bundy” after finding out we would be studying him as part of our forensic psychology topic, which was fascinating. Taking psychology or forensic psychology would give me the opportunity to study a range of topics in greater detail and be a steppingstone to a master’s degree where I could specialise further.

In the future, my dream job would be to become a forensic psychologist. I would be able to help victims of crime, perform psychological analyses on perpetrators and inmates, or help in rehabilitation units or secure hospitals. To achieve this, I will need the ability to communicate and listen in order to build relationships and trust with the offender or victim. Research and analysis skills will be critical, as I will have to present statistical data and have a non-discriminatory and non-judgemental approach to avoid bias or damaging any trust built with the patient. I fully appreciate I would have to cope with an element of personal risk alongside this.

Many of these skills have been developed within my A levels. Alongside critical analysis in English, I have also improved data analysis when carrying out practical work in biology. Both psychology and biology require me to be confident with using statistical tests to support data analysis in bringing my conclusions together. Discussions of sensitive ethical topics in both psychology and biology need a non-biased, non-judgemental approach to allow for an open discussion of ideas. I believe this course will really help to develop these skills further, while also introducing new techniques when studying such a fascinating subject in more depth and detail.

As a junior prefect in Y8 I helped the new Y7 adjust to secondary school life, before taking on extra duties in Y11, finally becoming a senior prefect in sixth form. I also took on extra responsibilities by supporting a Y8 English class; this involved forming a relationship with the class, so they felt confident in asking me any questions about the work. This role helped me successfully apply for house vice-captain. Working together as a team of six, we planned house events such as sports day and house music, this developed my organisation and team working skills. These events are a huge part of the Chosen Hill community, we listened to other students’ opinions and ideas then, working as part of the team, I helped to plan and deliver the finished successful events

I volunteered for the Gloucestershire Young Carers charity, helping to support young carers and take part in fundraising events. I was meant to be joining this charity for my work experience. Unfortunately, this was cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic, however I managed to continue volunteering by transcribing videos that explain how difficult lockdown can be for them as they became even more isolated, which is why this charity is so important.

I feel that my fascination with psychology and the criminal mind, as well as the fact that I will work hard to achieve my goals and never give up, make me well-suited to studying your course. I will bring enthusiasm and a dedication to my studies in order to take the first step towards fulfilling my dream to be a forensic psychologist.

**Exemplar 4**

My intrigue in how society works started from an early age. I’ve been fascinated to discover what affects and influences how people think, react and interact individually and within society. I am choosing a degree in sociology, or combined with psychology, to enable me to study these areas in more detail and not specialise too early on a career path.

Studying Sociology at A-level has been fascinating and I have enjoyed the chance to debate a wide range of sociological issues from feminism to religion and beliefs. A particular interest was the topic of feminism and, in particular, the empowerment of women in the workplace. Considering the Equal Pay Act and seeing the debate in the media around presenters such as at the BBC stimulated me to want to study the topic further so I enrolled on a FutureLearn course by the University of Exeter “Understanding Gender Equality”. This furthered my passion for the topic of gender, the representation of gender and identifying stereotypes. Discovering we’re more than 100 years away from achieving gender equality has motivated me even more to further my understanding and help expand my knowledge by choosing to continue studying Sociology at degree level.

Throughout my A-levels, essay writing and research skills have become increasingly important. This has allowed for me to develop these skills to the extent where I can effectively take my learning outside the classroom and research topics in depth that have not only benefitted my education, but my personal understanding of the topic. An example being my reading of the book ‘Invisible Women’ that looked at the glass ceiling and the difficulties in progressing in society as a result.

Biology has been fascinating to me as it links well to my Health & Social Care and Sociology. I have enjoyed the anatomy and physiology sections and, in particular, the nervous system. I have found that it has increased the understanding of the physiological disorders topic where I am researching into dementia care and its impact on society. To increase the depth of understanding I am taking another FutureLearn course “Foundations in Dementia” which links well to a course “How the NHS Really Works” that I studied last March at the start of Lockdown. So much of my courses are interlinked and end up coming back to Sociology in some way.

Biology has also helped support my data analysis skills that are so important when looking at different sociological perspectives on a micro and macroscale. It has helped my critical analysis and helped with understanding repeatability versus validity.

I have further developed my debating skills by joining the Debating Society and have argued that women should be able to freeze their embryos. This enabled me to use my science knowledge and debating skills with counter arguments. I also represented the school in The Great Debate against Worcester Grammar School, where I argued that we should not judge historical figures by the morals of today. All these skills will help when studying at university as I need to be able to consider theories and evidence from a range of points of view to come to conclusions.

I have taken on a range of leadership roles in sixth form that have developed my confidence and team working skills. As a prefect and school council representative, I was responsible for trying to maintain and improve facilities in the school as well as being a role model for younger students. This year I was successful in becoming House Captain which has brought new challenges with the pandemic and social distancing. I have had to be adaptable and inventive to find ways of running competitions despite the “bubbles” in school.

I believe your university will provide the best opportunities to build on and strengthen my knowledge and skills, both as a student and a person. I will strive to make the most of every opportunity I get, both in and beyond the campus, and am excited to take the next steps in my future studying sociology.

**Exemplar 5**

I am fascinated by how an individual’s mind works and how our minds are coupled with our actions. Choosing a psychology with criminology degree course will help me answer questions like these. Studying psychology and crime and deviance within sociology, I am intrigued by the biological and mental/cognitive reasons for individuals to commit crime, and the way in which society can have an impact on the crime individuals commit. I would love the opportunity to develop a deeper insight into an individual’s actions and thoughts, along with behaviour, and gain an understanding how this has an affect on themselves and others. This subject matter is a passion of mine and it is a dream of mine to go into a career surrounding these topics, specifically a career as a forensic psychologist or a crime scene investigator.

Alongside developing knowledge surrounding psychology and crime during my A-level studies, I have watched countless documentaries, such as the murder to mercy: The Cynotia Brown story, which explored how crime was dealt with in younger individuals and depending on the severity of the crime whether they stay in juvenile prison or are moved to a more secure adult facility. This documentary also went into detail about the court processes and how much of an important and difficult decision people working in this field of work have to make. Furthermore, I have completed an online course ‘Orientation to Educational Neuroscience’ to further deepen my knowledge surrounding how the brain and the way our schema is mapped out can impact our thoughts and, as a result, our actions. I explored different aspects of pain, both physical and emotional, and how they can affect an individual and the negative changes this can make to their personality. Case studies have enabled me to look at individual criminals in much more depth and I enjoyed the detailed geographical profiling. I love solving a problem or confusing concept and I enjoy working both in a group and individually with resources to be able to do so.

My other A-levels link well with my interests as the sociology looks at the impacts of society on the behaviour of both individuals and groups, whilst the biology considers the biochemical effects on an individual and helps me understand the impact of the nervous system and, in particular, neurotransmitters on behaviour and emotions. Sociology has encouraged me to look at the bigger picture and developed my essay writing skills. Biology has encouraged me to be methodical and record things in precise detail. These will all be transferable to successful university study.

I have also had the opportunity to hone my communication skills from my job and previous work experience. Working in the housekeeping department at a prestigious wedding venue, requires working within a team of people to get a job done on time and to a high standard, broadening my communication and listening skills. In a typical week, I have to be organised to fit in all my homework on top of extra revision and reading as well as producing mind maps and flashcards. I have volunteered at my local Infants school in order to have experience in working in a fast-paced environment. Learning how to lead a class of young impressionable children certainly developed my skills in patience! As well as this, I have taken on roles of responsibility at school becoming both a senior and junior prefect.

Outside of the school environment, I love keeping fit and exercising; physical activity puts me in the right mind-set to give work and school my all, whist also helping me deal with stress after a busy day. I aim to continue this at university.

To conclude, I am extremely excited about exploring psychology and criminology at degree level and widening my understanding of these subjects to pursue my career in forensic psychology. I have taken the steps necessary to prepare myself for student life and I am eager to start.

**Exemplar 6**

I believe that investigations into criminal profiling and forensics is a vitally important
role towards the improvement of society. I would like to pursue a career in psychological
profiling because it is important to understand why criminals and psychopaths think and act
the way they do. This research and knowledge helps us to reduce the effects of these
characteristics on offenders and victims, and to know how best to offer help to those who have been affected. I would like to take part in research like this because it is the area of
psychology that I find the most fascinating and applicable to real life.

In psychology, I have developed skills to use in my evaluative and analytical writing. I am
able to relate concepts and theories to real life, and identify and explain strengths and
limitations. This helps me to think critically when evaluating research and I can analyse
different approaches to explaining criminal behaviour, e.g. top-down and bottom-up, to
determine which approach is more appropriate to a situation.

Biology has helped me apply knowledge in novel situations and develop practical techniques, both skills necessary for the course. It has advanced my knowledge in biopsychology, in areas such as synaptic transmission, drugs and the nervous system. This helps me to understand biological approaches to criminal behaviour, as well as drugs that may be used to treat genetic or neural conditions that cause such behaviour. Maths helps with interpretation and understanding data that I will use when conducting experiments at university, as well as extra practice of using statistical tests to check for significance. It develops the objective mindset needed for analysing and evaluating research in real life applications.

In the summer, I volunteered with a charity called Mindsong that visit care homes and sing
with dementia patients. It was explained to me that the area of the brain that is associated
with music and rhythm isn't affected by dementia, so while patients may struggle to have a
conversation, they tend to enjoy singing along to some well-known songs. I learnt a lot about
different age groups and the ways that dementia can affect the brain.

I have a range of work experience that I will supplement by volunteering as an appropriate
adult once I turn 18 to be more focused on forensics. Working at a pharmacy was fascinating, as I was working with different types of medicine, including those used to treat depression. It was interesting to discover the types of drug that are prescribed to different people for depression, as some side effects are particularly bad for certain age groups or people who are taking other forms of medication. This is important as many criminals have mental illnesses or disorders that may require drug treatment. I interacted with customers who had some of these illnesses or disorders, so witnessed some of the difficulties that I may have to face when working in forensic psychology. My main job was dispensing medi-doses for people who take a lot of medication and are unable to keep track by themselves.

My work experience at a local primary school, part time job and role as House Vice-Captain
shows I can balance work, school and my social life. I have to speak to a range of people of
different ages, genders and backgrounds. It has made me more confident to talk to and in front of people, as well as teaching me to be open-minded and approachable; excellent preparation for communicating in multidisciplinary teams while working in forensic psychology.

Finally, I have been doing a FutureLearn course, Introduction to Forensic Science, to advance my knowledge about forensic science and psychology. This has allowed me to independently study areas such as DNA profiling, crime scene investigation, and blood pattern analysis. This has prepared me very well for studying independently and beyond A-level; I look forward to continuing to study psychology and forensics at university.