Describe two or more definitions of abnormality

One definition of abnormality is ‘deviation from social norms’ which refers to behaviour that is considered anti-social or undesirable by the majority of social members. In any society there are social standards of acceptable behaviour that are set by the social group, and obeyed by those socialised into that group. This could be things such as politeness or moral issues like sexual behaviour. However, a limitation of this definition is susceptible to abuse as the concept of social normal varies as time changes. Issues such as homosexuality are acceptable today but may not have been acceptable 50 years ago therefore was conclude that social norms is based on social morals and attitudes. Another limitation, is that deviance is related to context and degree as what a person wearing on a beach wearing next to nothing is regarded as normal, whereas the same outfit elsewhere would be regarded as abnormal therefore social deviance on its own cannot offer a complete definition because it is related to both context and degree.

Another definition is ‘failure to function adequately’ which is when an individual is unable to cope as their disorder begins to interfere with their daily routine such as going to work, eat it meals, washing clothes etc. However, there is the issue of who judges as sometimes the patient determines themselves that their behaviour is undesirable and sometimes the individual is unaware that they are not coping but others around them judge that their behaviour is abnormal. Another limitation is whether the disorder is adaptive or maladaptive as some mental disorders such as depression or a eating disorder may lead to extra attention for the individual.