1. Discuss the contribution of behaviourist psychologists such as Pavlov and Skinner to our understanding of human behaviour. (16 marks)

2. Outline and evaluate the social learning approach in psychology. (16 marks)

Sammi and Krishna are talking. Sammi says, ‘Look at your little sister Josephine. She’s pretending she’s got an iPhone and is sending a text message.’

Krishna replies, ‘Yes. But when Josephine saw me get told off for using my Dad’s iPad, she never copied me doing that!’

3. Describe and evaluate social learning theory. Refer to the conversation above as part of your answer. (16 marks)

4. Outline and evaluate the cognitive approach in psychology. (16 marks)

5. Outline and evaluate the biological approach in psychology. (16 marks)

6. Outline and evaluate the psychodynamic approach in psychology. (16 marks)

7. Outline and evaluate the humanistic approach in psychology. (16 marks)

Harriette’s mother and father are worried about her mobile found use. Harriette is becoming increasingly anxious and has low self-esteem. However, Harriette does feel good when she receives WhatsApp messages or ‘likes’ on Facebook; holding and using her iPhone make her feel safe.

Harriette’s mother and father are worried that her reliance on her iPhone and how this is affecting her work at school, as well as her well-being.

8. Outline and evaluate the humanistic approach. Refer to Harriette’s behaviour in your answer. (16 marks)

9. Outline the key features of the cognitive approach in psychology. Compare the cognitive approach with the psychodynamic approach. (16 marks)

10. Outline the biological approach in psychology. Compare the biological approach to the behaviourist approach to explaining human behaviour. (16 marks)
Discuss the contribution of behaviourist psychologists such as Pavlov and Skinner to our understanding of human behaviour. (16 marks)

Behaviourism is one of the most influential approaches in modern psychology. Its central claim is that almost all human behaviour is the result of learning. To explore the learning process, behaviourists favoured the laboratory experiment over other methods because this kind of research was objective. i.e. it focused on observable events, and could be rigorously controlled.

One of the first behaviourists to explore the relationship between learning and behaviour was Ivan Pavlov. Pavlov developed the theory of classical conditioning and famously tested it using his dogs, who were conditioned to associate the sound of a bell with food. This resulted in the dogs producing a salivation response at the sound of a bell even when no food was present. Pavlov demonstrated that repeated exposure to an event leads to a learned and uncontrollable behaviour.

Developing these ideas, B.F. Skinner suggested that behaviour was the result of learning through the consequences of our actions. Skinner conducted research into his operant conditioning theory using rats, and found that three types of consequences will affect behaviour: Positive reinforcement involves rewarding a behaviour, which increases the likelihood of it being repeated; negative reinforcement involves removing an unpleasant outcome to increase the likelihood of a behaviour being repeated; punishment involves adding an unpleasant outcome to a behaviour, which reduces the likelihood of it being repeated. For Skinner, behaviour is the result of learning and remembering the consequences of previous behaviours.

Behaviourists have significantly contributed to the still-developing recognition of psychology as a science. The experimental methods used by Pavlov and Skinner rejected the earlier emphasis in psychology on introspection and encouraged research that focused on more objective, because more measurable, dimensions of behaviour. According to behaviourists, this emphasis on the scientific method has led to an increasingly valid and reliable understanding of human behaviour. These methods have also helped psychology gain credibility and status as a scientific discipline, which in turn attracts more funding and research opportunities.

The behaviourist approach was also influential in encouraging the use of animals as research subjects. Behaviourists
believed that the learning processes in humans and animals are very similar; consequently, Pavlov conducted research using dogs, and Skinner used rats and pigeons. Using non-human animals in research gives experimenters more control over the process, without demand characteristics or individual differences influencing findings. However, many consider using animals in experiments to be unethical as there is less concern about protection from harm for non-human subjects. Furthermore, some argue that findings from animal experiments are not generalizable to human behaviour. From this perspective, behaviourists have arguably made a limited contribution to explaining human behaviour, as the biology, experiences, and capabilities of different species are extremely different.

Finally, the behavioural approach has made important contributions to our modern understanding of mental illness. For example, many phobias are thought to be the result of earlier unpleasant learning experiences. Consequently, this understanding has helped psychologists develop therapies, such as systematic desensitisation, that attempt to re-condition a patient’s fear response. Also, some addictions such as gambling can be better understood through operant conditioning, as the rewards of gambling could be seen to reinforce the destructive behaviour. This demonstrates that the behaviourist approach has many real-world applications in the understanding and treatment of atypical behaviour.

[~550 words]

Examiner style comments: *Mark band 4*

This is a well-detailed an accurate account of the behaviourist approach and its contribution to psychology. The evaluation is well-detailed, thorough and effective drawing on a range of points. The use of specialist terminology is excellent and add clarity and focus to the essay.