

National Qualifications Review

Psychology

Investigation Report Executive summary

This report is the outcome of an investigation into how to implement the agreed actions which were detailed in the Psychology Subject Review Report, published in May 2002.

The main concerns identified in the Review of Psychology were:

- ◆ The current structure has only one mandatory Unit at Intermediate 1 to Higher, and has five optional Units at each of these levels.
- ◆ There is currently an over-emphasis on knowledge and understanding at the expense of skills of evaluation and analysis.
- ◆ The existing mandatory Units at Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher are content-heavy and difficult to deliver in 40 hours.
- ◆ The added value of the Courses is not clear.
- ◆ The volume of assessment needs to be reduced.

The consultation process, carried out between January and March 2003, involved:

- ◆ A questionnaire sent to all presenting centres.
- ◆ A range of interviews with individuals, both within centres and in a number of organisations.
- ◆ Feedback from a meeting of the Subject Advisory Group.

The responses to the consultation process indicated substantial support for a revised Course structure at each of the levels along the lines of one of the models proposed in the questionnaire. This model would meet some of the major concerns outlined above, would enable the other concerns to be addressed at the next stage, and would meet the design rules for National Qualifications.

The following specific recommendations are made in this report:

- ◆ Course structures should be developed with three mandatory Units at Intermediate 2 and Higher.
- ◆ At these levels the Units should be based on the following areas of study:
 - The Psychology of Individual Processes
 - Psychology: Research Methods and Research Skills
 - Psychological Processes in the Social Context
- ◆ The external assessment should consist of a question paper at Intermediate 2. The external assessment at Higher should consist of a Research Investigation Report and a question paper.
- ◆ The external assessment at Intermediate 2 should be increased from 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours to give sufficient time to adequately assess the content of the revised course and to bring it into line with the other social sciences.
- ◆ No change should be made to the Intermediate 1 or Advanced Higher Courses for 2004–05. Instead, the Courses should be monitored in the light of the emerging policy on low uptake and the impact of changes at Intermediate 2 and Higher. A business case should be made for the retention and revision of the Intermediate 1 and Advanced Higher Courses — if this business case can be made, then the Intermediate 1 and Advanced Higher may be revised in line with Intermediate 2 and Higher for 2005–06. Alternatively, the Courses may be withdrawn, leaving free-standing Units.

Note: SQA is currently developing policy and procedures for dealing with Courses with very low uptake. The Advanced Higher in Psychology had a maximum of four candidates in its first two years of implementation (see Appendix 7). It is therefore proposed that no changes should be made to the Advanced Higher for 2004–05. Instead, the Course should be monitored in the light of the emerging policy on low uptake and the impact of changes at Higher. A business case should be made for the retention and revision of the Advanced Higher. If this business case can be made, the Advanced Higher may be revised in line with Higher for 2005–06. Alternatively, the Course may be withdrawn, leaving free-standing Units. There are no progression issues in taking this action as very few candidates progress from Higher to Advanced Higher. It is also proposed that no development work takes place on Intermediate 1 until a business case can be made for its retention and revision.

The full version of the investigation report is available on the appropriate NQ subject page of the Scottish Qualifications Authority website - www.sqa.org.uk

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