
Postgraduate Certificate in Clinical Psychology (Hong Kong)

Assessment and Diagnosis in Clinical Psychology

Assessment A systematic process of gathering information to understand a client's psychological functioning, including history, symptom presentation, and contextual factors. Related terms: evaluation, intake, formulation Practical application involves conducting clinical interviews, administering standardized tests, and observing behavior. Challenges include cultural bias, client cooperation, and time constraints.

Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) A trauma-related condition occurring within days to weeks after exposure, characterized by intrusive memories, dissociation, and heightened arousal. Related terms: PTSD, trauma, stress response Example: a survivor of a severe motor-vehicle accident presenting with flashbacks and avoidance behaviors. Clinicians must differentiate ASD from normal stress reactions and rule out pre-existing disorders.

Actuarial Assessment Use of statistical algorithms and normative data to predict outcomes such as risk of violence or treatment response. Related terms: risk assessment, predictive modeling, base rates Example: applying the Violence Risk Appraisal Guide (VRAG) to estimate recidivism risk. Limitations involve over-reliance on numbers and potential neglect of individual nuance.

Adaptive Functioning The ability to meet daily life demands across domains such as self-care, work, and social relationships. Related terms: psychosocial functioning, daily living skills, competence Measured via instruments like the WHO Disability Assessment Schedule. Challenges arise when distinguishing functional impairment due to mental illness versus environmental barriers.

Age-Appropriate Norms Standardized reference values that correspond to specific developmental stages, ensuring test scores reflect expected performance for a client's chronological age. Related terms: standardization, scaling, percentile ranks Example: using the Children's Depression Inventory for a 10-year-old rather than an adult version. Inaccurate norms can lead to misdiagnosis.

Alzheimer's Disease Screening Brief cognitive tools designed to detect early memory deficits associated with neurodegenerative processes. Related terms: dementia assessment, MMSE, MoCA Practical use includes administering the Mini-Cog in primary-care settings. Pitfalls involve false positives in low-education populations and cultural insensitivity.

Altruistic Bias The tendency of clinicians to overestimate a client's willingness to engage in treatment due to perceived goodwill. Related terms: therapist optimism, therapeutic alliance, expectancy effects Recognizing this bias helps maintain realistic treatment planning and prevents premature termination of services.

American Psychiatric Association (APA) Diagnostic Criteria The official symptom lists and severity thresholds outlined in the DSM-5 used for classification of mental disorders. Related terms: DSM-5, nosology, categorical diagnosis Example: meeting five of nine criteria for major depressive disorder within a two-week period. Critics argue that strict criteria may overlook subthreshold presentations.

Anamnesis Comprehensive retrospective account of a client's medical, psychiatric, familial, and psychosocial history. Related terms: case history, background interview, collateral information Effective anamnesis guides formulation and informs differential diagnosis. Barriers include client memory gaps and reluctance to disclose sensitive information.

Anchoring Bias The cognitive error of relying heavily on the first piece of information obtained (often the presenting complaint) when forming diagnostic hypotheses. Related terms: heuristic, premature closure, confirmation bias Mitigation strategies involve generating alternative diagnoses and revisiting data throughout the assessment.

Application of the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-5 (SCID-5) A semi-structured interview that operationalizes DSM-5 criteria, enhancing reliability across clinicians. Related terms: diagnostic interview, reliability, inter-rater agreement Example: using SCID-5 to differentiate bipolar I from major depressive disorder. Time consumption and need for training are notable challenges.

Assessment of Insight Evaluation of a client's awareness of having a mental health problem, its causes, and need for treatment. Related terms: metacognition, self-awareness, denial Measured via the Insight and Treatment Attitudes Questionnaire. Low insight predicts poor adherence, necessitating motivational interviewing techniques.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Rating Scales Instruments such as the Conners' Adult ADHD Rating Scales that quantify symptom frequency across settings. Related terms: executive dysfunction, impulsivity, neurodevelopmental disorder Example: scoring above the clinical cutoff on both inattention and hyperactivity subscales. Raters must consider comorbid conditions that may inflate scores.

Behavioral Observation Direct monitoring of client actions, affect, and interaction patterns in naturalistic or controlled settings. Related terms: non-verbal cues, ethology, systematic observation Used during intake to corroborate self-report data, for instance noting avoidance of eye contact in social anxiety. Observer bias and situational variability limit generalizability.

Biopsychosocial Model Integrated framework that considers biological, psychological, and social contributors to mental health problems. Related terms: holistic assessment, ecological perspective, multi-modal treatment Guides the formulation of a comprehensive case conceptualization. Over-emphasis on one domain can lead to incomplete interventions.

Brain Imaging in Diagnosis Utilization of structural (MRI, CT) and functional (fMRI, PET) techniques to identify neuroanatomical correlates of psychiatric conditions. Related terms: neuroimaging biomarkers, neurobiology, radiology Example: detecting reduced hippocampal volume in chronic depression. High cost, limited specificity, and ethical concerns about incidental findings pose challenges.

Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) A 53-item self-report questionnaire assessing psychological distress across nine symptom dimensions. Related terms: psychopathology screening, dimensional assessment, psychometrics Clinicians use global severity index scores to monitor treatment progress. Cultural translation issues may affect validity in Hong Kong populations.

Case Formulation An explanatory synthesis linking assessment findings to a coherent narrative of causation, maintenance, and prognostic factors. Related terms: conceptualization, hypothesis generation, treatment planning Example: integrating childhood trauma, maladaptive coping, and current interpersonal stressors to explain depressive episodes. Requires iterative revision as new data emerge.

Clinical Decision-Making Models Structured approaches such as the hypothetico-deductive method that guide clinicians from data collection to diagnosis and intervention selection. Related terms: diagnostic reasoning, algorithmic pathways, evidence-based practice Models help reduce errors but may be constrained by limited evidence for certain cultural groups.

Clinical Interview The foundational dialogue in which the clinician elicits presenting problems, history, and contextual information. Related terms: rapport building, open-ended questioning, therapeutic alliance A well-conducted interview balances empathy with systematic data gathering. Time pressure and language barriers can impede depth.

Clinician-Rated Scales Instruments completed by professionals to assess symptom severity, functional impairment, or risk (e.g., Hamilton Depression Rating Scale). Related terms: observer-based measures, inter-rater reliability, rating bias Example: assigning a score of 24 on the HAM-D indicating moderate depression. Potential for subjective inflation necessitates training and calibration.

Collateral Information Data obtained from family members, teachers, or medical records to supplement self-report. Related terms: third-party report, informant data, verification In child assessments, teacher reports on classroom behavior provide ecological validity. Confidentiality constraints and informant bias must be managed ethically.

Comorbidity The co-occurrence of two or more psychiatric disorders within the same individual. Related terms: dual diagnosis, overlapping symptoms, diagnostic complexity Example: major depressive disorder concurrent with generalized anxiety disorder. Comorbidity complicates treatment sequencing and may require integrated protocols.

Construct Validity The degree to which a test measures the theoretical trait it purports to assess, such as anxiety or impulsivity. Related terms: validity, factor analysis, convergent validity Validation studies in Hong Kong have examined whether Western anxiety scales capture culturally specific somatic expressions. Weak construct validity undermines diagnostic confidence.

Cultural Formulation Interview (CFI) A DSM-5 supplement that explores cultural identity, explanatory models, and treatment preferences. Related terms: cultural competence, ethnopsychiatry, cross-cultural assessment Using the CFI, clinicians may discover that a client attributes depressive symptoms to “yin-yang imbalance,” guiding culturally congruent interventions. Requires linguistic proficiency and cultural humility.

Diagnostic Overshadowing The phenomenon where a primary diagnosis (often a physical illness) leads clinicians to overlook co-existing mental health conditions. Related terms: misdiagnosis, underrecognition, stigma Example: attributing agitation in a patient with Parkinson’s disease solely to medication side effects, missing underlying depression. Training in comprehensive assessment mitigates this bias.

Diagnostic Reliability The consistency of diagnostic decisions across different clinicians or over time. Related terms: inter-rater agreement, kappa statistic, standardization Structured interviews like the SCID-5 improve reliability, yet cultural nuances can still produce divergent judgments. Ongoing supervision and calibration exercises are essential.

Diagnostic Sensitivity The ability of an assessment tool to correctly identify individuals who truly have a disorder (true positives). Related terms: false negative, detection rate, screening efficiency High sensitivity is crucial for early-stage psychosis screening to prevent missed cases. However, overly sensitive instruments may generate excessive false positives, burdening services.

Diagnostic Specificity The capacity of a measure to correctly exclude individuals without the disorder (true negatives). Related terms: false positive, discrimination, criterion validity A tool with high specificity, such as a well-validated substance-use checklist, reduces unnecessary labeling. Balancing sensitivity and specificity remains a central psychometric challenge.

Diagnostic Threshold The cut-off score or symptom count required to assign a categorical diagnosis. Related terms: cutoff point, criteria, severity grade For major depressive disorder, DSM-5 mandates five or more symptoms persisting for at least two weeks. Thresholds may be adjusted in research settings to explore subthreshold phenomena.

Diagnostic Interview for Borderline Features (DIB) A semi-structured interview targeting DSM-5 criteria for borderline personality disorder. Related terms: personality assessment, trait-based interview, reliability Clinicians use the DIB to differentiate borderline pathology from emotion-dysregulation secondary to mood disorders. Lengthy administration time can limit feasibility in busy clinics.

Diagnostic Validity The extent to which a diagnosis corresponds to an underlying disease process, biological marker, or functional outcome. Related terms: construct validity, external validity, nosological accuracy Ongoing research seeks biomarkers for schizophrenia to enhance diagnostic validity beyond symptom checklists. Lack of validity raises concerns about over-medicalization.

Differential Diagnosis The systematic process of distinguishing among possible disorders that share overlapping symptoms. Related terms: exclusion criteria, rule-out, diagnostic hierarchy When a client presents with insomnia, clinicians must consider depression, anxiety, substance use, and medical conditions such as hyperthyroidism. Failure to conduct thorough differentials can lead to inappropriate treatment.

Discriminant Function Analysis A statistical technique used to develop diagnostic algorithms that separate groups based on test scores. Related terms: multivariate analysis, classification, predictive modeling Researchers have employed discriminant analysis to differentiate obsessive-compulsive disorder from generalized anxiety disorder using questionnaire data. Requires large sample sizes and careful validation.

Ecological Validity The degree to which assessment findings reflect real-world functioning. Related terms: external validity, generalizability, naturalistic observation Administering a social skills test in a laboratory may have lower ecological validity than observing client interactions in community settings. Enhancing ecological relevance improves treatment relevance.

Evidence-Based Assessment (EBA) The integration of best research evidence, clinical expertise, and client preferences in selecting assessment tools. Related terms: practice guidelines, measurement selection, outcome monitoring EBA encourages clinicians to choose instruments with demonstrated reliability, validity, and cultural suitability for Hong Kong populations. Barriers include limited access to psychometric databases.

Executive Function Testing Cognitive tasks that assess planning, inhibition, working memory, and cognitive flexibility (e.g., Wisconsin Card Sorting Test). Related terms: neuropsychology, frontal lobe function, cognitive control Impairments are common in schizophrenia and ADHD, influencing functional outcomes. Test administration requires trained personnel and may be affected by language proficiency.

Externalizing Disorders A group of conditions characterized by outwardly directed behaviors such as aggression, impulsivity, and rule-breaking (e.g., conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder). Related terms: behavioral problems, dysregulation, antisocial traits Assessment often involves parent and teacher rating scales. Co-occurring internalizing symptoms can complicate diagnostic clarity.

Familial Risk Assessment Evaluation of genetic and environmental factors within a client's family that may predispose to mental illness. Related terms: pedigree analysis, heritability, family history A positive family history of bipolar disorder raises suspicion when a client exhibits mood swings. Accurate risk estimation supports preventive counseling but may be limited by incomplete family information.

Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) Paradigms Task-based neuroimaging protocols designed to map brain activation patterns associated with specific cognitive or emotional processes. Related terms: BOLD signal, neurocircuitry, experimental design fMRI studies of emotion regulation inform diagnostic hypotheses for anxiety disorders. High cost, motion artifacts, and interpretive complexity restrict routine clinical use.

Generalizability The extent to which assessment results obtained from a sample can be applied to broader populations. Related terms: external validity, sample representativeness, transferability A depression scale validated only in Western university students may lack generalizability to older Hong Kong adults. Researchers must report demographic characteristics to aid applicability judgments.

Grandiosity Scale A sub-measure within personality inventories assessing inflated self-importance and entitlement (e.g., Narcissistic Personality Inventory). Related terms: personality pathology, self-enhancement, overconfidence Elevated scores assist in diagnosing narcissistic personality disorder but may overlap with mania symptoms. Cultural conceptions of modesty influence response patterns.

Guidelines for Psychological Testing (Hong Kong Psychological Society) Official standards outlining ethical, technical, and cultural considerations for test administration in Hong Kong. Related terms: professional standards, test adaptation, regulatory compliance Adherence ensures that translated instruments maintain psychometric integrity. Non-compliance risks legal repercussions and compromised client care.

Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ) A self-report measure assessing trauma exposure and symptom severity, often used with refugee populations. Related terms: trauma assessment, cross-cultural instrument, PTSD screening The HTQ has been adapted into Cantonese, allowing clinicians to evaluate post-traumatic

stress among Hong Kong asylum seekers. Translation fidelity and cultural relevance remain ongoing concerns.

Health Anxiety Inventory (HAI) A questionnaire evaluating excessive worry about health and bodily sensations. Related terms: hypochondriasis, somatic symptom disorder, illness anxiety High HAI scores may indicate somatic presentation of underlying anxiety disorders. Differentiating health anxiety from genuine medical conditions requires collaborative medical assessment.

Hierarchical Taxonomy of Psychopathology (HiTOP) A dimensional framework that organizes mental disorders into broader spectra (e.g., internalizing, externalizing) based on empirical factor structures. Related terms: dimensional model, transdiagnostic, phenotypic clustering HiTOP encourages clinicians to consider symptom continua rather than categorical labels, facilitating personalized treatment. Transitioning from DSM-based practice poses systemic challenges.

Homocedasticity Assumption In regression-based diagnostic models, the expectation that residuals have constant variance across predictor values. Related terms: statistical assumptions, model fit, heteroscedasticity Violations can lead to biased parameter estimates, affecting the accuracy of risk calculators for suicide. Diagnostic statisticians must test and correct for heteroscedasticity.

Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) A 14-item self-report instrument designed to detect anxiety and depression in medical settings, minimizing somatic item bias. Related terms: mood screening, somatic confounding, psychometric brevity HADS is frequently employed in Hong Kong oncology units to monitor emotional wellbeing. Cut-off scores may differ across cultures, necessitating local validation.

Impairment Criterion The requirement that symptoms cause clinically significant distress or functional limitation for a diagnosis to be assigned. Related terms: severity threshold, functional impact, diagnostic necessity In DSM-5, mild depressive episodes require at least two weeks of symptoms that impair social or occupational functioning. Overlooking impairment can result in over-diagnosis of subclinical presentations.

Incidental Findings Unexpected abnormalities discovered during neuroimaging or laboratory testing unrelated to the presenting problem. Related terms: ethical disclosure, medical follow-up, unintended information A benign brain cyst identified during an MRI for anxiety assessment must be communicated responsibly. Clinicians must balance duty to inform with potential anxiety induction.

Individualized Assessment Plan (IAP) A tailored roadmap outlining specific assessment tools, timelines, and responsible parties for a client. Related terms: case management, assessment schedule, collaborative planning An IAP for a teenager with suspected autism may combine ADOS-2 observation, parent interviews, and school reports. Poorly coordinated plans can lead to duplicated efforts and client fatigue.

International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) Diagnostic Criteria The World Health Organization's globally recognized taxonomy of diseases, including mental disorders, offering an alternative to DSM-5. Related terms: ICD coding, global health standards, cross-national comparability ICD-11 emphasizes dimensional qualifiers, such as severity specifiers for depression, enhancing cross-cultural applicability. Transitioning between ICD and DSM systems requires careful mapping.

Item Response Theory (IRT) A psychometric approach modeling the probability of a specific response based on underlying trait level and item characteristics. Related terms: latent trait, difficulty parameter, discrimination index IRT analyses have refined the Beck Depression Inventory, allowing computer-adaptive testing that reduces respondent burden. Complex modeling demands specialized software and expertise.

Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) Standards for Assessment Regulatory benchmarks governing documentation, timeliness, and quality of psychological evaluation in accredited facilities. Related terms: compliance, quality assurance, accreditation Meeting JCAHO standards ensures that assessment records are complete, legible, and securely stored. Non-compliance may jeopardize institutional accreditation.

Key Clinical Features (KCF) Distinctive signs and symptoms that most strongly indicate a particular disorder, aiding rapid identification. Related terms: hallmark symptoms, diagnostic pointers, signature presentation For obsessive-compulsive disorder, intrusive thoughts coupled with compulsive washing are KCFs. Reliance on KCFs alone can miss atypical presentations.

Knowledge Translation in Assessment The process of applying research findings on assessment tools to everyday clinical practice. Related terms: implementation science, evidence uptake, practice guidelines Workshops that teach clinicians how to interpret the PHQ-9 scores exemplify knowledge translation. Barriers include limited time, resources, and resistance to change.

Latent Variable Modeling Statistical techniques (e.g., confirmatory factor analysis) that infer unobserved constructs such as anxiety from observed indicators. Related terms: structural equation modeling, factor structure, construct inference Latent variable models support the validity of new scales measuring cultural syndromes in Hong Kong. Requires large sample sizes and sophisticated statistical software.

Levy's Theory of Personality Disorder Development A conceptualization emphasizing the interaction of early maladaptive schemas, coping styles, and environmental triggers in the emergence of personality pathology. Related terms: schema therapy, developmental psychopathology, longitudinal risk Assessment guided by Levy's theory includes evaluating childhood trauma, schema activation, and current interpersonal patterns. Integrating this perspective can enrich case formulation but may increase assessment length.

Life Events Checklist (LEC) A self-report inventory cataloging exposure to potentially traumatic events across the lifespan. Related terms: trauma exposure, event frequency, stressor inventory The LEC assists clinicians in establishing whether criteria for PTSD are met. Cultural differences in event interpretation necessitate careful contextual probing.

Linear Mixed-Effects Models Advanced statistical techniques that account for both fixed and random effects, useful in longitudinal assessment data. Related terms: repeated measures, hierarchical modeling, random intercept Researchers employ mixed-effects models to track symptom trajectories across therapy sessions, adjusting for individual variability. Complexity may limit use by clinicians unfamiliar with statistical software.

Likelihood Ratio (LR) A metric indicating how much a test result changes the odds of having a disorder, calculated as sensitivity/(1-specificity). Related terms: diagnostic odds, predictive value, test performance An

LR > 10 for a PTSD screening tool signifies strong evidence for the disorder. Interpreting LRs requires statistical literacy among clinicians.

Logistic Regression in Diagnostic Prediction A modeling approach that estimates the probability of a categorical outcome (e.g., presence of depression) based on predictor variables. Related terms: odds ratio, binary outcome, model fitting Logistic regression models incorporating age, gender, and PHQ-9 scores can predict treatment non-adherence. Overfitting and multicollinearity present methodological challenges.

Longitudinal Assessment Repeated measurement of client variables over time to capture change, stability, or relapse patterns. Related terms: follow-up, temporal dynamics, repeated measures Using the BDI-II at baseline, 6-weeks, and 12-weeks enables evaluation of antidepressant efficacy. Attrition and inconsistent timing can compromise data integrity.

Manic Episode Criteria DSM-5 specifications requiring an abnormally elevated, expansive, or irritable mood lasting at least one week, accompanied by three or more additional symptoms (e.g., decreased need for sleep, pressured speech). Related terms: bipolar disorder, hypomania, mood elevation Accurate identification prevents misdiagnosis of unipolar depression. Overlapping symptoms with ADHD necessitate careful differential analysis.

Measurement Invariance The property that an assessment instrument operates equivalently across different groups (e.g., gender, culture). Related terms: cross-cultural equivalence, metric invariance, configural invariance Demonstrating invariance of the GAD-7 across Cantonese-speaking and English-speaking clients validates its comparative use. Lack of invariance undermines cross-group comparisons.

Mini-International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI) A brief structured diagnostic interview covering major DSM-5 disorders, designed for clinical and research settings. Related terms: brief assessment, diagnostic efficiency, structured interview The MINI can be completed in 15-20 minutes, facilitating rapid screening in emergency departments. Limited depth may miss nuanced symptom presentations.

Multimodal Assessment Integration of data from diverse sources such as self-report, performance tests, physiological measures, and collateral reports. Related terms: triangulation, comprehensive evaluation, data synthesis For anxiety disorders, combining the STAI, heart-rate variability, and therapist observation yields a richer picture. Coordination challenges arise in data management and interpretation.

Neurodevelopmental Disorder Screening Early identification tools targeting conditions like autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, and learning disabilities. Related terms: early detection, developmental milestones, screening batteries The Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT) is employed in Hong Kong preschools to flag potential autism. False-positive rates demand careful follow-up assessments.

Neuropsychological Battery A collection of standardized tests evaluating domains such as memory, attention, language, and executive function. Related terms: cognitive profiling, test battery, assessment protocol The Hong Kong Neuropsychological Test Battery includes culturally adapted versions of the Rey Auditory Verbal Learning Test. Administration time and examiner expertise are limiting factors.

Non-verbal Assessment Tools Instruments that rely on visual, auditory, or motor responses rather than

language, useful for clients with limited verbal ability. Related terms: pictorial scales, performance tasks, language-independent The Picture Vocabulary Test assesses receptive language without requiring reading. Cultural relevance must be ensured to avoid misinterpretation.

Nomothetic Approach A research orientation seeking general laws applicable to groups, often informing standardized assessment norms. Related terms: generalization, population-based, universal principles
Nomothetic findings underpin the creation of normative tables for intelligence tests. Critics argue that such approaches may overlook individual variability.

Objectivity in Assessment The degree to which measurement is free from personal bias, often achieved through standardized procedures and scoring. Related terms: inter-rater reliability, blind administration, scoring manuals Using computer-scored reaction-time tasks enhances objectivity. Nevertheless, interpretation of results remains a subjective step.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) **Yale-Brown Obsession-Compulsion Scale (Y-BOCS)** A clinician-rated instrument quantifying severity of obsessions and compulsions. Related terms: severity rating, symptom checklist, treatment monitoring Y-BOCS scores guide treatment intensity decisions; scores above 24 suggest severe OCD requiring intensive ERP. Training is required to maintain reliable administration.

Outcome Measures Tools used to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, often administered pre- and post-treatment. Related terms: treatment efficacy, change scores, clinical significance The WHO Quality of Life-BREF captures functional improvement across physical, psychological, social, and environmental domains. Selecting appropriate outcome measures aligns with therapeutic goals.

Parasuicidal Behavior Assessment Evaluation of self-harm actions that do not intend death, such as cutting or burning. Related terms: non-suicidal self-injury, self-damage, risk assessment The Self-Injurious Thoughts and Behaviors Interview (SITBI) distinguishes between suicidal intent and impulsive self-harm. Accurate assessment informs safety planning and crisis intervention.

Patient-Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) Self-administered questionnaires capturing the patient's perspective on symptoms, functioning, and wellbeing. Related terms: self-report, health status, quality of life PROMs like the SF-12 are increasingly integrated into electronic health records for routine monitoring. Response bias and literacy issues require consideration.

Person-Centered Assessment An approach that prioritizes the client's own goals, values, and narrative in the evaluation process. Related terms: client-led, empowerment, collaborative formulation In practice, clinicians may ask "What outcomes matter most to you?" before selecting assessment tools. Balancing client preferences with psychometric rigor can be challenging.

Personality Disorder Screening Instruments Brief questionnaires designed to flag potential personality pathology for further evaluation (e.g., Personality Diagnostic Questionnaire-4). Related terms: screening, trait assessment, dimensional scoring High scores on borderline and antisocial subscales prompt comprehensive interview. Over-reliance on screening may lead to labeling without thorough assessment.

Pharmacological Assessment History Documentation of past and current medication use, dosage,

side-effects, and adherence patterns. Related terms: medication chart, drug history, treatment compliance Understanding antidepressant trials aids in diagnosing treatment-resistant depression. Incomplete histories can obscure iatrogenic symptom contributions.

Phenomenological Interview A qualitative technique exploring the lived experience of symptoms from the client's perspective. Related terms: narrative inquiry, subjective experience, idiographic data Phenomenological interviews reveal cultural idioms of distress, such as "heat in the chest" describing anxiety. Time-intensive nature limits routine use in high-throughput settings.

Psychometric Properties Characteristics that describe an instrument's reliability, validity, sensitivity, and specificity. Related terms: test quality, measurement theory, scale evaluation A scale with high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.90$) but low test-retest reliability may be unsuitable for longitudinal monitoring. Continuous re-evaluation ensures tools remain fit for purpose.

Psychiatric Rating Scales Standardized instruments that quantify symptom severity, often used for monitoring treatment response (e.g., PANSS for schizophrenia). Related terms: symptom inventory, severity index, clinical monitoring Regular PANSS administration allows detection of subtle changes in positive, negative, and general psychopathology. Rater fatigue can affect scoring accuracy.

Psychiatric Nosology The systematic classification of mental disorders, encompassing taxonomic principles, diagnostic categories, and hierarchical organization. Related terms: classification system, diagnostic taxonomy, disease ontology Shifts from categorical (DSM) to dimensional (HiTOP) nosology reflect evolving scientific understanding. Transition requires extensive clinician re-education.

Psychiatric Screening Tools Brief questionnaires intended to quickly identify probable cases for further diagnostic work-up (e.g., AUDIT for alcohol use). Related terms: brief screener, early detection, triage instrument In primary care, the AUDIT-C (three-item version) facilitates rapid risk identification. Sensitivity trade-offs necessitate confirmatory assessment.

Psychiatric Symptom Checklist (PSC) A parent-report measure detecting emotional and behavioral problems in children. Related terms: child screening, developmental psychopathology, early identification Scores above the clinical cutoff signal need for comprehensive evaluation. Cultural adaptation ensures relevance to Hong Kong families.

Psychiatric Structured Interview for DSM-5 (SCID-5-CV) A clinician-administered interview covering major mental disorders, emphasizing clinical validity. Related terms: diagnostic interview, reliability, standardized assessment The SCID-5-CV is the gold standard for research diagnosis but requires extensive training and time (≈ 90 minutes). Use may be limited to specialist settings.

Psychiatric Treatment Planning The process of translating assessment findings into specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals. Related terms: goal setting, intervention mapping, outcome specification For a client with generalized anxiety, a plan may include weekly CBT sessions targeting worry control. Inadequate planning leads to ambiguous progress markers.

Psychiatric Triad of Assessment The three-fold combination of interview, observation, and testing that

provides a comprehensive picture. Related terms: multimodal evaluation, holistic assessment, integrative approach Neglecting any component can result in incomplete diagnosis; for example, omitting behavioral observation may miss non-verbal anxiety cues.

Psychiatric Unit-Based Risk Assessment (PURA) A systematic protocol used in inpatient settings to evaluate risk of self-harm, aggression, and suicide. Related terms: safety assessment, inpatient monitoring, risk stratification PURA incorporates historical, clinical, and contextual factors to assign risk levels. Documentation must be timely and regularly updated.

Psychiatric Validity Types Various forms of validity (content, construct, criterion, face) that collectively determine the accuracy of a diagnostic tool. Related terms: test validation, evidence hierarchy, measurement integrity Content validity ensures items reflect the disorder's domain; criterion validity compares test scores to a gold-standard diagnosis. Comprehensive validation enhances clinical confidence.

Psychiatric-Specific Functional Imaging (SPECT) Single-Photon Emission Computed Tomography used to visualize cerebral blood flow patterns associated with mental disorders. Related terms: functional neuroimaging, cerebral perfusion, diagnostic adjunct SPECT may reveal hypoperfusion in frontal regions in depression, supporting diagnostic formulation. High radiation exposure and limited specificity restrict routine clinical adoption.

Psychodynamic Formulation An explanation of current symptoms rooted in unconscious processes, early relationships, and defense mechanisms. Related terms: intrapsychic, transference, therapeutic narrative Using psychodynamic formulation, a therapist may link a client's panic attacks to unresolved parental loss. Integration with evidence-based assessment ensures balanced case conceptualization.

Psychometric Calibration The process of adjusting test scores to align with a new normative sample, often required after translation or cultural adaptation. Related terms: norming, standardization, score conversion Calibration of the Beck Anxiety Inventory for Cantonese speakers involved re-scoring a large community sample. Inadequate calibration can produce inflated prevalence estimates.

Psychosis Risk Screening Tools designed to identify individuals at ultra-high risk for developing psychotic disorders, such as the Prodromal Questionnaire-16. Related terms: prodrome, early detection, preventive psychiatry Positive screens trigger comprehensive assessments, including structured interviews and neurocognitive testing. False-positive rates necessitate careful follow-up to avoid unnecessary labeling.

Psychosocial Stressor Inventory A checklist that enumerates life events and chronic pressures contributing to mental health problems. Related terms: stress appraisal, life-event scale, contextual factors The inventory may capture job loss, relationship conflict, and caregiving burden, informing treatment focus on stress management. Subjectivity in stress perception requires clinician clarification.

Qualitative Content Analysis A systematic method for interpreting textual data from interviews, case notes, or open-ended questionnaire responses. Related terms: thematic analysis, coding, narrative synthesis In assessment research, content analysis uncovers common idioms of distress among Hong Kong adolescents. Requires rigorous coder training to ensure reliability.

Reliability Coefficient A statistical index (e.g., Cronbach's α) indicating the consistency of scores across items or administrations. Related terms: internal consistency, test-retest reliability, split-half reliability A coefficient of 0.85 for a depression scale suggests acceptable reliability. Over-reliance on a single reliability metric may overlook other measurement issues.

Risk Assessment Matrix A visual tool that plots likelihood of an adverse event against its potential impact, aiding prioritization of safety concerns. Related terms: risk stratification, hazard analysis, decision matrix In suicide risk assessment, a high-likelihood, high-impact scenario prompts immediate intervention. Matrices may oversimplify complex clinical realities.

Screening vs. Diagnostic Assessment The distinction between brief tools intended to flag possible cases (screening) and comprehensive evaluations required for formal diagnosis (diagnostic). Related terms: brief screener, full assessment, tiered evaluation A positive PHQ-9 screen warrants a full clinical interview to confirm major depressive disorder. Misuse of screening tools as diagnostic substitutes can lead to misclassification.

Self-Report Bias Systematic errors arising from respondents' tendency to over- or under-report symptoms due to social desirability, lack of insight, or malingering. Related terms: response distortion, impression management, validity scales Inclusion of infrequency items helps detect exaggerated reporting. Clinicians