

## Psychology



This update contains information relevant to your subject and details of the support available to you.

We also publish updates on the new National Courses in the 'Updates and Announcements' section of the relevant [subject pages](#). I would encourage you to make regular use of our subject pages, where you will find support documents, answers to common questions, and links to other areas of interest. You can also sign up for 'My Alerts', SQA's e-mail update service, that notifies you whenever content you are interested in is added or updated on our website. Visit [www.sqa.org.uk/myalerts](http://www.sqa.org.uk/myalerts) to register.

I hope you find the following update helpful, and please contact me if you have any questions.

**Elaine McFadyen**  
Qualifications Manager

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## The Qualifications Team

Elaine McFadyen  
Qualifications Manager

Erin McCabe  
Qualifications Officer

# Key messages from Diet 2014-15

## Course Reports

We strongly recommend that you read the annual Course Reports for the subject(s) and levels you are teaching. These reports are produced following the annual diet of exams and are published by the end of October. The reports provide informed and valuable comment on the assessment for each component in the Course, and include a summary of:

- candidate performance in the Course assessment
- areas in which candidates performed well
- areas which candidates found demanding

The reports also contain advice on preparing future candidates, and statistical data relating to grade boundaries. Course Reports are available from the relevant [subject pages](#) of our website.

## Verification Key Messages

Key messages from verification in session 2014–15 were published over the summer. They are available from the relevant [subject pages](#), where you can access them from the 'Verification and Course Reports' heading in the 'Assessment Support' section.

# Documents and assessment support materials

It is important that you read the full suite of documents for your Course, as well as those relating to assessment, and that you refer to the latest versions.

Information on documents and assessment support materials for National 1 to Advanced Higher can be found at [www.sqa.org.uk/supportdocuments](http://www.sqa.org.uk/supportdocuments)

## National 5 Coursework information

Following feedback from the 2014–15 diet, it was determined that overall, the Psychology National 5 Course assignment did not sufficiently test higher order skills and differentiate appropriately. It was therefore agreed that the Marking Instructions and documentation for the Coursework would be reviewed and revised for clarity and to realign the marks with the skills expected at SCQF level 5.

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Updated versions of the following documents were published at the end of September 2015:

- National 5 Psychology Coursework General Assessment Information
- National 5 Psychology Course Assessment Task

**Summary of changes:**

The Detailed Marking Instructions and Marking Instructions summary table for the Psychology National 5 assignment have been amended to clarify the requirements of the task and the way in which marks are awarded. Some changes have been made to the allocation of marks within specific sections of the marking instructions; the overall mark allocation remains unchanged.

The section regarding word count penalty has also been amended. Candidate instructions have been updated to include this amended advice regarding word count penalty.

## Higher Coursework information

Following feedback from the 2014–15 diet, it was determined that overall, the Psychology Higher Course assignment did not differentiate appropriately in terms of candidate performance. It was therefore agreed that the Marking Instructions and documentation for the Coursework would be reviewed and revised for clarity and to realign the marks with the skills expected at SCQF level 6.

Updated versions of the following documents were published in August and September 2015:

- Course Assessment Specification (August 2015)
- Higher Psychology Coursework General Assessment Information and Course Assessment Task (September 2015)
- Course and Unit Support Notes (September 2015)

**Summary of changes:**

The Course Assessment Specification and Course and Unit Support Notes have been updated to emphasise the flexible nature of the assignment briefs by stating that SQA will provide Psychology research briefs, which candidates should review to guide them towards selection of a research topic. This research will be based on a topic the candidate has studied. Briefs are only provided to guide the candidate towards selection of a research topic.

The coursework documents have been amended to reflect the above and provide clarification that once the candidate has selected their topic, they can work in a group or independently when planning and carrying out their research, however the analysis of their results and production of the report must be done independently.

Advice regarding reasonable assistance has been amended to reflect that the assessor can provide one key research study for the chosen research topic, as outlined in the assignment briefs. Amended advice regarding word count penalty has also been incorporated.

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The Detailed Marking Instructions for the Higher Psychology assignment have been amended to clarify the requirements of the task and the way in which marks are awarded. Some changes have been made to the allocation of marks within specific sections of the marking instructions; the overall mark allocation remains unchanged.

The marks awarded for ethics within the method section of the Marking Instructions have been increased. Centres should note that within this section, 0 marks out of a possible 4 marks will be awarded if:

- candidates only make general comments about ethics
- the research is unethical
- candidates use participants under the age of 16

Specific ethical guidance is provided in Appendix 3 of the Higher Psychology Course Support Notes; within The British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct which can be found at [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk); and within the Association for the Teaching of Psychology (ATP) Guide to Ethics for Teachers and Students of Psychology at Pre-Degree Level, which can be found at [www.theatp.org](http://www.theatp.org).

The candidate instructions have been updated to clarify task requirements and reflect changes made to Detailed Marking Instructions and changes made to the advice regarding word count penalty.

Please note that the Course Assessment Task document is available from our secure website and you can arrange access to it through your SQA Co-ordinator.

You can view the Notification of changes spreadsheets for National 3 to Higher, and Advanced Higher at [www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjectchanges](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjectchanges)

## **2015–16 Higher Psychology assignment briefs**

The Higher Psychology Coursework Assessment Task document has been updated to include research assignment briefs for use in session 2015–16. These can be found in Appendix 2 within the document. The Coursework Assessment Task document is available from our secure website and you can arrange access to this through your SQA Co-ordinator.

## **Advice and guidance**

### **Higher Psychology Individual Behaviour Unit**

The mandatory topic for the *Individual Behaviour* Unit is Sleep, Dreams and Sleep Disorders.

Learners cover at least three psychological approaches to demonstrate understanding of this topic from different psychological points of view. For this topic, two of the three approaches (the biological and cognitive) are mandatory. The third approach is a matter of choice.

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At least two relevant psychological theories must be covered. These must include:

- Oswald (1966) Restoration theory of sleep
- Crick and Mitchison (1986) Reorganisational theory of dreaming

Following recent enquiries we would like to take this opportunity to clarify to centres that despite having Neurobiological elements, the Course design intention is that the Crick and Mitchison (1986) Reorganisational theory of dreaming is delivered by centres as the mandatory **cognitive** theory. It is the Oswald (1966) Restoration theory of sleep which is the mandatory **biological** theory.

As there is some degree of debate regarding whether the reorganisational theory could be considered both a cognitive theory and a biological theory due to its neurobiological elements, we can confirm that no candidate would be disadvantaged by this during marking.

## Approval criteria

Centres are reminded that teachers and lecturers delivering or assessing Psychology within centres are required to have the following qualifications:

- at least two years' successful study of psychology at University or Higher National Diploma (HND) level, including study of research methods in psychology

Individuals undertaking the Internal Verifier role for Psychology within centres must have sufficient subject knowledge to understand the content of assessments and national standards for the Course. They also need to be able to confirm that reliable assessment judgements have been made.

Internal Verifiers do not require at least two years' successful study of psychology at University or Higher National Diploma (HND) level.

## Coming up in 2015–16

### Understanding Standards 2015–16

From the end of October 2015, we will publish further Understanding Standards packs for National 1 to Higher. These packs contain candidate evidence and commentaries for Unit assessment and internally assessed components of Course assessment.

From November 2015 to January 2016, we will hold subject-specific Understanding Standards events for teachers and lecturers. The main focus of these events will be on Course assessment at Higher. An Understanding Standards event for Higher Psychology will take place on the following date:

- Friday 11 December 2015 (Glasgow)
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Materials from the recent Nominee training events will also be published on our website.

For more information, visit [www.sqa.org.uk/understandingstandards](http://www.sqa.org.uk/understandingstandards)

Details of the Understanding Standards materials for each subject are available from the [subject pages](#)

## Marker recruitment opportunities for 2016

We are now accepting Marker applications from teaching professionals to contribute to the 2016 examination diet. If you are interested in joining us as a Marker please visit the [appointee opportunities](#) of our website where you will find a marker advert for all subjects and levels, with details of the role.

Our current Markers will confirm to you that the experience of marking helps increase their awareness of the demands of Course assessment and that marking is excellent professional and personal development. To become a Marker, a minimum of two years' Psychology teaching experience is required.

Please check [www.sqa.org.uk/appointees](http://www.sqa.org.uk/appointees) regularly for other appointee opportunities which may be of interest to you.

### Contact us

For centre enquiries, please contact our Customer Support Team:

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