



Guidance on use of gender as a variable in National 5 and Higher Psychology assignments

In National 5 and Higher Psychology assignments, learners design and carry out primary research on a topic of their choosing, sometimes using gender as a variable. In many assignments, learners investigate sex differences rather than gender differences. When investigating gender differences, learners should conform with best practice. Current best practice when using gender as a variable is to allow participants to self-identify their gender using open measures.

Two suggestions to enhance inclusivity in learners' assignments are:

- Avoid using tick-boxes for gender identification:
 - Encourage learners to allow participants to self-identify their gender using open-ended responses rather than tick-boxes (avoid including 'Other' or 'Prefer not to say', which may suggest secrecy or shame).
 - Promote the idea that everyone should have the opportunity to express their gender identity in their own words.
- Rethink reporting of gender statistics:
 - Avoid reporting a sample as '48% women, 49% men, 3% other', as it reinforces a binary view of gender.
 - Describe the prevalence of each gender category separately and use respectful terminology, such as 'trans', 'non-binary' and/or 'gender non-conforming'.

When supporting learners, you may find the further guidance in this [Social and Personality Psychology Compass article](#) helpful. For full guidance on National 5 and Higher Psychology assignments, please refer to the appropriate course specification and coursework assessment task documents.

If you have any questions, please email qualification.development@sqa.org.uk