



## Higher National Unit specification: general information

**Unit title:** Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics

**Unit code:** FK8E 34

**Superclass:** PK

**Publication date:** May 2013

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 03

### Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to enable candidates to analyse theory related to specific topics in psychology. Candidates will also conduct research into a psychological topic. This Unit is intended for those candidates who wish to develop their knowledge and understanding of psychological topics and for those who wish to use it as a basis for further study.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

- 1 Describe the theory and research evidence relating to three psychological topics.
- 2 Conduct research into a psychological topic.

### Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Candidates should possess good communication skills. Other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the unit would be beneficial, such as, research skills.

The previous study of Psychology through Units and National Qualifications at SCQF levels 5 or 6, or other similar qualifications, is desirable but not essential. Candidates would benefit from achievement of HN Unit *Psychology A: History and Development of Psychology*.

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

## General information (cont)

### Credit points and level

2 Higher National Unit credits at SCQF level 7: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7\*)

*\*SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

### Core Skills

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6, *Working with Others* at SCQF level 6, *Numeracy* at SCQF level 5, *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5 and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

### Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

### Assessment

This Unit will be assessed using two instruments of assessments, as follows:

- 1 Outcome 1 will be assessed by one closed book instrument of assessment covering all evidence requirements for **one** topic.
- 2 Outcome 2 will be assessed by one open-book assessment covering all evidence requirements for the Outcome.

An exemplar instrument of assessment and marking guidelines has been produced to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 7

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

**Unit title:** Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

### Outcome 1

Describe the theory and research evidence relating to **three** psychological topics

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ three psychological topics
- ◆ relevant conflicting theories/opinions/arguments within each topic
- ◆ research evidence appropriate to each psychological topic

Note: Topics chosen should come from **topics listed in support notes**

#### Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can give:

- ◆ a definition of the psychological topic
- ◆ an analysis of conflicting theories/opinions/arguments relevant to the topic
- ◆ a description of research evidence relevant to the topic

The knowledge and skills for Outcome 1 will be sampled in the assessment. Candidates will only be assessed on **ONE** psychological topic chosen from the topics listed in the 'Guidance on content and context' section in the Support Notes.

This part of the Unit will be assessed by a closed book assessment, which means candidates should be assessed without the use of notes, textbooks, VLE or other materials in a supervised setting.

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards cont)

**Unit title:** Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics

### Assessment Guidelines

There is a wide variety of methods of assessment that would allow candidates to meet the evidence requirements. The following are suggestions and there may be other methods that would be suitable. Centres are reminded that Prior Verification would help to ensure that the national standard is being met.

This assessment could take the form of a set of unseen structured questions requiring a response of approximately 1000 words across all questions *or* an essay, also requiring approximately 1000 words *or* an oral response to set questions requiring the candidate to respond in sustained detail for approximately 8 minutes *or* an oral presentation of approximately 8 minutes duration *or* another method decided by the Centre. As this is a closed book assessment, it would not be appropriate for candidates to use visual aids (such as Powerpoint presentations or posters) in the oral presentation, rather it would be sustained presentation without aid of notes. The topic used for assessment should be changed each year for sampling purposes. Broad guidance on the area to be assessed will be given one week prior to the assessment date. It is likely that if it is a written assessment it will take between 90 minutes and two hours to complete.

### Outcome 2

Conduct research into a psychological topic

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ psychological evidence/theory relevant to the topic being researched
- ◆ accurate hypotheses and aims
- ◆ methodology appropriate to the aims of the investigation
- ◆ ethical implications identified and dealt with appropriately
- ◆ study appropriately located in relevant psychological theory and previous research
- ◆ treatment and presentation of findings using appropriate descriptive statistics
- ◆ criticisms of methodology given
- ◆ conclusions drawn relating to hypotheses

#### Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ Plan and carry out research
- ◆ Collate and analyse results
- ◆ Draw conclusions
- ◆ Complete a report of the research to a prescribed format

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics

For Outcome 2, the assessment will be open-book and should be completed according to a prescribed format set in advance. The format chosen will provide evidence of all items listed under the knowledge and skills section. A feedback session with the candidate should ensure authenticity of the candidate's work. In response to the task set, the candidate must convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent form.

As the assessment is open-book candidates will be allowed access to materials (e.g. text books, notes, VLE).

Regardless of the assessment method chosen, the candidate must submit a bibliography presented in a standard referencing format, such as Harvard or APA.

### Assessment Guidelines

The research task should be handed out to be completed at a date specified by the Centre. It should be completed according to a prescribed format (for example that used by BPS) and could be submitted as a written report *or* an oral presentation. It is expected that a written response will be approximately 2,000 words and an oral presentation would be approximately 15 minutes in duration. This should cover all parts of the knowledge and skills listed under Outcome 2.

Research should be conducted with tutor support and supervision to ensure ethical practice. Tutors should make candidates aware of the importance of the judicious selection of appropriate academic sources. The topic chosen as the focus for Outcome 2 should be one of those taught in Outcome 1 but should not be the same one chosen for assessment of Outcome 1.

Candidates may work together on a research project but should be assessed individually ensuring that each candidate meets all knowledge and skills required.

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes

**Unit title:** Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 80 hours.

### Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This is one of a suite of Units that covers Psychology within HNC/D Social Sciences Group Awards. This Unit leads on from *Psychology A: History and Development of Psychology* and prepares candidates for *Psychology C: Analysis and Evaluation of Psychological Topics*. The Unit can be taught as a free-standing Unit or as part of the HNC/D Social Sciences Group Awards.

In order to allow as much flexibility as possible a list of topics from which to choose is provided. The intention here is to allow choices which reflect individual interests and specialisms and which also satisfy the requirements of higher education institutions with which articulation is possible. It is not considered desirable to restrict topics to year one or year two and Centres can choose whichever topics are considered attractive in increasing understanding of Psychology and articulation.

### Selection of Topics

There are 5 main general areas identified within this Unit: Cognitive Processes, Individual Differences, Development Processes, Social Behaviour and Biological Basis of Behaviour. Centres should choose 3 of these and then choose one topic within each of the 3 general areas chosen. Centres should not select 2 within the same area (eg memory and perception are both in Cognitive Processes, therefore both cannot be chosen).

#### Biological Basis of Behaviour

Addiction  
Sleep and Dreaming  
Motivation  
Consciousness and Awareness  
Reproductive Behaviour  
Emotion

#### Social Behaviour

Interpersonal Perception  
Interpersonal Attraction  
Group Processes  
Attitudes and Prejudice  
Pro-Social Behaviour  
Anti-Social Behaviour  
Power and Leadership

#### Cognitive Processes

Memory  
Perception  
Attention  
Learning  
Language/Thinking

#### Development Processes

Attachment and Separation  
Cognitive and Moral Development  
Gender Development  
Lifespan Development  
Forensic Psychology

#### Individual Differences

Personality  
Intelligence  
Psychopathology

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics

### Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

When introducing topics in Outcome 1, candidates should be made aware of the general topic area the specific topic belongs to. Research evidence that supports as well as that which refutes a theory should be introduced. This will help to strengthen the candidate's ability to question theories rather than be too accepting. It is useful to mention debates and issues in context, e.g. Nature/Nurture in the context of a topic rather than as a sterile debate. Debates are not assessed in this Unit, but can contribute to the understanding of a topic, especially in terms of conflicting opinions and arguments.

Some topics listed have two parts that although linked in delivery could be assessed separately, for example, 'attitudes and prejudice'. The link of both dealing with social behaviour should be emphasised. However, it is possible to design an assessment instrument that focuses on part of the topic e.g. just 'prejudice'. The re-assessment could pick up on the other part or focus again on the same part. This applies to other topics, such as 'cognitive and moral development', 'language/thinking' or 'attitudes and prejudice'.

In Outcome 2 the candidate should be introduced to the research skills required to be successful in implementing research. This should include a broad overview of time management and planning. Lecturers may have to teach specific calculations (descriptive statistics) unless the candidate has the Core Skill of Numeracy or previous experience of dealing with similar calculations, or at least candidates should be provided with suitable flexible learning materials for these procedures. These calculations should be taught as part of an ongoing exploration of how to carry out and interpret research. Ethical issues should be explored in the context of research evidence. The topic chosen as the basis for the research should come from those taught in Outcome 1, but should not be the same as the one chosen for assessment in Outcome 1.

Tutors should make candidates aware of the importance of the judicious selection of appropriate academic sources in researching the topics. They should be encouraged to choose academic sources rather than generic search engines, to enable them to be more confident of information and to be more equipped to progress to SCQF level 8 Units or further study.

Centres should structure the teaching programme to allow time for development of Core Skills and other transferable skills and for assessment practice within the notional hours suggested.

Centres should design an appropriate assessment instrument based on a method that is suitable in allowing candidates to meet the evidence requirements. This can be written or oral (depending on the needs of the candidates and the organisational aspects for the Centre in choosing particular methods). If an oral method is chosen, it is recommended that Centres record this (either by DVD or digital recorder etc.) or provide assessor notes on the presentation for External Verification purposes. Oral presentations must be done individually as each candidate has to show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements, so a group presentation would not be suitable.

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics

If the Centre is using a Blog or creation of a website as the way of gathering evidence, this should not be in the public domain. Rather it should be on an Intranet or private area of a VLE to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism. Authentication of the candidate's work is essential. It would be helpful to collect notes or PPT presentation materials from the candidate as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 7 in the presentation.

A Centre can choose to use a mixture of methods across a cohort, as it may be more suitable for some candidates to give a written response and for others to use an oral method.

Centres should make sure they can authenticate a candidate's work for Outcome 2 (open-book). This may be done by questioning a candidate about their work, by seeing drafts of work under construction, by having partial write-up in presence of assessor or by using an anti-plagiarism tool, such as Turnitin or SafeAssign, which checks Internet sites.

Remediation for Outcome 1 could be done by oral clarification for minor omissions or to clarify minor detail. If additional information is required this can be added, as long as it is in total approximately 100 words or less per outcome. If these conditions cannot be met, then the candidate should be reassessed using a different set of questions for Outcome 1.

Remediation for Outcome 2 should be done by a review of the original work. Candidates should be asked to hand in a complete piece of work, with amendments incorporated in the appropriate context, rather than a large add-on at the end, or asked to fully rewrite their work to a prescribed format if it did not meet requirements. Oral clarification could be used for minor omissions or to clarify minor detail. If it is thought appropriate that a candidate tackle a different topic or question, then that new submission would count as a reassessment.

In oral work, candidates can be questioned by the assessor at the end of their presentation or explanation, where minor omissions occur, or where clarity is required. This would help to reduce the need for reassessment. However, where more work is required to meet the evidence requirements (eg where the quality of evidence is poor in a presentation) another presentation of the same duration, on the same topic or question as the original would be required. Only where a different topic or question is attempted would this be classed as reassessment.

### Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute towards the development of the Core Skills of *Communication, Information and Communication Technology, Numeracy, Working with Others* and *Problem Solving*. It can also support the development of other transferable skills, such as, essay writing, referencing, citation and bibliography skills and thinking, analytical and critical skills.



## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics

It is possible to develop **Communication at SCQF level 6** if the assessment takes the form of an essay/report or oral presentation. **For written communication at SCQF level 6 the skill is: produce well structured written communication on complex topics.** To develop this skill candidates can be encouraged in both formative and summative assessment to present all essential ideas/information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order; use a structure that is organised and use paragraphing to make distinctions between facts, opinions, arguments and conclusion, use a format, layout, and word choice which are appropriate to the content and context, and use spelling, punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structures which are consistently accurate. It is part of the evidence requirements for Outcome 2 to ensure candidates convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way. This can be stressed in delivery and in formative work, as well as being considered in summative assessment.

The candidates could be tasked with producing a written communication which presents, analyses, and evaluates a substantial body of information. These skills can be developed through formative activities, such as shorter essays on each topic or on a major theorist, without being formally assessed for certification of the Core Skill. The topics that Centres can choose are complex so should easily fit with SCQF level 6.

It is important to develop report writing or essay-writing skills for candidates' future progression. In doing this candidates should also be encouraged to use an appropriate referencing method, such as Harvard or APA, for any formative or summative essays. Referencing, citation and bibliography skills are best developed using the vehicle of formative essay writing. The Assessment for Outcome 2 could be a written report that would be to a prescribed format but would include the need for referencing and citation skills.

**For oral communication at SCQF level 6 the skill is: produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic.** In both formative and summative assessment the candidate could be encouraged to give a detailed oral presentation on the topic chosen for summative assessment of Outcome 1 or another topic, which could be used as formative work, as these would be sufficiently complex. The specific skills of using an appropriate level of vocabulary, consistent spoken language structures and formality, conveying all essential information, opinions, or ideas with supporting detail accurately and coherently, and with varied emphasis as appropriate and responding to others, taking account of their contributions would be developed in an oral presentation. Although a summative assessment would require individual work and individual presentation, a formative assessment could be constructed that would encourage candidates to work in a small group, with a few people contributing to the presentation. This could be on a particular theory, with associated research, a particular sub-topic or for a whole topic. This may allow a candidate to experience the demands of oral presentation before choosing this as an option for summative assessment of the Unit (if the Centre is able to give that choice).

As it is important that candidates submit a bibliography (or reference section) in a standard format, such as Harvard or APA, for the summative assessment, even oral assessment methods should incorporate an appropriate bibliography.

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics

**For the Core Skill of Information and Communication Technology at SCQF level 5 the skills are: ‘Accessing Information, use ICT independently, effectively, and responsibly to access information within a range of tasks’ and ‘Providing/Creating Information, use ICT independently, effectively, and responsibly to carry out a range of processing tasks’.** This Unit can help to develop such skills by the use of mini formative presentations using PowerPoint or other ICT presentation tool that will also support the development of oral communication. A summative assessment using ICT presentation methods is also possible. Specific areas of accessing information using Internet searches or VLE use and providing and creating information can be developed in such tasks. Creating a Blog or a website for the summative assessment is another way in which this Core Skill can be developed. This could be used where candidates (and their lecturer) have particular skills and interest in ICT.

**For the Core Skill of Numeracy at SCQF level 5 the skills are: ‘Using Number, apply a range of numerical skills in various everyday situations’ and ‘Using Graphical Information, interpret and communicate graphical information in everyday situations’.** The research investigation for Outcome 2 lends itself well to development of Numeracy at SCQF level 5. Candidates can be given sample calculations to work out and data presented in tables and graphs to analyse as formative work. It is possible to develop these skills alongside the work done for the Unit ‘Research and Methodology’, where calculations are part of the knowledge and skills developed. As part of the summative assessment candidates will have to work with statistical data, carry out calculations, present information in graphical form and draw conclusions based on collated data.

**For the Core Skill of Working with Others at SCQF level 6, the skills are ‘Working Co-operatively with Others’, ‘Review Co-operative Contribution’.** Candidates will be involved in complex interactions, work with others co-operatively on an activity and/or activities, particularly the research investigation, which can be done as a group (although the reporting should be done individually to ensure each candidate meets all evidence requirements). It would be appropriate to encourage candidates to reflect on their own contribution to any group activity, whether that is a formative oral presentation on a topic or the research investigation for summative assessment.

**For the Core Skill of Problem Solving at SCQF level 6 the skills are: ‘Critical Thinking’ and ‘Planning and Organising’ and ‘Reviewing and Evaluating’.** This Core Skill can be developed particularly the planning of Outcome 2, which involves planning, organising and carrying out a research task. Tutors should encourage learners to explore appropriate strategies for managing their time and evaluating the considerable amount of data available on the complex topic chosen for the research. Tutors may actively choose to further develop this skill by setting this task as a group activity and arranging joint information feedback sessions. Part of the Outcome 2 assessment task is to review and evaluate the work carried out, with a view to suggesting improvements. This fits well with the development of ‘Reviewing and Evaluating’ skills. Thinking, analytical and critical skills could be developed by posing questions at appropriate points in the delivery, enabling discussion and promoting the need for candidates to take responsibility for learning by encouraging the development of research skills via the Internet or using text books. This would contribute towards the component Critical Thinking where the general skill of analysing a complex situation or issue will be developed. This Core Skill could be developed without formal certification.

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics

### Curriculum for Excellence

The Curriculum for Excellence aspires to place learners at the centre of the curriculum and develop their capacities as Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors. The four capacities will be developed throughout this Unit.

This unit will develop the literacy and communication skills of the learners by way of formative and summative assessments. Independent learning is required throughout this unit, whilst the opportunity is available for group learning through formative tasks and in the summative assessment for Outcome 2. The subject of psychology demands independent thinking, and through reasoned evaluation encourages learners to reach satisfactory conclusions. Further opportunity is offered to develop technological skills by way of researching via the internet, the production of word documents, PowerPoint presentations, blogs and/or the creation of a website. Collectively these skills contribute towards the creation of a **Successful Learner**.

Time management skills should improve during the delivery of this Unit, as should the ability to relate to others through formative tasks. The topics in Psychology B should allow the learner to develop their own thoughts of the world around them, and they will be given the opportunity to express these views within the classroom setting. This should lend to the emergence of a **Confident Individual**, particularly if they gain success in the achievement of the Unit.

Psychology B can also contribute to learners becoming **Responsible Citizens** by allowing the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of why people behave the way they do. Candidates will be encouraged to develop a more positive view of mental health issues, particularly in discussions of certain topics such as Psychopathology, which could play a large part in improving future interactions. Furthermore, informed, ethical views of complex issues can be developed, as can an understanding of different cultures.

Learners can become **Effective Contributors** to society by learning to work together effectively in teams within the class setting. This can be achieved through group-work where they can apply critical thinking within new contexts. In planning group tasks, evaluating data and presenting their findings, learners will also develop problem solving skills. Both oral and written communication skills will also be developed. This can be achieved through written work, individual PowerPoint presentations, and the creation of blogs and websites.

All these skills can be developed within the Unit.

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics

### Open learning

This Unit could be delivered by open or distance learning; however, it would require planning by the centre to ensure sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence.

Arrangements would have to be made to ensure that the assessment for Outcome 1 was conducted closed book and under supervision. For Outcome 2 a written response in the form of an essay or answers to structured questions could be posted or emailed to the assessor or uploaded onto a VLE. An oral presentation could be used that would be recorded on DVD and sent to the assessor, or could be done using video-conferencing or web-link and observed by the assessor.

### Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Clarification of remediation and reassessment statements.	26/10/12
03	Time for closed book assessment extended to two hours.	08/05/13

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## General information for candidates

### Unit title: Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics

This Unit allows you to study three topics in psychology that help us to explain human behaviour. Each topic will come from a different area of psychological study. You will study theory and research related to each topic, covering alternative views, opinions and arguments related to the topics.

This part of the Unit will be assessed by a closed book assessment, which means you will be assessed without the use of notes, textbooks, VLE or other materials in a supervised setting. This could take the form of a set of unseen structured questions requiring a response of approximately 1000 words across all questions *or* an essay, also requiring approximately 1000 words *or* an oral response to set questions requiring you to respond in sustained detail for approximately 8 minutes *or* an oral presentation of approximately 8 minutes duration *or* another method decided by your Centre. Your centre will inform you of the chosen method in good time. You will know the broad area to be assessed one week prior to the assessment date. It is likely that if it is a written assessment it will take between 90 minutes and two hours to complete.

You will then have the opportunity to conduct research into one of the topics studied in the Unit. The research will be conducted partly in structured class time and partly in your own time and will be detailed work. The assessment will be *open-book*. This means that you will be allowed access to materials (e.g. text books, notes, VLE).

The research task will be handed out to be completed at a date specified by your lecturer. It should be completed according to a prescribed format and could be submitted as a written report *or* an oral presentation based on a prescribed format given by your lecturer. It is expected that a written response will be approximately 2,000 words and an oral presentation would be approximately 15 minutes in duration.

As you progress through the Unit material, you will be encouraged to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6, *Working with Others* at SCQF level 6, *Numeracy* at SCQF level 5, *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5 and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6, by the types of activities you will experience.

You will also be given opportunities throughout the Unit to develop as a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.