



NQ Verification 2017–18 Key Messages Round 1

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Psychology
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	March 2018

National Courses/Units verified:

Psychology SCQF level 5 and Higher — all units

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The majority of centres used SQA-provided assessments from the unit assessment support packs.

The majority of centres used Package 1: Unit-by-unit approach, although there were a number of centres using Package 2: Combined, or Package 3: Portfolio approach. It is possible that using the portfolio or combined approach could reduce the amount of assessment for candidates. Where centres did choose the portfolio approach, they had included the tasks used for gathering evidence in the verification sample ensuring appropriate identification of assessment standards being targeted.

While it is encouraging to see centres devising their own approaches to assessment, it is strongly recommended that these be sent for prior verification before use with candidates. There were a number of centre-devised assessments that did not enable candidates to generate evidence to meet the assessment standards. Centres are advised to produce a 'judging the evidence table' for any assessments they devise to support assessors in making appropriate assessment judgements.

Some centres successfully adapted the judging evidence table for the SQA-provided unit assessment support packs supporting the assessment process for assessors. Column four of the judging evidence table can be adapted to fit a topic even when using the SQA-provided unit assessment support pack. Attention is drawn to column three of the judging evidence table which details the requirements for each assessment standard.

Centres should note that assessing a whole unit using a closed-book approach increases the level of demand for their candidates and as such they are potentially being disadvantaged.

Centres are advised that the SQA-provided Unit Assessment Support Pack: Package 1: Unit-by-unit approach for H262 76 Higher Psychology: Social Behaviour requires one topic to be used as the basis for each assessment standard. Any re-assessments could therefore be completed on the second topic from this unit.

Centres are advised to develop a more secure understanding of the differences between unit assessment and course assessment. Centres might find it helpful to review their unit assessment tasks to ensure that these are aimed at gathering evidence of minimum competence in the assessment standards.

Assessment judgements

The verification team were able to confirm assessment judgements for most centres. Where this was not the case, assessment judgements had either not been securely based on the published assessment standards of the units, or centres had used alternative approaches to make assessment judgements. In some instances, centres were lenient in judging application of knowledge. This occurred predominantly for unit H262 76 Higher Psychology: Social Behaviour assessment standard 1.3: 'Applying understanding of social psychology to everyday behaviour' where candidates had explained an everyday behaviour using concepts but not research. Centres should be aware that in order to achieve this assessment standard candidates are required to both 'explain everyday social behaviour with reference to concepts and/or theories' and 'explain everyday social behaviour with reference to research evidence'. This information can be found in the third column of the judging evidence table for the unit assessment support packs for the unit H262 76 Higher Psychology: Social Behaviour. Centres are also reminded that the requirement of the unit is for 'everyday behaviour'.

In addition, some centres were lenient in judging the stages of the research process for assessment standard 1.1: Explaining the stages of the research process for the unit H260 76 Higher Psychology: Research. Candidates had either not explained all the stages of the research process or described the stages but not explained them. Centres are directed towards pages 3 and 8 of the SQA-provided Unit Assessment Support Pack: Package 1: Unit-by-unit approach where the required eight stages of the research process are listed. Centres should be aware that this assessment standard was updated in August

2016 and candidates are now required to explain each of the eight stages of the research process.

Centres are also directed towards the generalised marking instructions for explanations of skill terms. These are found on any past paper on SQA's website.

For the unit H261 75 SCQF level 5 Psychology: Individual Behaviour, a small minority of centres used research studies instead of theories to provide evidence for assessment standards 1.2 'Explaining the behaviour using psychological approaches and theories' and 1.3 'Explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the psychological approaches and theories used to explain the behaviour'.

Centres are reminded that there is no requirement for candidates to provide lengthy descriptions of specific studies and where research evidence is provided the assessment still requires approaches and theories. Using a research study instead of a theory therefore impacts on the likelihood of achieving both assessment standards 1.2 and 1.3.

There were some instances of inaccuracies in assessment judgements and centres are reminded to use the judging evidence table when making assessment judgements if using an SQA-provided unit assessment support pack.

Many centres had good practice in checking assessment judgements, eg cross-marking. In addition, many centres had good practice with respect to the activities of the internal verifier who sampled scripts in an agreed manner and recorded the details and decisions from this activity.

Most centres entered candidates for the appropriate level.

Many centres provided clear checklists or grids indicating where assessment standards had been achieved, which was helpful during the verification event. Identifying where assessment standards were met on candidates' scripts was noted as good practice as it provided very clear, supportive feedback for candidates to measure their own progress.

Section 3: General comments

It is important that centre-devised assessment materials relate clearly to the assessment standards for each outcome. Prior verification of centre-devised assessment materials should ensure this and is recommended.

Centres should ensure that assessments devised internally address all the relevant assessment standards for the unit outcome and give candidates the opportunity within the task to be able to demonstrate their performance against the standards.

The verification team were encouraged to see evidence of personalisation and choice in some approaches to assessment, particularly in candidate posters and presentations. Candidates seemed engaged with the subject and demonstrated ownership of their learning.

Centres are reminded that candidate evidence should be viewed holistically in relation to assessment standards. Assessment approaches should enable candidates to achieve the minimum standard and so there is no requirement for the use of time limits.

Annotating candidate evidence with an indication of where assessment standards had been met was extremely useful during the verification event.

It was encouraging to see centres adopting the use of systems to ensure authenticity of candidates' responses, eg 'Turnitin', and where this had been used the verification team were able to see detailed, supportive and developmental feedback specific to each candidate.

Centres are required to submit an indication of the internal verification approaches adopted. A clear context of the conditions of assessment and internal verification procedures is extremely helpful and supports verifiers in confirming assessment judgements. The [SQA Internal Verification Toolkit](#) provides advice on the development and maintenance of an effective internal quality assurance system.