

Next Generation Higher National Unit Specification

Psychology B: Applied Psychology (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J6EV 47
SCQF level: 7 (16 SCQF credit points)
Valid from: session 2024–25

Prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 3.0) August 2024

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year.

This unit specification is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information required to deliver and assess the unit.

The information in this unit specification may be reproduced in support of SQA qualifications only on a non-commercial basis. If it is reproduced, SQA must be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be reproduced for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from permissions@sqa.org.uk.

This edition: August 2024 (version 3.0)

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2022, 2023, 2024

Unit purpose

This unit enables learners to apply theory to specific topics in psychology. Learners also conduct research into a psychological topic.

The unit is aimed at learners who want to develop their knowledge and understanding of psychological topics, as well as those who want to use it as the basis for further study.

Entry to the unit is at your centre's discretion. However, we recommend that learners have one or more of the following:

- ◆ good communication skills
- ◆ previous study of psychology, for example National Qualifications (NQ) at SCQF levels 5 or 6, or similar qualifications
- ◆ achievement of Psychology A: The Shaping of Modern Psychology at SCQF level 7
- ◆ other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the unit

Learners normally study the unit as part of HNC Social Sciences. They can also study it on a stand-alone basis.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

- 1 apply theory and research evidence to psychological topics
- 2 conduct research into a psychological topic

Evidence requirements

Learners should provide written or oral evidence covering all unit outcomes, produced under open-book conditions. You should give learners the task at an appropriate point of delivery of the unit. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.

Learners should produce written or oral evidence conforming to the requirements of a laboratory report.

Learners must produce a written response of approximately 2,000 words, or an oral response that is 12 to 15 minutes in duration.

Learners' responses must include:

- ◆ a definition of the psychological topic that they are using in the research investigation
- ◆ an analysis of conflicting theories, opinions and arguments relevant to the topic
- ◆ an explanation of research evidence relevant to the topic
- ◆ justification of their selected research method and sampling method
- ◆ an explanation of how they carried out the research, including how they addressed ethical considerations
- ◆ a collation and statistical analysis of results
- ◆ conclusions drawn from the results

You should select topics from the list in 'Content and context for this unit' in the 'Additional guidance' section.

You can choose to use a mix of assessment methods across a cohort, depending on what is most suitable for each learner; for example, some could give a written response, others could give an oral response and others could respond in the form of a blog.

Learners must fully reference their assessment, using reliable sources appropriate for SCQF level 7. They must list all sources in a bibliography or reference list, in a recognised standard format such as Harvard or APA.

The SCQF level of the unit provides additional context relating to the quality of evidence. Learners should:

- ◆ contribute information that is complex, accurate and relevant to its purpose and audience
- ◆ present ideas clearly and coherently
- ◆ use a structure that is appropriate to the purpose
- ◆ provide supporting evidence or references

Knowledge and skills

The following table shows the knowledge and skills covered by the unit outcomes:

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 1 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ the definition of a psychological topic◆ how specific features of theory relate to the topic◆ how published research is used to support and challenge psychological theory	<p>Outcome 1 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ explain a psychological topic through theory◆ challenge a theory through a variety of research studies
<p>Outcome 2 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ how to carry out psychological research using the research process◆ how to carry out ethical research◆ how to conduct quantitative data analysis on a data set	<p>Outcome 2 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ carry out psychological research◆ demonstrate ethical conduct in research◆ statistically analyse quantitative data and understand what the results mean

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, learners develop meta-skills to enhance their employability in the social sciences sector.

The unit helps learners develop the meta-skills of self-management, social intelligence and innovation. Learners should develop meta-skills naturally as you deliver the unit. You should encourage learners to develop a minimum of one area in each of the three categories, but they do not need to cover all suggested subsections. The following suggestions may help shape delivery and assessment, and vary depending on the chosen topics and assessment method.

Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ focusing: sorting information into a coherent narrative; filtering out irrelevant theory and research from the literature review process
- ◆ integrity: developing an understanding of ethical issues involved in conducting research in psychology, and how these issues are considered through an acknowledged code of practice; ensuring that final research submission is demonstrably their own work
- ◆ adapting: demonstrating resilience where the research process does not flow smoothly, for example, if there is difficulty obtaining a sample or understanding results; learning new skills such as operationalising the research process; presenting work in a specified format
- ◆ initiative: decision making; self-motivation; responsibility when conducting research with human participants

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ communicating: reading and listening to information; participating in structured lessons, class discussions and digital enhancement activities such as podcasts and videos; giving information through discussions, other formative work and the final summative assessment
- ◆ feeling: using empathy when carrying out research with human participants; briefing and debriefing participants; understanding and anticipating factors that may unintentionally cause distress in participants
- ◆ collaborating: working in small groups during appropriate parts of the research process

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ curiosity: questioning and challenging current knowledge through empirical research; questioning research findings; filtering information in the literature review; problem recognition

- ◆ creativity: producing an assessment that reflects their interests while meeting the unit's requirements; using illustrations to enhance explanations and oral presentations, where appropriate; producing materials for the research method section
- ◆ sense-making: considering where their research findings fit into the overall area of research; filtering and synthesising data; analysis
- ◆ critical thinking: deconstructing the research process; logical thinking; identifying, analysing and evaluating information; using judgement to accept or reject their hypothesis; evaluating their own research process

There are other meta-skills that learners could develop in the unit, depending on the learning and teaching activities you carry out, including:

- ◆ social intelligence: leading

Literacies

Learners develop core skills in the following literacies:

Numeracy

Learners develop their numeracy skills by understanding facts and statistics related to research findings within different topics in psychology. They analyse their own curated data in outcome 2 where they conduct and analyse their own quantitative research.

Communication

Learners develop communication skills in formative and summative assessment. It is part of the evidence requirements for the unit to ensure learners convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way, with academic references. You should give learners opportunities to give oral presentations and participate in discussions to improve their communication skills.

Digital

Learners develop digital skills and computer literacy by using digital packages to produce assessments, and internet sources to research information on theorists, concepts, structures and ideas. You should offer guidance on appropriate sources.

You can incorporate digital skills in delivery by using digital presentations; online research tasks; word-processed documents for written tasks; digital statistical packages or spreadsheets for calculations; and digital teaching and online enhancement activities.

Using a virtual learning environment (VLE) also supports digital skills.

Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability aims to build the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence needed to develop practices and make decisions that are compatible with a sustainable and equitable society. In this unit, there are opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of social sustainability while studying theories of key psychologists and their work to understand human behaviour in relation to mental ill health, with links to the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The unit fits with the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:

- 3 Good health and well-being: through covering topics related to mental health and treatment for mental health issues and maladaptation due to experiences.
- 4 Quality education: through using a range of sources to explore, explain and analyse; learners carry out and analyse their own research.

Delivery of unit

This unit is in the 'named social sciences' section of HNC Social Sciences. You can deliver it as part of the group award or as a stand-alone unit.

It is one of two units that cover psychology within HNC Social Sciences. The unit works well if delivered alongside Psychology A: The Shaping of Modern Psychology at SCQF level 7.

The overall unit delivery time is a notional 80 hours of contact time for delivery and assessment, with learners expected to commit a further 80 hours of self-directed study.

The amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your centre's discretion. We suggest the following distribution of time, including assessment:

Outcome 1 — Apply theory and research evidence to psychological topics (40 hours)

Outcome 2 — Conduct research into a psychological topic (40 hours)

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

Learners can articulate to the second year of a Psychology degree in some universities if they complete Psychology A: The Shaping of Modern Psychology at SCQF level 7 and Psychology B: Applied Psychology at SCQF level 7 together. This allows learners to access degrees approved by the British Psychological Society.

The aim of this unit is to provide an interesting and engaging introduction to applied psychology through research. It provides an overview of three different psychological topics from a range of approaches within psychology. Where possible, learners should influence the topics chosen for delivery.

You can choose three topics from the list below. Amongst the topics chosen, there should be scope for learners to cover biological or cognitive explanations of behaviour.

- ◆ addiction
- ◆ anti-social behaviour
- ◆ attachment and separation
- ◆ attention
- ◆ attitudes and prejudice
- ◆ cognitive and moral development
- ◆ consciousness and awareness
- ◆ emotion
- ◆ forensic psychology
- ◆ gender development
- ◆ group processes
- ◆ intelligence
- ◆ interpersonal perception
- ◆ interpersonal attraction
- ◆ language and thinking
- ◆ learning
- ◆ lifespan development
- ◆ memory
- ◆ motivation
- ◆ perception
- ◆ personality
- ◆ power and leadership
- ◆ pro-social behaviour
- ◆ psychopathology
- ◆ reproductive behaviour

◆ sleep and dreaming

For outcome 1, you should consider the range of articulation routes possible, learners' interests, and your own preferences and strengths. For outcome 2, there should be clear, ethical choices available for research, drawing on one of the topics already delivered for outcome 1. This may influence the topics delivered, or which of the three topics is selected for assessment.

You should deliver three topics, and select one of the three for summative assessment.

Outcome 1 requires learners to engage with a topic in terms of research evidence supporting and challenging theory. You should deliver different theories within each topic so that learners can choose to include those most relevant to their research.

Outcome 2 requires learners to carry out empirical research, following the research process. You should encourage them to carry out original research. They can work collaboratively to collect data if they can ensure substantively different submissions. This could involve a small group of learners using the same materials for data collection, but using the data to answer different research questions. For example, one learner could look for gender differences, while another looks for age differences; or one could hypothesise a correlation while another hypothesises differences, depending on their literature review. Alternatively, three learners could each collect data from 10 participants, and use their own data plus half of each of their research partners' data. Universities that learners may progress to require individual statistical and semantic analysis of data.

Learners gain knowledge including how to explain a theory with supporting and challenging research evidence; how to operationalise research; and how to analyse research.

Learners develop the skill of applying a research process. They do this by carrying out a detailed literature review exploring a topic in terms of theory and research evidence, and carrying out and analysing an empirical piece of research.

We recommend that statistical analysis used is non-parametric; for example, Spearman's rank correlation for correlation data, Mann-Whitney U for unrelated non-parametric data, Wilcoxon signed rank for related non-parametric data and chi-square for category data. Probability is not required. Learners should consider significance in their response.

Learners should analyse data and test statistical results for significance under open-book conditions, with additional lecturer guidance where required. It should be noted that universities are looking for understanding of statistical techniques and data analysis at this level. Where learners are studying the unit as part of the HNC Social Sciences, their grade for the unit takes into account the amount of independent study and lecturer support required. Learners should carry out independent study with at least some elements supervised to ensure authenticity.

Required resources

Learners should be able to access original research articles. There are curated textbooks that summarise studies, however, learners should also engage with the language and

structure of formal academic published research before they carry out the practical element of outcome 2. You should use peer-reviewed journals where possible — libraries should be able to provide online access. You should make sure that research articles you reference in your teaching are accessible to learners.

Outcome 2 requires quantitative statistical analysis. It would be useful for learners to have access to statistical software or accessible textbooks. Learners can carry out statistical analysis in supportive, supervised, open-book conditions. They are only required to carry out the relevant statistic that suits their data and research purpose, and are not required to understand the different statistics needed for different data sets. Software such as SPSS, its free alternative, PSPP, or even Excel can be used for statistical calculations and producing graphs and charts. Learners need access to tables of significance to understand what their statistical results mean. These form appendices in most basic psychology research textbooks.

Approaches to delivery

You should structure the learning and teaching programme to allow time for learners to develop meta-skills, and academic and other transferable skills. You should also allow for assessment practice within the notional hours suggested.

A varied and active learning approach would be beneficial, where supported, independent, and collaborative learning takes place, and you encourage learners to take a participative and practical approach. You can use a range of delivery methods to enable learners to gain knowledge, understanding and skills, such as:

- ◆ demonstration
- ◆ tutorial question and answer sessions
- ◆ debate
- ◆ individual and group research tasks
- ◆ presenting findings
- ◆ VLE
- ◆ digital tools and social media
- ◆ film and visual images
- ◆ close reading of sources

You should deliver outcome 1 first, delivering all three topics before you tell learners which topic you have chosen for assessment. Articulation routes to higher education degrees are dependent on learners engaging with the breadth and depth of the unit.

If you are delivering both Psychology units, you can make links to Psychology A: The Shaping of Modern Psychology at SCQF level 7.

You should introduce the iterative process of psychology research. You should discuss a varied range of research, addressing diverse researchers, and using cross-temporal and cross-cultural evidence where appropriate. Encourage learners to question the evidence, as well as using the evidence to question the theories. Where early research is ethically or

culturally inappropriate and risks distressing learners, you should deal with it sensitively, for example with 'trigger warnings' in advance and reassurance regarding which material is required and which is optional.

Interactive learner-led sessions could give learners the opportunity to formatively prepare image-based presentations, perhaps with small groups each presenting one piece of research evidence. This approach can work well within topics such as cognitive and moral development, where, for example, eight small groups could each prepare either supporting or refuting evidence for one stage of Piaget's theory of cognitive development and present it to the class in an informal supportive environment. They could then debate the overall theory using the research presented.

Learner debates can take place where one 'side' presents one theory, supported by research evidence, which is then challenged by the other 'side' with an alternative theory, also supported with research evidence. They would then engage in academic debate to explore the strength of the evidence.

Learners could use templates for academic posters to visually present the theory being challenged and supported by research. They are also useful for learners to summarise the research process before they start outcome 2.

Outcome 2 requires careful planning in terms of encouraging good time management. Interim deadlines are helpful for completing each section of the research process.

You can shape delivery and assessment to support learners to develop their academic skills such as time management, multi-tasking ability, digital skills, essay writing skills, numerical and statistical skills and questioning ability. You can design formative and summative activities and assessments that encourage learners to practise the skills that they need to progress to the next level of study.

Meta-skills are naturally embedded in the delivery of the unit. The 'Meta-skills' section above suggests further ways to develop them.

Approaches to assessment

You can generate evidence using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable for learners.

We recommend that you assess the unit holistically, as that is best to reduce the learners' assessment burden. You can decide to use a portfolio approach with two or more assessment tasks issued at different times in the unit delivery, if that is better for your learners. You can choose the format of their submission, as long as it allows them to address each element of the evidence requirements.

The assessment could take the form of a formal written laboratory report in a standardised structured format, comprising approximately 2,000 words (excluding title page, contents page, results section, and appendices). Alternatively, it could take the form of an oral presentation of 12 to 15 minutes, using a visual stimulus such as an academic poster or digital slide presentation. Learners must show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements. Ideally, they would complete oral presentations or poster exhibitions individually. If a group presentation is used, individual learners must show coverage of all evidence requirements. To do this, they may need to provide additional responses to structured questions or an essay. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.

You should encourage learners to explore an aspect of the selected topic that interests them, as long as it is ethical and practicable to do so.

The literature review section comprising the introduction section of the research must include supporting and refuting research evidence to meet the requirements of outcome 1. Learners can include two theories where relevant, but the focus should be on applying research evidence in analysing theories.

You should make learners aware of the importance of good judgement when selecting appropriate academic sources. Encourage them to choose academic sources rather than generic search engines, to enable them to be more confident of information and better equipped to progress to SCQF level 8 units.

You must ensure that planned research is ethical. You must verify that planned research materials and participant sampling methods follow an ethical code of practice. You should give learners advice concerning approaching participants, briefing, debriefing and ethical conduct.

If you are using a blog or creation of a website as the way of gathering evidence, it should not be in the public domain. Rather, it should be on an intranet or private area of your VLE to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism.

Authenticating learners' work is essential. It would be helpful to collect notes or digital presentation materials from learners as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 7 in the presentation. You should monitor learners' progress throughout to authenticate submitted work. Where possible, you should use plagiarism detection software. Regardless of the assessment method chosen, learners must submit a bibliography citing appropriate sources, presented in a standard referencing format, such as Harvard or APA.

It is important that learners' responses to the assessment are at SCQF level 7.

Opportunities for e-assessment

Assessment that is supported by information and communication technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software, may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit.

If your centre wants to use e-assessment, you must ensure that you apply the national standard to all evidence and that conditions of assessment (as specified in the evidence requirements) are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence.

Equality and inclusion

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You should take into account the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs is available on the assessment arrangements web page:

www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Information for learners

Psychology B: Applied Psychology (SCQF level 7)

This information explains:

- ◆ what the unit is about
- ◆ what you should know or be able to do before you start
- ◆ what you need to do during the unit
- ◆ opportunities for further learning and employment

Unit information

This unit enables you to apply theory to specific topics in psychology. You also conduct research into a psychological topic.

The unit is aimed at learners who want to develop their knowledge and understanding of psychological topics, as well as those who want to use it as the basis for further study.

The unit introduces you to three different topics within different areas of psychology. You explore each topic through theory that is both supported and challenged by research evidence. You are encouraged to read original journal articles and understand how they fit in the iterative process of psychology research.

You should have good communication skills and an interest in psychology. It would also be helpful to have some basic digital skills before you begin.

On completing the unit, you can:

- 1 apply theory and research evidence to psychological topics
- 2 conduct research into a psychological topic

You are assessed using an open-book assessment covering both outcomes. This means that you are allowed access to materials such as textbooks, notes and your virtual learning environment (VLE). You can give your assessment response in writing or orally. If your assessment response is written, it must be approximately 2,000 words, and if it is oral, it must be 12 to 15 minutes long.

One of the topics you study provides the basis for carrying out your own empirical research. The assessment involves giving evidence that you have followed the research process by:

- ◆ identifying the topic
- ◆ carrying out a comprehensive, fully sourced literature review of theory and research evidence in the topic area
- ◆ creating a logical hypothesis based on the literature review
- ◆ selecting an appropriate research method to ethically test the hypothesis
- ◆ collecting quantitative data

NextGen: HN published prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 3.0)
August 2024

- ◆ statistically analysing and understanding the collected data
- ◆ analysing what the findings mean

During the unit, you develop academic skills such as time management, multi-tasking ability, digital skills, essay writing skills and questioning ability based on the formative and summative activities and assessments.

You also develop key literacies such as communication, developed in formative and summative assessment. You learn to convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way, with references where appropriate. Oral presentations and discussions may also be used to help you improve your communication skills. You develop digital skills and computer literacy by using digital packages to produce assessments, and internet sources to research information on theorists, psychological concepts and other psychological ideas.

During the unit, you are introduced to Learning for Sustainability ideas, with links made to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. These are particularly relevant when you study theories of key psychologists and their work to understand human behaviour in relation to mental ill health.

The unit can support learning in other related units, such as Psychology A: The Shaping of Modern Psychology at SCQF level 7. You may be able to study HND Social Sciences or a degree programme in a related subject if you study the unit as part of the HNC Social Sciences.

Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, you develop meta-skills to enhance your employability in the social sciences sector.

Meta-skills include self-management, social intelligence and innovation.

You develop these naturally as you take part in the range of learning and teaching activities and produce assessment responses. Improving meta-skills such as organising your time (self-management) and communicating ideas clearly (social intelligence) is useful for future study and employment as well as during this course.

Administrative information

Published: August 2024 (version 3.0)

Superclass: PK

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Change to suggested time of delivery of the outcomes in 'Delivery of unit'. ◆ List of topics moved from 'Delivery of unit' to 'Additional guidance' for consistency across HNC Social Sciences units. Wording in 'Evidence requirements' updated to reflect this. ◆ In 'Approaches to assessment', additional information allowing group presentations was added. ◆ Rewording or additional sentences to standardise statements across HNC Social Sciences units in 'Evidence requirements', 'Meta-skills', 'Learning for Sustainability', 'Delivery of unit', 'Approaches to assessment' and 'Information for learners'. 	June 2023
3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Removed reference to requirement to use holistic assessment in 'Evidence Requirements and 'Information for learners'. ◆ In 'Evidence Requirements', changed 'a minimum of 2,000 words' to 'approximately 2,000 words', for consistency with other named social sciences units. ◆ In 'Approaches to assessment', additional words that a holistic or portfolio approach can be used. ◆ In 'Content and context for the unit', removed the headings for the five areas of psychology, Biological, Cognitive processes, Developmental processes, Individual differences and Social behaviour, as there is no need to make such distinctions between different areas of study. The list of available topics underneath the headings have remained. ◆ In 'Information for learners', added information on word length and duration of any oral presentation. 	April 2024

NextGen: HN published prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 3.0)
August 2024

Version	Description of change	Date

Note: please check [SQA's website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2022, 2023, 2024