**Outline and evaluate explanations of conformity**

One reason why people conform is because of the desire to be right. This is known as informational social influence (1 mark). This is more likely to occur in ambiguous situations, in other words, when the correct answer or way to behave is unclear, and most likely to result in internalisation (1 mark). For example, if a student is asked the answer to a difficult question, they are likely to look to others around them for guidance as to what the right answer is (1 mark). Another reason why people conform is because of the desire to be liked. This is known as normative social influence and is most likely to result in compliance (1 mark). People want to fit in and be accepted by those around them, so are likely to change their behaviour to that of the majority in order for that to happen (1 mark). An example would be somebody wearing the same style of clothing as their friends (1 mark)

**P** Sherif’s study using the autokinetic effect gives support for the existence of informational social influence. **E** Sherif found that when participants were asked to judge how far a spot of light had moved in a dark room, when answering individually, estimates were relatively stable, but there was considerable variation between participants (between 2 and 12 inches – 5cm and 30 cm). **E** However, when they were put into groups of three their judgements converged towards a group norm. Sherif suggests this is because the task is difficult and therefore the group members are more likely to look to others to guide them to the right answer, **L** therefore supporting the view that informational influence leads to conformity

**P** Asch’s study gives support for the existence of normative social influence. **E** He found that when participants were asked to give an answer to an easy task, (judging which out of three lines was the same as the sample line), but the confederates, who answered first, all gave the same wrong answer, there was a 32% general conformity rate across critical trials. **E** As the task was easy, this suggests that participants conformed in order to fit in with the group. **L** This is evidence to support normative social influence as an explanation for conformity

**P** The research in this area has useful applications. **E** For example, members of a jury may feel pressured to conform through normative influence, which could lead to a miscarriage of justice if a minority feel pressured to agree with a majority verdict. **E** This knowledge can be used by the courts to make jurors aware of the importance of being able to cast their vote privately, and not say it publicly, which should reduce the pressure each jury member feels to conform. **L** This should result in a fairer verdict, one which truly reflects the opinions of the jury members, showing that psychological research can have real benefits in society.