



Higher
Coursework
Assessment Task



Higher Psychology

Assignment

Assessment task

This document provides information for teachers and lecturers about the coursework component of this course in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed. It **must** be read in conjunction with the course specification.

Valid from session 2023-24 and until further notice.

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Introduction

This document contains marking instructions and instructions for candidates for the Higher Psychology assignment. You must read it in conjunction with the course specification.

This assignment is worth 40 marks. This is 33% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

This is one of two course assessment components. The other component is a question paper.

Marking instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following marking instructions for the Higher Psychology assignment are addressed to the marker. They are also helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

Candidates' evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking.

General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- a Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- b If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- c The term 'or any other relevant response' allows for possible variation in candidates' responses. Always award marks according to the accuracy and relevance of an answer.
- d 'Explain' requires candidates to relate cause and effect and/or make relationships between things clear.
- e 'Analyse' requires candidates to identify parts, the relationship between them, and their relationships with the whole; draw out and relate implications; and analyse data (possibly including calculations as well as a conclusion).
- f 'Evaluate' requires candidates to make a judgement based on criteria to determine the value of something.
- g 'Concluding' requires candidates to draw conclusions based on a set of information or data.
- h The report should be between 2,000 and 2,500 words, excluding references, footnotes and appendices. Candidates must provide the word count for the completed report, excluding references, footnotes and appendices. If the word count exceeds the maximum by more than 10%, a penalty will be applied.

Detailed marking instructions

Report section	Marking instruction	Max mark	Additional guidance
Introduction	<p>Accurate and relevant descriptions</p> <p>Candidates are expected to carry out and interpret background research.</p> <p>Based on their background research, candidates are expected to describe the aim and hypothesis of their primary research.</p>	10	<p>A maximum of 8 marks can be awarded in a variety of ways where candidates use background research to describe the psychological context for their own primary research study.</p> <p>For the full 8 marks candidates must include a description of a relevant psychological theory/concept and a minimum of two related background research studies.</p> <p>Award a maximum of 4 marks if candidates have provided no research studies (for example, only descriptions of concepts/theories are provided).</p> <p>Award a maximum of 6 marks if candidates have provided only one research study.</p> <p>2 marks are specifically awarded for the aim and hypothesis.</p> <p>For the full 2 marks the aim must clearly relate to the background research, and the hypothesis must be operationalised with clear expression of the research variables – this can be any hypothesis that is correct from experimental/null/alternative/correlational.</p>

Report section	Marking instruction	Max mark	Additional guidance
Method	<p>Accurate and sufficient descriptions</p> <p>Candidates should identify the method used for their own research, and provide a justification for the selection of this method. This includes identification of the design (if applicable), and of sampling and materials.</p> <p>Candidates should describe their procedure.</p>	10	<p>A maximum of 10 marks can be awarded for the method section.</p> <p>Candidates should include all relevant information for the method used in their primary research in this section of the report; however, candidates may refer to appropriate supplementary information contained in the appendices. This section must be sufficient to enable the research to be replicated.</p> <p>Award a maximum of 6 marks where candidates have accurately identified the method and justified the selection of this method, which includes: identification of design (where appropriate); research variables; extraneous and/or confounding variables; sampling method; and participants. All materials should be identified (and must be included in the appendix section to enable replication).</p> <p>For the full 6 marks to be awarded, candidates must fully describe the procedure.</p> <p>Award a maximum of 4 marks for ethics. Candidates may be awarded a maximum of 2 marks for generic points which may apply to other research.</p> <p>Where a candidate's research includes a minor ethical breach, award 0 marks for their procedure. Where a candidate's research includes a major ethical breach, award 0 marks for their procedure and justification of their method.</p>

Report section	Marking instruction	Max mark	Additional guidance
Results	<p>Interpreting and presenting data/results in an appropriate format</p> <p>Candidates are expected to use appropriate statistical procedures and present their own data/results in a suitable format.</p>	6	<p>A maximum of 6 marks can be awarded where candidates interpret and present data/results in an appropriate format. All relevant results must be included in this section of the report; however, candidates may refer to appropriate supplementary information contained in the appendices.</p> <p>The 6 marks must be awarded in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Award a maximum of 2 marks where candidates justify the choice of statistical procedure(s). 1 mark is awarded for an appropriate choice of statistical technique, and 1 mark for justification of that choice. Justification must relate to candidates' own data set. ◆ Award 1 mark where candidates accurately carry out appropriate statistical procedures, as demonstrated in their calculations (which must be included in appendices). ◆ Award a maximum of 2 marks where candidates present data in an appropriate format(s). 1 mark is awarded for providing an appropriate table and graph, and 1 mark is awarded for an appropriate title and accurate labels and legend (if appropriate). These must provide enough information to enable interpretation. ◆ Award 1 mark where candidates provide an accurate statement on whether the results support or refute the hypothesis.

Report section	Marking instruction	Max mark	Additional guidance
Discussion	<p>Relevant points of analysis</p> <p>Candidates are expected to provide an analysis of their results in relation to relevant psychological theories/concepts and previous research referred to in the introduction to their report.</p> <p>Points of analysis can be made anywhere within the discussion.</p> <p>Analysis requires candidates to identify parts, the relationship between them, and their relationships with the whole. Analysis can involve drawing out and relating implications and drawing conclusions.</p>	8	<p>A maximum of 8 marks can be awarded in a variety of ways for candidates' analysis of results.</p> <p>Award marks for each relevant analytical point made anywhere within the discussion section of the report.</p> <p>Points of analysis could explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ analysis of results as candidates interpret them ◆ how candidates' results confirm or refute their research hypothesis ◆ the possible influence of variables, other than the research variables, on their results ◆ how candidates' primary research results relate to the psychological theory/concept and the two previous research studies presented in their introduction ◆ the implications of candidates' primary research findings in terms of real world application and/or suggestions for new research within this topic (new research must be substantially different to candidates' primary research) ◆ candidates' conclusions, including statistics (with the exception of correlation where an accurate comment about direction or relationship must be included), where appropriate ◆ any other relevant response

Report section	Marking instruction	Max mark	Additional guidance
<p>Discussion (continued)</p>	<p>Relevant points of evaluation</p> <p>Candidates are expected to evaluate their research.</p> <p>Points of evaluation can be made anywhere within the discussion.</p> <p>To evaluate, candidates must make a judgement based on criteria or determine the value of something.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>A maximum of 4 marks can be awarded in a variety of ways for candidates' evaluation of their own primary research.</p> <p>Award 1 mark for each relevant point of evaluation.</p> <p>Candidates may be awarded a maximum of 2 marks for generic points of evaluation. Other points of evaluation must be specific to candidates' primary research and supporting reasons must be provided for evaluative points made, for example 'this is unreliable because', or 'this is a strength because'.</p> <p>A point of evaluation could include making a judgement about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the design (if appropriate) and research method ◆ extraneous variables that should have been controlled ◆ validity and reliability ◆ method of data collection ◆ any other relevant information

Report section	Marking instruction	Max mark	Additional guidance
Other	<p>Appropriate presentation and style</p> <p>Candidates are expected to present their research report in the appropriate style and format.</p>	2	<p>Award a maximum of 2 marks for presentation and style.</p> <p>For full marks candidates must present their research in the style and format of a psychological research report, written in the third person. The whole report must be organised correctly, include a title, and all sections must be in the correct order, with all appropriate information in the correct section. Candidates must use appropriate terminology and the correct tense throughout.</p> <p>References must be organised in such a way as to enable a third party to locate information.</p>
	Total marks	40	

Instructions for candidates

This assessment applies to the assignment for Higher Psychology.

This assignment is worth 40 marks. This is 33% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

It assesses the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ interpreting and evaluating descriptive statistics in psychological research
- ◆ using research skills to generate, select, organise, interpret, analyse and evaluate information in psychology
- ◆ using communication skills to present information, including a report on psychological research

Your teacher or lecturer will let you know if there are any specific conditions for doing this assessment.

In this assessment, you have to carry out a piece of primary research based on a topic you have studied, and produce a psychological research report.

Your completed research report is the assessment evidence for this assignment and must be submitted to SQA for marking.

You should begin the assignment when your teacher or lecturer tells you to start. Your teacher or lecturer will give you a date for completing your report.

The assignment has the following stages. You have to:

- ◆ review the topics and related research you have studied
- ◆ from these, choose a topic for your own primary research
- ◆ carry out background research on your chosen topic
- ◆ plan your primary research according to the topic you have chosen, implementing **British Psychological Society (BPS) ethical guidelines**
- ◆ carry out your primary research according to your plan, implementing **BPS ethical guidelines**
- ◆ produce a report that conforms to the style and format of a psychology research report

In this assignment you need to know how to use appropriate research methods to carry out primary research on topics in psychology. You should make sure that you can carry out background research using a range of resources.

You should also be able to use psychological terminology and know how to use skills to describe, explain, analyse and evaluate information. You need to use the knowledge and understanding from the course, as well as the additional information your teacher or lecturer provides you with that is specific to this assignment.

The research report you need to produce for your assignment must conform to standards for report writing in psychology. You must also comply with BPS ethical standards for psychological research. It is essential that you are familiar with the most recent version of the *BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct* which **applies to all psychological research**: www.bps.org.uk.

The BPS Code establishes four ethical principles: **respect, competence, responsibility, and integrity**. These principles are relevant for the assignment. It is important to ensure that the research you conduct is ethical. Ethical issues should be addressed **before** conducting the psychological research.

Do not use participants under the age of 16 in your research.

Resources

There are no restrictions on the resources to which you may have access when undertaking this assignment. For example, you should refer to psychology websites, journals, textbooks or research reports. You need to select appropriate information from your background research to introduce your chosen topic and research aim.

You can work in a group or independently when planning and carrying out your research, however the analysis of your results and production of your report must be done independently.

Reasonable assistance

Your teacher or lecturer may give you reasonable assistance. For example, they can provide guidance on:

- ◆ your choice of topic – they will let you know if the topic is one for which there are sufficient available resources to enable you to complete the assignment
- ◆ ethical considerations such as plagiarism or inadvertent internet access to illegal or inappropriate material relating to your topic
- ◆ ways of setting out a report

Your teacher or lecturer will also give you one study which you can include in the 'Introduction' section of your assignment report.

You may ask your teacher or lecturer for clarification about this assignment task if you find the instructions unclear. In this case, the clarification is normally given to the whole class.

At any stage in the assignment, reasonable assistance does **not** include your teacher or lecturer providing:

- ◆ model answers
- ◆ any feedback on drafts, including marking

The assignment is conducted under some supervision and control. This means that although you may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching setting, your teacher or lecturer monitors your progress to ensure that the work is your own and that plagiarism has not taken place.

When you are ready to start the assignment you need to:

Review the topics and related research you have learned as part of the course

Think about topics you are interested in and related research that you could use as the key research to base your assignment on.

Choose a topic for your own primary research

With the help of your teacher or lecturer, choose a suitable research topic. With your teacher or lecturer, it is important that you consider the following:

- ◆ the potential ethical issues related to the topic. It is important to ensure that at each stage your assignment complies with BPS ethical guidelines
- ◆ that you are not deceiving or harming participants or placing yourself at risk. Always check your research plan with your teacher or lecturer and make them aware of all ethical considerations and how you plan to avoid any potential ethical breaches
- ◆ the resources available to enable you to complete the assignment

Carry out background research on your chosen topic

Once you have chosen a topic you need to carry out background research. This background research will enable you to set your own research in a psychological context. You need to show how your own primary research relates to a psychological theory/concept and relevant classic and/or contemporary research studies. You must use background research from a minimum of one theory/concept and two research studies to help you decide on the aim for your own research, and devise the experimental or alternative hypothesis. You are advised to keep a note of references, as you must provide a list of references for all sources referred to in your report. Once you have sufficient information with which to provide an introductory background for your own research, you can start the planning stage.

Plan your research according to the topic you have chosen, following ethical guidelines

Working in a group, or on your own, plan your research according to the topic you have chosen. When you have identified an aim and a hypothesis, you need to decide on the most suitable research method to use (for example, experiment, survey).

If you have chosen an experimental method, you will need to decide the design of your study, specifying whether you will use independent measures, repeated measures or matched pairs. You should define the variables under investigation. For example, the independent variable (IV) and dependent variable (DV) should be operationally defined. This should include conditions of the IV and the meaning of the DV.

If you use a non-experimental method you should define the variables under investigation.

You should also consider the control of extraneous and/or confounding variables. You need to identify the sampling method and the sample group/participants for your research. You need to devise the materials required for your own study (you may use or adapt an existing survey/experiment or choose to devise your own, taking account of and addressing potential ethical issues). Remember to check these with your teacher or lecturer before carrying out the research. You also need to develop a detailed account of the procedure to

be followed when conducting the research, so that it could be replicated, and to demonstrate you have implemented ethical guidelines.

You should check your research plan with your teacher or lecturer and make them aware of all ethical considerations and how you plan to avoid any breaches of the BPS ethical guidelines.

Do not use participants under the age of 16 in your research.

Carry out research according to your plan, implementing ethical guidelines

Working in a group, or on your own, carry out your research according to your plan. You must uphold ethical guidelines at all times. On your own, you will need to choose appropriate statistical procedures to analyse the data gathered, and decide how you will present the results in your report. These results will be used in your report to show the outcome of your research and if your hypothesis can be supported or refuted.

Produce a report that conforms to the style and format of a psychology research report

The psychology research report provides evidence that you have undertaken all of the assignment stages.

You need to produce the report in the style and format of a psychological report. The report must include the following sections:

- ◆ title
- ◆ contents page
- ◆ introduction
- ◆ method
 - design/method
 - sample/participants
 - materials
 - procedure
 - ethics
- ◆ results
- ◆ discussion
- ◆ references
- ◆ appendices

The voice used throughout the report should be passive: it should be written in the third person and in the past tense. **You must preserve the anonymity of participants and maintain confidentiality.**

Your report may be produced in written form or be word-processed. Whichever form is used, the assignment must be submitted on paper to SQA for marking.

The report must be between 2,000 and 2,500 words, excluding references, footnotes and appendices. You must provide the word count for the completed report, excluding

references, footnotes and appendices. If the word count exceeds the maximum by more than 10%, a penalty will be applied.

References

You must provide a list of references for all sources referred to in your report. The references can be provided in any format that enables someone else to find the source of information.

Appendices

You must include appendices in your report. These should contain calculations and research materials, such as a questionnaire, list of items to be remembered, or a photograph of apparatus used in your research. Appendices should only contain essential information relevant to your report. They should not contain information which identifies research participants, in order to protect their confidentiality and comply with BPS ethical guidelines.

Assignment report checklist

A checklist is provided in Appendix 1 which you may find useful to ensure you have included all relevant sections of your report.

Note: you are not required to use this checklist and you should **not** submit this checklist to SQA with your report.

The following table sets out how marks are allocated for the assignment.

Report section	Max mark	Mark allocation
Introduction	10	<p>A maximum of 8 marks can be awarded for using background research to describe the psychological context for your primary research study.</p> <p>You must include a description of a relevant psychological theory/concept and a minimum of two related background research studies.</p> <p>A maximum of 4 marks can be awarded if you do not provide research studies.</p> <p>A maximum of 6 marks can be awarded if you provide only one research study.</p> <p>A maximum of 2 marks are specifically awarded for your aim and hypothesis.</p> <p>Your aim must clearly relate to your background research and your hypothesis must be operationalised with clear expression of the research variables.</p>
Method	10	<p>A maximum of 10 marks can be awarded for the method section.</p> <p>All relevant information for the method used in your primary research must be included in this section of the report; however you may refer to appropriate supplementary information contained in the appendices. Your descriptions must be sufficient to enable the research to be replicated.</p> <p>A maximum of 6 marks can be awarded for identifying your method and justifying why you have chosen this method. This should include identification of design (where appropriate); research variables; extraneous and/or confounding variables; sampling method; and participants. Procedure should be described and all materials identified (which must be included in the appendix section of your report to enable replication).</p> <p>If your research is unethical, you may not be awarded marks for your procedure, or for justifying your method/design.</p> <p>A maximum of 4 marks can be awarded for an explanation of how you have implemented BPS ethical guidelines and avoided ethical breaches, for example deception and breach of confidentiality.</p>

Report section	Max mark	Mark allocation
Results	6	<p>A maximum of 6 marks can be awarded for interpreting and presenting data/results in an appropriate format. All relevant results must be included in this section of your report; however, you may refer to appropriate supplementary information contained in the appendices.</p> <p>The 6 marks are awarded in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A maximum of 2 marks can be awarded for justifying your choice of statistical procedure(s). 1 mark is awarded for an appropriate choice of statistical technique, and 1 mark for justification of that choice. This justification must relate to your own data set. ◆ 1 mark can be awarded for accurately carrying out appropriate statistical procedures, as demonstrated in your calculations (which must be included in appendices). ◆ A maximum of 2 marks can be awarded for presenting your data in an appropriate format(s). 1 mark is awarded for providing an appropriate table and graph, and 1 mark is awarded for an appropriate title and accurate labels and legend (if appropriate). These must provide enough information to enable interpretation. ◆ 1 mark can be awarded for an accurate statement on whether the results support or refute your hypothesis.
Discussion	8	<p>A maximum of 8 marks can be awarded for the analysis of results.</p> <p>Points of analysis could explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ how your results confirm or refute your research hypothesis or are inconclusive ◆ the possible influence of variables, other than the research variables on your results ◆ how your research results relate to the psychological theory/concept and previous research presented in your introduction ◆ the implications of your research findings in terms of real world application and/or suggestions for new research within this topic (new research must be substantially different to your primary research) ◆ your conclusions drawn <p>4</p> <p>A maximum of 4 marks can be awarded for evaluation of your primary research.</p>

Report section	Max mark	Mark allocation
Discussion (continued)		<p>Evaluation must be specific to your primary research and supporting reasons must be provided for evaluative points made, for example 'this is unreliable because', or 'this is a strength because'.</p> <p>A point of evaluation could include making a judgement about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ your design (if appropriate) and research method ◆ extraneous variables that should have been controlled ◆ validity and reliability ◆ the method of data collection ◆ any other appropriate point of evaluation
Other	2	<p>A maximum of 2 marks can be awarded for presentation and style.</p> <p>For full marks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ You must present your research in the style and format of a psychological research report, written in the third person. ◆ The whole report must be organised correctly, include a title, and all sections must be in the correct order, with all appropriate information in the correct section. You must use appropriate terminology and the correct tense throughout. ◆ Your references must be organised in such a way as to enable a third party to locate the information.

Appendix: assignment report checklist

Report section	Have I:	Done
Introduction	◆ described the research topic?	
	◆ described at least one theory or concept relevant to the topic?	
	◆ described at least two studies relevant to the topic?	
	◆ provided an aim for the research?	
	◆ provided an operationalised hypothesis?	
Method	◆ identified the research method?	
	◆ provided a justification for this choice of method?	
	◆ identified the research design (if experimental)?	
	◆ identified research variables and extraneous and/or confounding variables?	
	◆ identified the sampling method?	
	◆ described the participants?	
	◆ identified materials appropriately, where required?	
	◆ given a full description of my procedure?	
	◆ explained how I have implemented BPS ethical guidelines and avoided ethical breaches?	
	Important: do not give any information that may help identify your participants (confidentiality).	
Important: you must comply with British Psychological Society ethical guidelines. Unethical research studies will not be awarded marks for procedure and/or justification.		
Report section	Have I:	Done
Results	◆ justified my choice of statistical procedure(s)?	
	◆ accurately calculated these statistics (and shown these calculations in appendices)?	
	◆ presented the data in an appropriate format?	
	◆ provided a statement on whether the results support or refute my hypothesis?	
Report section	Have I:	Done
Discussion	◆ analysed my results in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — how they confirm or refute my hypothesis? — how variables other than the research variables may have influenced results? — how my results relate to the theories/studies described in the ‘Introduction’? — how my results could be applied in the real world? — the conclusions drawn from my results? 	
	◆ evaluated my own procedures / materials / sample?	
	◆ made these evaluations specifically about my own study ?	

Discussion (continued)	◆ provided reasons for each evaluative point?	
Presentation and style	◆ formatted my report correctly?	
	◆ included references?	

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
1.1	Amendments for clarity to pages 4-5, 12, 14-15 and Appendix.	September 2023

Note: you are advised to check SQA's website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.

Security and confidentiality

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