



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Psychology C: Analysis and Evaluation of Psychological Topics

Unit code: FK8F 35

Superclass: PK

Publication date: October 2012

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 02

Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to enable candidates to analyse and evaluate theory and research relevant to psychological topics. Candidates will also analyse and evaluate the contribution of major issues or debates in psychology. This Unit is intended for those candidates who already have a basis of knowledge and understanding of psychology and wish to develop this further.

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

- 1 Analyse and evaluate the theory and research evidence relating to psychological topics.
- 2 Analyse the contribution of major issues or debates to psychology.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Candidates should possess good communication skills. Other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the Unit would be beneficial.

In addition, candidates would benefit from achievement of HN Unit *Psychology A: History and Development of Psychology* and HN Unit *Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics*.

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

Credit points and level

2 Higher National Unit credits at SCQF level 8: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8*)

**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.*

General information (cont)

Core Skills

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* at SCQF level 6, *Working with Others* at SCQF level 6, and *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5 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

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

An exemplar instrument of assessment and marking guidelines has been produced to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 8

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Psychology C: Analysis and Evaluation of Psychological Topics

Unit code: FK8F 35

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

Analyse and evaluate the theory and research evidence relating to psychological topics

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ **four** psychological topics
- ◆ the role of each topic in psychology
- ◆ relevant conflicting theories/opinions/arguments within each topic
- ◆ research evidence appropriate to each psychological topic

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ analyse the psychological topic
- ◆ explain the role of the topic in psychology
- ◆ evaluate relevant conflicting theories/opinions/arguments within the topic
- ◆ evaluate research evidence appropriate to the psychological 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 C: Analysis and Evaluation of Psychological Topics

Assessment Guidelines

A variety of assessment methods may be used to enable 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 **or** an essay both requiring a response of approximately 1000 words **or** an oral response to set questions requiring the candidate to respond in sustained detail for 8 minutes **or** an oral presentation of 8 minutes duration **or** another method decided by the Centre. As this Outcome is assessed under closed book conditions candidates are not allowed access to notes, textbooks, VLE or any other material. It would also be inappropriate for candidates presenting their evidence orally to use visual aids under these assessment conditions; rather it would be sustained presentation without aid of notes.

Although a minimum of four topics are delivered, only one topic is required for assessment purposes. The topic used for assessment should be changed each year for sampling purposes. It is recommended that Centres advise candidates of the broad area to be assessed one week prior to the assessment. It is likely that if it is a written assessment it will take 90 minutes to complete.

Outcome 2

Analyse the contribution of major issues or debates to psychology

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ the contribution of **two** issues or debates in contemporary psychology
- ◆ the main features of **two** issues or debates

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ analyse the contribution of both issues or debates in contemporary psychology, relating the debates to topics studied in Outcome 1 of this Unit or the Psychology B Unit.
- ◆ describe the main features of both issues or debates.

The assessment will be *open book*. This means that candidates will be allowed access to materials (eg text books, notes, VLE).

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Psychology C: Analysis and Evaluation of Psychological Topics

Assessment Guidelines

The assessment could take the form of an essay **or** set of structured questions both requiring a response of approximately 2000 words **or** an individual oral presentation **or** poster exhibition. The oral presentation or explanation of posters should be approximately 15 minutes in length. Evidence could also be presented as a podcast **or**, individual Blog **or** by the creation of a website with approximately 2000 words **or** any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. It is recommended that oral presentations are recorded in some form for internal and external verification purposes.

It is recommended that the assessment task be distributed to candidates after two topics have been delivered in Outcome 1. This will allow sufficient time for candidates to research the issues and debates relating to the topics. A date should be set for submission of candidate evidence.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Psychology C: Analysis and Evaluation 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 Unit belongs to a suite of Psychology Units within HNC and HND Social Sciences Group Awards. This Unit leads on from *Psychology A: History and Development of Psychology* and *Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics* and prepares candidates for *Psychology D: The Research Process in Psychology*. The Unit can also be delivered as a free-standing Unit or as part of the HND Social Sciences Group Award.

In order to allow as much flexibility as possible a list of topics which may be delivered is provided. The intention is to allow Centres to choose topics 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. Care should be taken to ensure candidates study different topics from those studied in year 1 of HNC/D Social Sciences Group Awards (in the Psychology B Unit).

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Psychology C: Analysis and Evaluation of Psychological Topics

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 4 of these and then choose one topic within each of the 4 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

Cognitive processes

Memory
Perception
Attention
Learning
Language/Thinking

Social Behaviour

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

Development Processes

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

Individual Differences

Personality
Intelligence
Psychopathology

Selection of debates/issues

Choose any two from:

Ethical Issues in Psychological Research
Freewill/determinism
Idiographic/nomothetic Debate

Psychology as a Science?
Reductionist/Holistic Debate
The Nature/Nurture Debate

The choice of debate is partly dependent on which topics are chosen from the topics list above, as some debates fit better with certain topics.

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 and evaluate theories rather than be too accepting.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Psychology C: Analysis and Evaluation of Psychological Topics

For Outcome 2, debates and issues should be taught in context, eg idiographic/nomothetic in the context of a topic, such as personality, rather than as a sterile debate. Candidates should be made aware that debates and issues apply to more than one topic area, so examples from across a few topics in psychology could be given and discussed.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

It is acceptable to cover the debates/issues and only two topics for Outcome 1, prior to giving the open book assessment for Outcome 2, to candidates. The submission date could then be given, whilst Centres continue exposition of the other topics not yet covered. The closed book assessment should generally be given after all four topics have been taught.

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 confident of information and to be equipped to progress to study at SCQF level 9.

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 eg 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'.

Centres may 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.

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 8 in the presentation.

A Centre can 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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Psychology C: Analysis and Evaluation of Psychological Topics

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 Core Skills of *Communication*, *Working with Others* and *Information and Communication Technology*. 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.

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.

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 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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Psychology C: Analysis and Evaluation of Psychological Topics

Referencing, citation and bibliography skills are best developed using the vehicle of formative essay writing. This may have been developed within Psychology B Unit, if that was studied previously. The development can continue in this Unit. The assessment for Outcome 2 could be a written essay that 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 subtopic 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 Centre is able to give that choice).

As it is important that candidates recognise the need to use a bibliography (or reference section) in a standard format, such as Harvard or APA, for citation purposes then even oral assessment methods should consider incorporating an appropriate bibliography to encourage development of this skill.

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. Formative activities could be used to encourage candidates to work co-operatively with others. A group presentation task or information gathering task could be the basis of developing specific skills relevant to this Core Skill. It would be appropriate to encourage candidates to reflect on their own contribution to any group activity, whether that is a formative oral presentation or research for a topic or debate, which may be done as a group activity.

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.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Psychology C: Analysis and Evaluation of Psychological Topics

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.

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. 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 C 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 C 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 or Addiction, 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 C: Analysis and Evaluation 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.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Clarification of remediation and reassessment statements.	23/10/12

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2011, 2012

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged.

Additional copies of this Unit specification can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Please contact the Customer Contact Centre, telephone 0845 279 1000.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Psychology C: Analysis and Evaluation of Psychological Topics

This Unit allows you to study four 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. If you have previously studied Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics then the topics chosen for this Unit will be different to those you studied in Psychology B. Your Centre will let you know which topics have been chosen for study. Within each topic you will develop skills in analysis as you consider different theories and arguments. You will also be introduced to research evidence appropriate to each topic. Another key skill being developed is evaluation, as you will be encouraged to evaluate the various theories, arguments or research put forward.

Outcome 1 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 **or** an essay both requiring a response of approximately 1000 words **or** an oral response to set questions requiring the candidate to respond in sustained detail for 8 minutes **or** an oral presentation of 8 minutes duration **or** another method decided by the Centre. Your centre will discuss the chosen method with you 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 90 minutes to complete.

As you study the four topics you will be introduced to two major debates/issues in psychology. You will be encouraged to relate these debates to topics studied in this Unit and in previous Units you may have studied.

The assessment for Outcome 2 (debates) will be *open book*. This means that you will be allowed access to materials (eg text books, notes, VLE). You will be assessed on both issues/debates studied. The task will be handed out to be completed at a date specified by the Centre. It should be completed according to a prearranged format and could take the form of an essay **or** set of structured questions both requiring a response of approximately 2000 words **or** an individual oral presentation **or** poster exhibition. The oral presentation or explanation of posters should be approximately 15 minutes in length. You may be able to provide the evidence in the form of a podcast **or**, individual Blog **or** by the creation of a website with approximately 2000 words.

As you progress through the Unit material, you will be encouraged to develop Core Skills of *Communication* (at SCQF level 6), *Working with Others* (at SCQF level 6), *Information and Communication Technology* (at SCQF level 5) 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.