

NextGen PDA educator guide

PDA Criminology (GYWP 47)

PDA History (GNO7 47)

PDA Politics (GE45 47)

PDA Psychology (GUNJ 47)

PDA Sociology (G44O 47)

Valid from: August 2026

This guide provides information about the Professional Development Award (PDA) to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It is for lecturers and assessors, and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver and assess the PDA.

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Purpose of the qualification

These five social science Professional Development Awards (PDA) have a variety of purposes. They:

- widen participation in the social sciences
- further develop learners' interest, knowledge and skills in one of the social sciences disciplines
- enhance learners' employment or promotion opportunities
- enable learners to progress to the Higher National Certificate (HNC) or the Higher National Diploma (HND) Social Sciences, or a relevant degree programme
- develop links between school and college provision, through a college and school partnership arrangement, to enhance the senior phase in schools

Each social science subject has value in its own right. Learners receive credit for in-depth knowledge and skills in a specific subject area.

Each PDA supports the development of meta-skills in the categories of self-management, social intelligence and innovation. Learners develop skills such as communication, time management and the ability to work with others. These skills are fundamental to learners' employment or academic prospects.

Each PDA also supports the development of other higher-order transferable skills, literacies and academic skills that are useful in many employment and higher education situations. Learners develop skills such as data handling, critical analysis and complex thinking through teaching and learning activities, and through formative and summative assessment.

The PDAs also provide opportunities for learners to develop their knowledge and understanding of sustainability and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

The PDAs require learners to go beyond basic knowledge and understanding of conflicting theories to analysis and evaluation of them. Skills such as problem solving, researching and reaching conclusions are advantageous in many occupations and in academic study. These are transferable skills which are not

specific to one situation but adaptable to a variety of situations. It is these skills that employers want their staff to demonstrate and that universities want their students to evidence. Each PDA supports the growth of these competences.

Structure

PDA's are made up of at least one double credit unit or two units. These can only be NextGen: HN units.

All PDA's and their component units are credit rated against SCQF. They may be set at SCQF levels 6 to 12.

At SCQF level 6, PDA's are made up of units with a minimum credit value of 12 SCQF credit points.

At SCQF levels 7 to 12, PDA's have a minimum credit value of 16 SCQF credit points. At least half the SCQF credit points must be at the level of the qualification.

PDA's in social science subjects are designed at SCQF level 7 and consist of 3 Qualifications Scotland credits (24 SCQF credit points), with all 3 Qualifications Scotland credits at SCQF level 7.

PDA Criminology framework

The PDA is made up of mandatory units. Learners must complete all mandatory units.

Mandatory units

Unit code	Unit title	Qualifications Scotland credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J72H 47	Criminology A: Introducing Theories and Concepts	1	8	7
J72J 47	Criminology B: Applied Criminology	2	16	7

PDA History framework

The PDA is made up of mandatory units. Learners must complete all mandatory units.

Mandatory units

Unit code	Unit title	Qualifications Scotland credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J6EN 47	History A: Exploring an Historical Period	1	8	7
J6EP 47	History B: Historical Debates	2	16	7

PDA Politics framework

The PDA is made up of mandatory units. Learners must complete all mandatory units.

Mandatory units

Unit code	Unit title	Qualifications Scotland credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J6ER 47	Politics A: Political Ideas	1	8	7
J6ES 47	Politics B: Governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom	2	16	7

PDA Psychology framework

The PDA is made up of mandatory units. Learners must complete all mandatory units.

Mandatory units

Unit code	Unit title	Qualifications Scotland credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J6ET 47	Psychology A: The Shaping of Modern Psychology	1	8	7
J6EV 47	Psychology B: Applied Psychology	2	16	7

PDA Sociology framework

The PDA is made up of mandatory units. Learners must complete all mandatory units.

Mandatory units

Unit code	Unit title	Qualifications Scotland credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J6EW 47	Sociology A: The Sociological Imagination	1	8	7
J6EX 47	Sociology B: Applied Sociology	2	16	7

Aims of the qualification

Social science PDAs aim to develop learners' knowledge, understanding and skills in specific social science disciplines.

They encourage learners to understand, analyse and evaluate theories and research carried out by social scientists associated with the specific discipline. Learners also acquire some of the skills of a social scientist. In addition, they develop meta-skills and other higher-order transferable skills, including academic skills.

General aims

1. Allow progression within the SCQF to further and higher education.
2. Allow progression into employment.
3. Support lifelong learning and multiple career options.
4. Develop the ability to work independently and as part of a group, and to be adaptable to respond to the needs of a constantly changing employment environment.
5. Develop meta-skills that complement professional knowledge and skills.
6. Develop transferable skills, such as study and research skills, communication skills, presentation techniques, personal effectiveness, problem solving, time management, and resource management.
7. Develop academic skills, such as referencing, citation and bibliography skills, as well as independent learning.
8. Develop digital literacy through opportunities to make use of a variety of digital tools and technologies to communicate and achieve learning goals.
9. Develop Learning for Sustainability skills, knowledge, understanding and values.

Specific aims

1. Develop an in-depth understanding of a social science discipline.
2. Improve learners' professional practice and behaviours in a social science discipline.
3. Develop critical- and evaluative-thinking skills, and the ability to manage and absorb large amounts of information.
4. Develop a questioning and evidence-based approach to a social science subject and topics, defining and framing questions about issues.
5. Gain knowledge of competing perspectives, theories, viewpoints and evidence within a social science discipline.
6. Develop informed, critical decision-making skills in relation to selecting sources of information, evidence and research, and the ability to describe, analyse and evaluate arguments of others.

Who is this qualification for?

This qualification is suitable for learners who want to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of a specific social science discipline. Learners progressing from lower-level qualifications gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the individual and society through knowledge and skills from a specific subject. They develop a range of meta-skills and other transferable higher-order skills, including academic skills. There is also the opportunity within the qualification to develop knowledge and skills in sustainability.

The PDAs are particularly relevant to part-time and evening study. The qualifications contribute to lifelong learning and social inclusion agendas and are suitable for those who are not in a position to commit to a full HNC programme.

Examples of part-time provision include:

- learners building up unit credits from PDAs over years in an individualised programme, working towards an HNC
- a discrete part-time course for a specific PDA
- school–college partnership for a specific PDA for senior-phase learners
- evening provision for a specific PDA

Entry to this qualification is at your centre's discretion. We recommend, however, that learners have one or more of the following:

- good communication and literacy skills; for example, Core Skill Communication at SCQF level 6
- previous study of social sciences subjects; for example, National Qualifications at SCQF level 6
- other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the qualification

Learners do not need to have previously studied a specific discipline, although it could be useful.

Social sciences has a tradition of offering opportunities to learners without formal qualifications and who may have experienced social exclusion. You are encouraged

to support social inclusion, providing opportunities for learners from non-traditional programmes. You should take into account experience, life skills and potential ability.

Learners may come from various routes. For example, a learner may have completed a non-certificated course in psychology or sociology and wish to pursue this at a higher level. Alternatively, a learner may be involved in political activity and want to gain a formal certificate.

Recognising prior learning

Qualifications Scotland recognises that learners gain knowledge and skills through formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. Formal learning is learning certificated by a recognised awarding or professional body. Non-formal learning includes learning such as employers' in-house training courses. Informal learning is learning based on experience from a variety of environments that is not formally assessed.

It is unlikely that a learner would have the appropriate prior learning and experience to meet all the requirements of a full PDA.

You can find more information and guidance about the [recognition of prior learning on our website](#).

Articulation and progression

Learners who complete this qualification could go on to:

- other qualifications in social sciences or related areas
- further study, employment and/or training

The PDAs in social sciences at SCQF level 7 can contribute to learners achieving the HNC Social Sciences, although learners must achieve other units that are not part of the PDAs to gain the full HNC. The HNC can provide progression to the HND Social Sciences or a degree programme.

The PDAs can provide useful continuing professional development (CPD) to support further study, employment or training in a wide range of occupational areas.

Credit transfer arrangements

Centres can make decisions about transferring credit. They can transfer credit if the subject-related content of the units is broadly equivalent. Centres should consider the currency of a learner's achievement before transferring credit.

It is possible that a learner who has studied individual SCQF level 7 social sciences units from a previous version of a Social Sciences PDA or from the HNC Social Sciences will have gained equivalent knowledge and skills at SCQF level 7.

You should supplement any information pertaining to credit transfer of individual units with information on transferable skills developed, as they could cover the meta-skills requirements.

PDA Criminology credit transfer arrangements

Current unit (SCQF level 7)	New unit (SCQF level 7)	Comment	Possible credit transfer
J8R1 34 Criminology: The Accused's Journey or J9FH 34 Criminology: The Accused's Journey	J72H 47 Criminology A: Introducing Theories and Concepts	No match	No
No previous B unit	J72J 47 Criminology B: Applied Criminology	No similar previous unit	No

PDA History credit transfer arrangements

Current unit (SCQF level 7)	New unit (SCQF level 7)	Comment	Possible credit transfer
FK7V 34 History A: Introducing Topics within a Historical Period	J6EN 47 History A: Exploring an Historical Period	Similar history content	You could consider credit transfer. This is dependent on the topics or themes covered in the unit and the meta-skills (Core Skills or other transferable or academic skills) development opportunities the learner took.
J02X 34 History B: Analysing Topics within a Historical Period	J6EP 47 History B: Historical Debates	Similar history content	You could consider credit transfer. This is dependent on the topics or themes covered in the unit and the meta-skills (Core Skills or other transferable or academic skills) development opportunities the learner took.

PDA Politics credit transfer arrangements

Current unit (SCQF level 7)	New unit (SCQF level 7)	Comment	Possible credit transfer
J032 34 Politics A: An Introduction to Political Theories of the State	J6ER 47 Politics A: Political Ideas	Content is different. The new unit focuses on political ideologies, rather than theories of the state.	No

Current unit (SCQF level 7)	New unit (SCQF level 7)	Comment	Possible credit transfer
J0H0 34 Politics B: The United Kingdom and Scotland	J6ES 47 Politics B: Governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom	Similar politics content	You could consider credit transfer. This is dependent on the topics or themes covered in the unit and the meta-skills (Core Skills or other transferable or academic skills) development opportunities the learner took.

PDA Psychology credit transfer arrangements

Current unit (SCQF level 7)	New unit (SCQF level 7)	Comment	Possible credit transfer
FK8D 34 Psychology A: History and Development of Psychology	J6ET 47 Psychology A: The Shaping of Modern Psychology	Similar psychology content	You could consider credit transfer. This is dependent on the topics or themes covered in the unit and the meta-skills (Core Skills or other transferable or academic skills) development opportunities the learner took.
J030 34 Psychology B: Explanation and Research of Psychological Topics	J6EV 47 Psychology B: Applied Psychology	Similar psychology content	You could consider credit transfer. This is dependent on the topics or themes covered in the unit and the meta-skills (Core Skills or other transferable or academic skills) development opportunities the learner took.

PDA Sociology credit transfer arrangements

Current unit (SCQF level 7)	New unit (SCQF level 7)	Comment	Possible credit transfer
FK8R 34 Sociology A: Introduction to Sociology	J6EW 47 Sociology A: The Sociological Imagination	Similar sociology content	You could consider credit transfer. This is dependent on the topics or themes covered in the unit and the meta-skills (Core Skills or other transferable or academic skills) development opportunities the learner took.
J031 34 Sociology B: Applying Sociological Theories and Studies to Sociological Topics	J6EX 47 Sociology B: Applied Sociology	Similar sociology content	You could consider credit transfer. This is dependent on the topics or themes covered in the unit and the meta-skills (Core Skills or other transferable or academic skills) development opportunities the learner took.

Recommended Core Skills entry profile

Learners should have the following Core Skills at the stated SCQF levels before starting this qualification.

Core Skill	Recommended SCQF entry profile	Associated assessment activities (dependent on the PDA's content)
Communication	SCQF level 6	Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summarise, analyse and evaluate • produce formative and summative essays; responses to structured questions; academic posters, timelines, blogs and journals; and presentations • participate in discussions and respond to others
Numeracy	SCQF level 5	In the PDA Psychology, learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • calculate central tendencies and other descriptive statistics • calculate statistical significance from inferential statistics research activity
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	SCQF level 5	Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carry out research online, including using internet sources and online library resources • use digital tools to produce formative and summative essays; responses to structured questions; academic posters, timelines, blogs and journals; and presentations • use a virtual learning environment (VLE)

Core Skill	Recommended SCQF entry profile	Associated assessment activities (dependent on the PDA's content)
Problem solving	SCQF level 5	Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carry out research tasks • develop solutions to any issues that arise during their studies
Working with others	SCQF level 5	Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with peers in a range of activities, formative research tasks, debates and presentations

How the qualification meets employer and higher education institution needs

This qualification is designed in collaboration with employers, higher education institutions (HEIs), practitioners, students and subject associations to meet the sector need.

Mapping qualification aims to units

All qualification aims are directly relevant to every unit.

Assessment strategy for the qualification

PDA Criminology

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J72H 47	Criminology A: Introducing Theories and Concepts	<p>An open-book assessment providing written or oral evidence covering all outcomes: you should give learners the assessment task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners must produce a written response of approximately 1,500 words, or an oral response of 10 to 12 minutes.</p> <p>Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment, including individual biographies; image essays; blogs; oral presentations; poster exhibitions; or any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.</p>

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J72J 47	Criminology B: Applied Criminology	<p>An open-book assessment providing written or oral evidence covering all outcomes: you should give learners the assessment task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners must produce a written response of approximately 2,000 words, or an oral response of 12 to 15 minutes.</p> <p>You must assess only one of the three topics studied. Learners must provide evidence of three contrasting criminological theories and three related criminological pieces of evidence applied to one topic. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.</p>

PDA History

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J6EN 47	History A: Exploring an Historical Period	<p>An open-book assessment covering all unit outcomes: you should give learners the assessment task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners must produce a written response of approximately 1,500 words, or an oral response of 10 to 12 minutes.</p> <p>This assessment could take the form of an open-book essay; structured questions; an individual oral presentation; a poster exhibition; an individual blog; creating a website; or any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.</p>

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J6EP 47	History B: Historical Debates	<p>An open-book assessment covering both unit outcomes, providing written or oral evidence: you should give learners the assessment task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners can produce their response for these outcomes over an extended period, if required. Learners must produce a written response of approximately 2,000 words, or an oral response of 12 to 15 minutes.</p> <p>This assessment could take the form of an open-book source or historical analysis; an essay; a portfolio; structured questions; an individual oral presentation; a poster exhibition; online methods such as an individual blog or creating a website; or any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.</p>

PDA Politics

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J6ER 47	Politics A: Political Ideas	<p>An open-book assessment providing written or oral evidence across all outcomes: you should give learners the assessment task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners must produce a written response of approximately 1,500 words, or an oral response of 10 to 12 minutes.</p> <p>Learners must cover one political ideology and two political concepts. Learners must also apply two political concepts to a political ideology. Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are only suggestions, and there may be other methods that would be more suitable for learners: a written essay; an oral presentation; a visual presentation using the learner's choice of media format; a quiz with open-text responses; an academic poster supported by an oral presentation; a storyboard; a blog; an audio-visual presentation; a podcast or debate; or any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.</p>

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J6ES 47	Politics B: Governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom	<p>An open-book assessment providing written or oral evidence covering all outcomes: you should give learners the assessment task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners must produce a written response of between 2,000 and 2,500 words, or an oral response of 12 to 18 minutes.</p> <p>Learners should provide evidence from two out of six key topics relating to the governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom. Options for assessment methods could take the form of a report; an essay; a set of structured questions; an individual oral presentation or poster exhibition with oral explanation; a podcast; a blog; creating a website; or any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. It could take the form of preparing papers for a debate or a combination of assessment approaches in one assessment. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.</p>

PDA Psychology

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J6ET 47	Psychology A: The Shaping of Modern Psychology	<p>An open-book assessment providing written or oral evidence covering all outcomes. You should give learners the assessment task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners must produce a written response of approximately 1,500 words, or an oral response of 10 to 12 minutes.</p> <p>Learners must cover at least two schools of thought. They could produce an annotated timeline showing the linear development of psychology as a handwritten or digitally created, double A3-sized infographic. Learners could present an illustrated summary poster, produce an essay or carry out any other method that meets the evidence requirements. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.</p>

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J6EV 47	Psychology B: Applied Psychology	<p>An open-book assessment providing written or oral evidence covering all outcomes: you should give learners the assessment task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners should produce written or oral evidence. Learners must produce a written response of approximately 2,000 words, or an oral response of 12 to 15 minutes, conforming to the requirements of a laboratory report.</p> <p>The assessment could take the form of a formal written laboratory report in a standardised structured format. Alternatively, it could take the form of an oral presentation, supported by visual materials such as an academic poster or digital slide presentation. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.</p>

PDA Sociology

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J6EW 47	Sociology A: The Sociological Imagination	<p>An open-book assessment providing written or oral evidence covering all outcomes: you should give learners the assessment task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners must produce a written response of approximately 1,500 words, or an oral response of 10 to 12 minutes.</p> <p>Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment, including individual biographies, image essays, a blog, an oral presentation or poster exhibition, or any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.</p>

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J6EX 47	Sociology B: Applied Sociology	<p>An open-book assessment providing written or oral evidence covering all outcomes: you should give learners the assessment task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners must produce a written response of between 1,500 to 2,000 words, or an oral response of 12 to 15 minutes.</p> <p>Only one theme needs to be assessed. This could be developed in an essay, a presentation or a poster exhibition, or any other method that is appropriate to meet the evidence requirements. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.</p>

Meta-skills

Every NextGen: HN Qualification gives learners the opportunity to develop meta-skills.

Meta-skills are transferable behaviours and abilities that help people to adapt and succeed in life, study and work. There are three categories of meta-skills: self-management, social intelligence and innovation. Each of these is made up of four meta-skills and a number of sub-skills.

- Self-management — focusing, integrity, adapting, initiative
- Social intelligence — communicating, feeling, collaborating, leading
- Innovation — curiosity, creativity, sense-making, critical thinking

From early in the qualification, we want learners to identify and understand the meta-skills they can develop, and to appreciate the personal and professional value of these skills. We want to support learners to continue to articulate, use and build on them long after they have achieved their qualification. In this way, we help learners to develop broad skills profiles, enabling them to thrive in a changing world.

Every NextGen: HN unit signposts opportunities for learners to develop meta-skills. Meta-skills development is founded on a clear process of self-assessment, goal setting, action planning and reflective practice.

You can find meta-skills teaching, learning and assessment resources on [our meta-skills web page](#).

Meta-skills in social sciences

Self-management

- **Focusing:** any activity in the social sciences that requires learners to read and discuss theories or research supports the development of this meta-skill. You should ensure there are suitable reading materials and sources available to encourage learners to read and think about theories and research evidence. Sources help them make decisions about what is valuable information and what is misinformation.
- **Integrity:** you can encourage learners to act in an ethical way when they produce responses to assessments and carry out project work. You could create a learning activity on the academic skill of citations and referencing for assessments to support the development of this meta-skill.
- **Adapting:** learners develop new knowledge and skills in each unit, as well as using different technologies and digital means of communicating or carrying out assessments. Working through a virtual learning environment (VLE) can support development here.
- **Initiative:** learners can read and think about theories, and research evidence or sources to help them decide what is valuable information and what is misinformation. You should make sure they know how to use your centre's library facilities. Organise regular check-ins for coursework to ensure learners stick to tasks and make sufficient progress. Getting them to set their own deadlines as they carry out assessment tasks works well here.

Social intelligence

- **Communicating:** any discussion or debate can support development of this meta-skill.
- **Feeling:** you can support the development of this meta-skill by giving learners time to discuss theories and express opinions to help them understand other perspectives. You should encourage learners to respect each other's viewpoints in discussions.

- **Collaborating:** you can organise learners into small groups of to work collaboratively on specific elements of researching information.
- **Leading:** you can give learners responsibility in a formative task, encouraging them to consider the contributions of others and share information effectively. You can use the jigsaw technique, in which each learner takes the lead on a specific aspect of knowledge and brings this to the group to develop a cohesive understanding.

Innovation

- **Curiosity:** you can encourage learners to gather information independently. You can facilitate this by demonstrating online research tools and allowing for library research time. You can organise class discussions and debates to encourage learners to question assumptions, ideas, information and research evidence.
- **Creativity:** you can ask learners to produce visual illustrations to enhance explanations and analysis points in an oral presentation.
- **Sense-making:** you can give opportunities for discussion, as this encourages learners to gain an understanding of why people behave the way they do. You should ask learners to evaluate a range of ideas. You could ask them to give a presentation to their peers on a topic.
- **Critical thinking:** you could ask learners to use a variety of information in a discussion on different interpretations about a related issue or event, and draw overall conclusions. You could structure this as a debate. Learners should use sources to form appropriate arguments.

Meta-skills are central to successfully engaging with and completing assignments and projects. You should encourage learners to plan how they will use and develop meta-skills in their coursework.

You should emphasise the importance of planning, as this helps learners succeed in completing activities and assessments on time. You can model good planning for your learners by having a clear lesson plan available, noting time allocated to different activities, and sharing this with your class. Creating a schedule for assessment across the whole PDA can support learners' planning skills. You could

have a discussion on the best ways to manage time for studying, reading theoretical material, or carrying out internet research, as this helps learners focus on the specific activities required for success. You can encourage learners to build 'thinking time' into their activities. Learners often underestimate what is needed to complete tasks well. The meta-skills of focusing, adapting and initiative are particularly key to planning in activities or assessment. Many higher education institutions (HEIs) give advice on their websites on how to create a useful study plan, and some also provide templates.

In any assessment task, learners can demonstrate the meta-skills of adapting and critical thinking by reviewing the available literature on theories and studies related to their chosen topic. They develop the meta-skill of curiosity through questioning and recognising the nature of evidence in social sciences.

There is a project in the PDA Psychology, in the unit Psychology B: Applied Psychology at SCQF level 7, that is used to assess both outcomes. You can ask learners to create a plan for time management, deciding on a suitable topic, specific research activities, conducting a literature review, any collaboration meetings, preparing materials, collecting data, and analysing and interpreting results. This helps the learners to complete the work on time. You can assign a project to meet the evidence requirements for other units in the PDAs. Planning is the key to success here, too.

The role of the coach, mentor or facilitator is key to helping learners understand, develop and reflect on their own meta-skills and those central to course activities and assessments.

Learners can focus on any meta-skills appropriate to the units in the PDA. However, learning and teaching should also facilitate individual development. Learners have individual strengths and areas for development, and they do not have to reach a particular level in relation to meta-skills. Coursework and projects provide the context for development appropriate to the SCQF level.

You can use case studies and scenario-based activities to demonstrate the value of meta-skills and how they can be applied. You can provide opportunities for peer reflection. A group of learners could share experiences and reflections about how to apply meta-skills in the context of their coursework. You could adopt the role of facilitator to draw learners' attention to situations where meta-skills were or could have been applied.

Your discussions with learners could include positive recognition and guidance on future development, based on previous performance. As learners progress, you could introduce industry content that requires skills such as problem recognition and problem solving, both of which combine multiple meta-skills.

Mapping opportunities to develop meta-skills across the PDAs

PDA Criminology

Self-management

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J72H 47	Criminology A: Introducing Theories and Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing • Integrity • Adapting • Initiative
J72J 47	Criminology B: Applied Criminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing • Integrity • Adapting • Initiative

Social intelligence

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J72H 47	Criminology A: Introducing Theories and Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating• Feeling• Collaborating
J72J 47	Criminology B: Applied Criminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating• Feeling• Collaborating• Leading

Innovation

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J72H 47	Criminology A: Introducing Theories and Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curiosity• Creativity• Sense-making• Critical thinking
J72J 47	Criminology B: Applied Criminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curiosity• Creativity• Sense-making• Critical thinking

PDA History

Self-management

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J6EN 47	History A: Exploring an Historical Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing• Integrity• Initiative
J6EP 47	History B: Historical Debates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adapting• Initiative

Social intelligence

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J6EN 47	History A: Exploring an Historical Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating• Collaborating
J6EP 47	History B: Historical Debates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating• Collaborating

Innovation

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J6EN 47	History A: Exploring an Historical Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curiosity• Sense-making• Critical thinking
J6EP 47	History B: Historical Debates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curiosity• Sense-making• Critical thinking

PDA Politics

Self-management

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J6ER 47	Politics A: Political Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing• Adapting
J6ES 47	Politics B: Governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing• Integrity• Adapting

Social intelligence

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J6ER 47	Politics A: Political Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating• Feeling• Collaborating
J6ES 47	Politics B: Governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating• Feeling• Collaborating

Innovation

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J6ER 47	Politics A: Political Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curiosity• Sense-making• Critical thinking
J6ES 47	Politics B: Governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curiosity• Sense-making• Critical thinking

PDA Psychology

Self-management

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J6ET 47	Psychology A: The Shaping of Modern Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing• Integrity• Adapting• Initiative
J6EV 47	Psychology B: Applied Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing• Integrity• Adapting• Initiative

Social intelligence

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J6ET 47	Psychology A: The Shaping of Modern Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating• Feeling• Collaborating• Leading
J6EV 47	Psychology B: Applied Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating• Feeling• Collaborating

Innovation

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J6ET 47	Psychology A: The Shaping of Modern Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curiosity• Creativity• Sense-making• Critical thinking
J6EV 47	Psychology B: Applied Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curiosity• Creativity• Sense-making• Critical thinking

PDA Sociology

Self-management

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J6EW 47	Sociology A: The Sociological Imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing• Integrity• Adapting• Initiative
J6EX 47	Sociology B: Applied Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing• Integrity• Adapting• Initiative

Social intelligence

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J6EW 47	Sociology A: The Sociological Imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating• Feeling• Collaborating
J6EX 47	Sociology B: Applied Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating• Feeling• Collaborating• Leading

Innovation

Unit code	Unit title	Meta-skills
J6EW 47	Sociology A: The Sociological Imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curiosity• Sense-making• Critical thinking
J6EX 47	Sociology B: Applied Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curiosity• Sense-making• Critical thinking

Learning for Sustainability (LfS)

Context

The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UK in 2015, has shaped the development of Scottish, national and international sustainability policy. It sets out the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), which are central to the Scottish Government's [National Performance Framework](#). Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is a commitment to embedding the SDGs in Scottish education.

LfS embraces global citizenship, sustainable development, social justice, human rights, climate change, biodiversity loss, equality and inclusion. Learners develop their capacity to deal with the unpredictable social, economic and environmental challenges facing our rapidly changing world.

LfS combines:

- education for sustainable development (ESD)
- global citizenship
- outdoor learning

ESD is the internationally used term for sustainability education. Although LfS has a broader remit, the terms are largely interchangeable. Colleges and universities tend to use ESD, while schools usually use LfS. Both focus on a broad range of social, economic and environmental themes and approaches across all levels of education. Qualifications Scotland uses LfS as an umbrella term.

Learning for Sustainability in NextGen: HN Qualifications

Sustainability is a core component in this qualification.

Learners who complete this qualification should have:

- a general understanding of social, economic and environmental sustainability
- a general understanding of the SDGs
- a deeper understanding of subject-specific sustainability
- the confidence to apply the skills, knowledge, understanding and values they develop in the next stage of their life

All social sciences PDAs indicate where concepts and ideas relate to the SDGs. You can cover any of the SDGs that are relevant to the subject area.

You can relate the UN SDGs to social sustainability or economic sustainability within different social sciences PDAs. You can use these as suggestions or link to any of the UN SDGs as relevant.

PDA Criminology	Goal 16	Peace, justice and strong institutions
PDA History	Goal 3	Good health and well-being
	Goal 5	Gender equality
PDA Politics	Goal 5	Gender equality
	Goal 10	Reducing inequalities
	Goal 16	Peace, justice and strong institutions
PDA Psychology	Goal 3	Good health and well-being
	Goal 4	Quality education

PDA Sociology	Goal 1	No poverty
	Goal 3	Good health and well-being
	Goal 4	Quality education
	Goal 8	Decent work and economic growth
	Goal 10	Reduced inequalities
	Goal 16	Peace, justice and strong institutions

Find out more about Qualifications Scotland’s approach on the [NextGen: HN Learning for Sustainability web page](#). Here, you can find various resources for both learners and practitioners, including an Academy module, an LfS reflective template and links to external resources. You may find it helpful as a starting point for considering how the SDGs are, or could be, embedded in a qualification, unit or assessment.

You could ask learners to work in groups to summarise the information on the relevant UN SDGs for the PDA and present it to their peers. This would support development of several meta-skills, such as communicating, collaborating and sense-making.

Resources to support Learning for Sustainability learning and teaching

Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) Scotland. Available at: <https://www.eauc.org.uk/about/what-we-do/> [accessed 14 April 2025].

Education Scotland information and resources. Available at: <https://education.gov.scot/resources/a-summary-of-learning-for-sustainability-resources/> [accessed 14 April 2025].

The General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) has a Learning for Sustainability section on its website, designed to help teachers and lecturers explore LfS and how it relates to the Professional Standards for Scotland’s Teachers. Available at: <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/registant-resources/learning-for-sustainability> [accessed 3 May 2024].

GTCS materials include videos, a self-evaluation tool linked to the professional standards, and other resources to help all learners and practitioners better understand LfS, the nature of and context for it in Scotland and globally, and how to embed it into your teaching. Their workbook *Exploring LfS in professional Standards for Teachers* is available at https://mygtcs.gtcs.org.uk/registant-resources/learning-for-sustainability/module-1/resources/res_10079.pdf

In partnership with Learning for Sustainability Scotland, Scotland's United Nations University-recognised Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development has selected a series of professional readings and resources to support teachers in Scotland to further enact and embed Learning for Sustainability in their practice. Available at: <https://learningforsustainabilityscotland.org/> [accessed 14 April 2025]

United Nations, 2021. *Nations United: Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times*, YouTube. Helps give context to the UN SDGs. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVWHuJOmaEk> [accessed 14 April 2025].

SDG Network Reporting Hub for the SDGs in Scotland and in the UK. Available at: <https://globalgoals.scot/report-hub/> [accessed 14 April 2025].

Scottish Government's refreshed LfS action plan 2023–2030 *Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity*. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/learning-for-sustainability-vision-2030-action-plan/> [accessed 14 April 2025].

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Click on each goal for further information. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/> [accessed 14 April 2025].

Scottish Colleges Statement of Commitment on the Climate Emergency, collaborating to delivering on 10 key actions. Available at: [Scottish-Colleges-Climate-Emergency-Commitment.pdf](#) [accessed 3 May 2024].

Grading

NextGen PDAs are ungraded.

When delivered as part of the NextGen: HN pilot, PDAs may contribute towards the grading of the overall qualification.

Approaches to delivery and assessment

Sequencing or integrating units

We recommend that you schedule the A unit before the B unit for each PDA, as the A unit can provide underpinning knowledge for learners going on to study the B unit. However, there may be circumstances in which you prefer to deliver the B unit first. Each unit is stand-alone, so this is possible.

An HN unit with a Qualifications Scotland credit value of 1 credit represents approximately 40 hours of programmed and directed teaching, learning and assessment, with a 2 Qualifications Scotland credit unit representing 80 hours of programmed and directed teaching, learning and assessment. Learners are expected to give the same amount again (for example, another 40 hours for a Qualifications Scotland 1-credit unit) to private study for that unit. We recommend these timings for the best chance of success in units. We recognise that timetabled hours may vary, but learners should be aware of the total number of hours they need to give to study to understand the content and develop the knowledge and skills required for each unit.

We give suggestions for delivery below, using a two-semester or three-block timetable. These are based on common delivery of 36 hours for 8 SCQF points (1 Qualifications Scotland credit). There are many other ways to schedule teaching and learning to ensure that there is enough time for learners to cover the required knowledge and skills.

A suggested timetable for two semesters of 18 or 19 weeks

Unit 1 A: 1 Qualifications Scotland credit in semester one — 2 hours a week

Unit 2 B: 2 Qualifications Scotland credits in semester two — 4 hours a week

A suggested timetable for three blocks of 12 or 13 weeks

Unit 1 A: 1 Qualifications Scotland credit in block one — 3 hours a week

Unit 2 B: 2 Qualifications Scotland credits in block two — 3 hours a week, and block three — 3 hours a week

Additional guidance on integrated or holistic assessment

Holistic or integrated assessment focuses on assessing a number of outcomes in a unit together, or in some cases, assessing the unit as a whole, rather than by outcome. When assessing a unit of competence holistically, the assessment activities integrate a number of aspects of the competence. Holistic or integrated assessment can reduce the time spent on assessment and can promote greater equity in the assessment process.

We recommend you use holistic assessment for each unit to minimise learners' overall assessment load. However, if you prefer, to avoid bottlenecks or assessment congestion at the end of the course, you can spread the assessment tasks for a unit or units over a longer period, using a portfolio-based approach.

Generic feedback

You can provide generic feedback to the class group before the final submission date, allowing learners to benefit from the experiences of others. You could give an overview of the common errors, areas of success, trouble spots, or any aspects that still require clarification in the drafts submitted.

Individual feedback

After marking assessments for an outcome or an entire unit, you can offer learners tailored feedback based on their strengths and areas for development. Your advice can concentrate on areas where they need to improve by providing specific information about their performance. Giving constructive criticism can motivate learners if it also involves recognising their achievements and hard work.

Feedback can serve as a platform for learners to ask questions and receive answers. You can clarify specific misconceptions and respond to enquiries to help learners understand what they must do to improve for future assessments or re-assessments.

Giving individual feedback can encourage learners to reflect on their meta-skills and the development of their understanding in their social sciences subjects.

Learners must demonstrate their capacity to work independently to complete a task, and achieve the knowledge, skills and evidence requirements outlined in each unit specification.

Reasonable assistance

We use the word 'reasonable assistance' to distinguish between giving learners guidance on how to produce the necessary evidence for assessment, and giving them too much aid, which would jeopardise the assessment's integrity. Every step involved in teaching and learning includes reasonable help.

At every stage of an assessment — that is, in between the time the task instructions are distributed and the completion date — you should be available to offer counsel, explanation and guidance (see examples below).

As with any assessment, learners must be able to meet the evidence requirements, and the evidence must be their own original work. Learners develop skills of planning, analysing and evaluating, including working independently.

Balancing giving reasonable assistance with learners working independently can be difficult. This applies whether you choose to use a holistic assessment or split the assessment into several tasks in a portfolio approach.

It is impossible to provide a comprehensive list of examples of 'reasonable assistance' for every potential assessment scenario. However, the examples below illustrate the types of support that you can give that are appropriate, whatever the planned assessment schedule is:

- selecting a subject for research, or a topic or theme for assessment
 - Unless the unit specifies that learners must choose the activity, topic or theme on their own, it is acceptable to offer your input and suggestions on the selection before they begin the assignment. Learners should operate with greater independence once they start working on the assessment.
- suggesting sources
 - You can suggest alternate sources if resources for an assignment are not available or learners are struggling to find suitable resources.
- clarification on an aspect of the task or question.
 - Learners may seek clarification if they do not fully understand what is being asked of them. You can answer questions about structure or meaning of the task or question.
- reviewing options with learners
 - Learners may have several options or solutions to a problem they have or to advance their work. You can discuss the pros and cons of the choices with the learner before asking them to choose a suitable course of action. This helps learners to think through the options to help them arrive at a suitable solution. You should not tell them which option to choose.

- asking learners to review or double-check material they have already been taught
 - If learners find it challenging to produce assessment responses that show appropriate analysis or evaluation, or display errors in their reasoning in their work, you can direct them to re-read relevant material or give additional reading materials, if required.
- guiding learners to elaborate or highlight ideas without directly leading them
 - This falls between providing clarification and outlining possibilities. Sometimes learners become stuck on a particular section of a task. In these situations, you could support them by posing follow-up questions that prompt reflection on the initial issue, enabling learners to develop their own solutions without being given the answers.
- arranging for introductions and access
 - In certain circumstances, you may have to make initial connections for learners to allow them to carry out aspects of a project or assignment. Once initial contact has been established, learners should take responsibility for further arrangements, if appropriate. This may include access to college facilities or rooms, where staff support is required for bookings.

You provide help in the form of prompts, questions and clarifications, without giving answers that learners could copy and use.

Holistic assessment

You can use the guidance on reasonable assistance when conducting holistic assessment. However, you would not mark learners' work until after the deadline for completion or submission, towards the end of the unit delivery. You would then ask the learner to remediate or, if necessary, offer a re-assessment if they failed to complete the evidence requirements correctly.

For holistic assessment, remediation or re-assessment would take place towards the end of the unit, after any completion date.

Portfolio approach

You can also apply the guidance on reasonable assistance when using a portfolio approach to assess a unit. Using the portfolio approach, you set several tasks for learners to complete during the unit delivery. This allows you to spread the workload across the duration of the unit. If you choose to use this approach, you should mark each task set and give individual feedback at that point. Timely feedback allows learners to reflect on it and apply the lessons learned in any future assessment. You should store the full set of tasks together for each learner to show coverage of the evidence requirements.

Individual feedback in the portfolio approach

Giving learners insightful, personalised feedback is useful for their development. You should clearly communicate expectations and criteria for success in advance. Help learners understand how their performance compares to the set standards by aligning feedback with these expectations.

Establish a friendly, approachable atmosphere where learners can freely discuss their work and ask questions. Give feedback as soon as it is practicable after marking to ensure its relevance and impact. Quickly address the aspects that went well and those that can be improved.

Give precise examples of learners' strengths and areas for development. Avoid ambiguous statements. Do not just say they did a good job — be specific about which aspects of their work are good. Make observations about their activities and efforts, using a positive tone. Present constructive feedback in a constructive way by focusing on areas for growth rather than flaws.

Encourage learners to reflect on their own work. Ask questions that guide them to think about what they did well and how they can improve. Encourage them to identify areas where they feel confident and areas where they may need additional support.

Provide helpful criticism. Make precise, actionable recommendations for improvement. Start with positive feedback, then provide constructive criticism, and

end with another positive note (this is known as a feedback sandwich). This approach helps balance the feedback and keeps the learner motivated.

Encourage learners to set goals to improve their approach. Support them in creating a plan for how they can work towards improvement.

Providing personalised feedback helps to foster a supportive and productive learning environment. By offering focused direction and chances for self-reflection and development, you support learners' overall growth and development. You should ensure that they understand that you expect them to act on any feedback given. You should consider their responses to feedback in remediation or in future assessment.

Learners can remediate shortly after you have marked their assessment task responses, or you can wait until later in the unit delivery to schedule time for remediation or re-assessment. In this way, you can help learners manage their workload more efficiently and effectively.

In summary

You can choose to use holistic assessment for a unit. If you do, learners should complete work to a target date, after which you mark the work, then give individual feedback. This would take place towards the end of the unit.

Alternatively, you can choose to use a portfolio approach, with the assessment split into set tasks throughout the unit delivery, covering all the evidence requirements. You would mark each task as learners complete it and give individual feedback after marking each task. Remediation or re-assessment can take place immediately after the assessment and feedback are complete.

Generic feedback and reasonable assistance can be used in both models. You can give generic feedback once you have information from learner drafts or from discussions with learners on their planned assessment responses. Individual feedback should wait until you have completed marking for the whole assessment (holistic assessment) or when learners have completed individual tasks.

Remediation and re-assessment in NextGen PDAs

Remediation

Remediation allows an assessor to clarify learners' responses, either by requiring a written amendment or by oral questioning, where there is a minor shortfall or omission in evidence requirements. In either case, the assessor must formally note such instances, in writing or as a recording, and make them available to the internal and external verifier.

Remediation is not permitted for closed-book assessments.

The size and structure of the larger NextGen: HN units should mean that the assessor or lecturer is close enough to ongoing assessment activity in project-based units to identify the requirement for remediation as it occurs.

In named social science units that are part of the PDAs, learners should complete remediation for outcomes by reviewing their original work. If it is a written response, you should ask the learner to hand in a complete piece of work with amendments incorporated in the appropriate context, rather than adding a large amount of text at the end. If their work does not meet evidence requirements, ask them to fully rewrite their work to a prescribed format. You should use your professional judgement to determine the number of words that the learner needs to add. However, if more than 10% of words is needed overall to fill gaps or provide clarification, a re-assessment would be more appropriate. You can use oral clarification for minor omissions or to clarify minor details in written work. You should record that oral clarification has been used.

In oral work, you can question learners at the end of their presentation or explanation to address minor omissions, or where further clarification is required. Again, you should note that oral clarification has been used. This helps reduce the need for re-assessment.

In formative assessment situations, you can give feedback at any point. There is one summative assessment point at the end of each unit, and you should give feedback

then. This is to ensure a consistent approach across the qualification and support standardisation.

Re-assessment

We must give learners who fail a unit a re-assessment opportunity or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. Where we have introduced larger units to a framework, we expect instances of re-assessment to be minimal, due to the approach to assessment and remediation. Where re-assessment is required in a project-based unit, a substantially different project must be used.

In a re-assessment, you must ask the learner to tackle a different topic or question. You can give a re-assessment using a different method, such as an oral presentation if the first method was a written assessment.

In oral assessment, you should use a re-assessment if there are large gaps in information requiring more than 10% of words to be added, or to meet evidence requirements. In this situation, you should give a new question or topic. If the structure of the learner's presentation is unsuitable, but the broad content is appropriate, you can ask them to give another presentation of the same duration on the same topic or question as the original.

Resource requirements

Centres must have suitably qualified staff, and appropriate learning and teaching resources in place for each subject before they begin delivery. See Qualifications Scotland's Systems and Qualification Approval: Guidance for Centres document, available on our [Becoming a Qualifications Scotland centre - application forms and guidance page](#) — in particular, Category 2, criteria 2.1 and 2.4.

Learners should have access to library resources to allow them to research topics and theories across the social sciences subjects. It is useful if learners can access original research articles. While there are curated textbooks available that summarise studies, we encourage learners to engage with the language and structure of formal published academic research. Where possible, they can use

peer-reviewed journals, using online access through a library. You should make sure that research articles you reference in teaching are accessible to learners.

Access to digital equipment, such as computers, laptops or tablets, helps support learners' digital skills development.

Guidelines on qualifications required for teaching, assessing and internally verifying the PDAs at SCQF level 7

Delivery staff should be qualified to teach the subject or subjects that they are teaching, for example, by having a degree in the subject. Course delivery is enhanced when staff support each other in sharing knowledge and skills, and centres should provide additional training to allow staff to be flexible.

For criminology, a degree in sociology or psychology would also be acceptable if appropriate options were studied within the degree programme.

Staff should also be encouraged to complete the following, as appropriate:

Lecturers and tutors

- Teaching Qualification Further Education (TQFE)
or
- GR5K 49 PDA Teaching Practice in Scotland's Colleges

Assessors

- TQFE, plus relevant CPD
or
- GR5K 49 PDA Teaching Practice in Scotland's Colleges
or
- GF8P 48 PDA Conduct the Assessment Process

Internal verifiers

- GF8R 48 PDA Conduct the Internal Verification Process

Additional unit information

In this section, we give you supporting notes on various units to help you shape the focus of learning and teaching activities. The information given here supplements the additional guidance given in the unit specifications.

Academic writing and referencing

We developed learner-specific Academy modules following feedback gathered in learner-evaluation activities. The following modules are now available on Academy, and we plan to develop additional content in the future.

Please feel free to share these modules with your learners:

- [NextGen: HN — Academic Writing](#) — By the end of this module, learners understand the core principles of academic writing.
- [NextGen: HN — Referencing](#) — This short module covers the fundamental aspects of referencing in academic writing.

Many of the units in these qualifications ask learners to analyse and evaluate theories, perspectives, or research evidence and sources. Analysis and evaluation are key skills for learners to develop and use.

What is analysis?

Analysis involves breaking something down into its constituent parts or elements to understand its nature or function. This can involve examining the components, structures and relationships between different aspects of a given subject. An example might be an analysis of a political speech, which should involve examining its various elements and components, such as its structure, language, tone and rhetorical strategies. This type of analysis would focus on describing and explaining these elements to gain a deeper understanding of the speech's intended message and purpose.

Learners are often asked to analyse specific social science theories, breaking them down into key concepts and components, and examining the ways in which they are

interconnected. Analysis could also explore the theory's historical and intellectual context, including its origins and influences, and how it has evolved over time. Identifying or defining key concepts related to the theory would also help with analysis.

Analysis can also involve examining the ways in which a theory has been applied in research and practice, and evaluating its strengths and weaknesses. This could involve considering questions such as:

- How effectively does the theory explain social phenomena?
- What are its limitations and blind spots?
- How has the theory been tested and refined over time?

An analysis of a theory could also involve comparing or contrasting it with other theories within the field. For example, you might examine how Weber's Theory of Social Action compares to other theories of social structure or agency, and consider the implications of these differences for understanding society.

What is evaluation?

In social sciences, evaluation of a theory involves assessing its usefulness and relevance in explaining specific events or behaviour. This may involve examining the theory's assumptions, concepts and any observable evidence to support the theory, to determine whether it provides a valid and credible explanation of the social world. An evaluation of a theory may also consider its practical implications, such as how it can inform policy or practice. Evaluation involves making judgements about the subject based on certain criteria or standards.

Evaluation may be one of the steps involved in the process of examining the subject in an analysis, as a means of developing an interpretation or understanding of the theory or event, rather than an end point. Evaluation as part of an analysis is focused on developing an interpretation or understanding of a complex subject, whereas evaluation on its own is more focused on making judgements based on certain criteria or standards.

PDA Criminology

Criminology A: Introducing Theories and Concepts

The British Society of Criminology notes that there is a need to update theories in criminology. Teaching should not end with theories developed in the 1940s, but should include information on more current theories.

You should identify the legacy of 'old' thinking, for example, the idea of the 'born criminal' and consider where assumptions about criminality being genetically determined still appear today. One example is research on pre-menstrual women committing crimes, which still suggests a biological aspect to criminal behaviour. You could introduce Edwin Sutherland's work as it relates to more current corporate crime. It is important to bring old theories up to date so that learners do not think of them as solely historical.. Many of the classic theories continue to shape and influence thinking today.

You could explain how feminist interventions have led to changes in our understanding of criminology. You can explore questions about the importance and role of gender in inequality of justice. This leads to looking at how crime has had an impact on the victim. This allows you to make a link to UN SDG 5, 'Gender equality'.

Criminology B: Applied Criminology

To provide flexibility in learning and teaching, you choose three from six topics to teach in this unit. Choices can reflect your individual interests or learners' interests.

An important area that you should aim to cover is violence against women and girls which takes up most of the police and courts' time . It is estimated that 75% of police time in Scotland is taken up by crimes such as abuse, violence and revenge porn. Because of its prevalence and importance, it would be useful for you to highlight this in any of the topics covered, or choose a topic that allows coverage of this.

The following sections give you some ideas of what you could cover in a topic.

Victimology

This is a branch of criminology that studies the relationship between a victim and an offender by exploring the causes and consequences of suffering. Victimology first emerged in the 1940s, and in its early stages focused on victim–offender interactions, emphasising the reciprocal nature of victimisation in society. It suggested that victims might share some degree of responsibility with offenders for their own misfortunes.

Examples can be useful to help learners understand this approach. For example, women are often wrongly portrayed as bearing some responsibility for so-called ‘misunderstandings’ in cases of sexual assault.

The field of victimology further developed in the 1970s to include other fields of study, such as economics, political sciences, psychology and sociology. Further research explains why the risks of violent victimisation vary dramatically from group to group, especially by age, gender, social class, race and ethnicity.

Another area of concern to victimologists is how the legal system deals with victims in their capacity as witnesses for the government. Victimologists have documented how the interests and needs of injured parties were historically overlooked, but are now increasingly being addressed, as the victims’ rights movement has secured reforms that empower victims within the justice system.

Global crime

To define global crime, you could start with the following definition: a crime that might happen in one country but is committed by persons in another. Global crime raises several problems regarding the rule of law, justice and accountability for states or administrations in these countries. If nations do not work together, it may be impossible to identify, apprehend, prosecute and convict criminals.

You can teach this topic in conjunction with others, such as cybercrime, policing and criminal justice. When addressing international crime, you should consider the functions of organisations such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation

(Europol). You may wish to consider examples of transnational crimes, such as the trafficking of illegal substances, weapons and people, money laundering and sex tourism.

Global crime could include other areas of trafficking, such as public objects through museums, for example. This is an area of interest linked to state crime, as state agents often tolerated such theft. Some banks hold high-value items that were originally 'appropriated' — that is, stolen.

You could also explore other challenging examples, such as terrorism. You could consider the definition of phrases like 'terrorism' and 'terrorist', as they are often used but it is not always clear what they mean. Until recently, terrorism was frequently associated with the strategies of people or groups engaging in unconventional warfare against authorities by terrorising civilians and sowing fear among the community. Since the turn of the century, the word 'terrorist' has frequently been employed to denote a unique identity or philosophy of a person or group. Some sources, such as Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman (*Political Terrorism*, 1988) provide definitional components of terrorism, which can number in the hundreds. You could explore terrorist groups and address broader philosophical questions that challenge common-sense assumptions, such as 'one person's freedom fighter is another person's terrorist.' You can pose critical questions, such as 'are individuals who belong to groups like ETA — the Basque separatist organisation — terrorists, guerrillas or militants?' And 'are they committing crimes or waging war?' to encourage debate.

Cybercrime

There is no universal definition of this term, which could be problematic for learners. The criminological and academic communities seek to provide an informed analysis of cybercrime, addressing its aetiology, consequences, regulation, and broader societal implications. However, a lack of shared understanding of the issue can contribute to its problematic nature, despite a common concern about cybercrime. The term 'cybercrime' now encompasses a variety of practices, including identity theft (phishing), cyberterrorism, information warfare, spam, denial-of-service attacks, hacking and cracking, hacktivism, e-frauds, auction fraud, click fraud, scams, hate

crimes, cyberbullying, illegal online gambling, extreme pornography, viruses, worms, and Trojan horses. (See Williams, M. (2010) 'Cybercrime', in Brookman, F. *et al.* (eds) *The Handbook on Crime*. Cullompton: Willan Publishing.).

You could consider a cybercrime matrix to further illustrate the complexity of cybercrime. For instance, several websites emphasise the distinction between cybercrime and computer crime. Computer crime refers to criminal acts that are committed using a computer, whereas cybercrime usually involves the use of a computer and the internet, or cyberspace. Other sources emphasise the distinction between 'pre-computer' crimes (those that occurred before the invention of the computer), such as embezzlement, fraud, financial scams, identity theft, and stalking, and crimes that require the existence of the cyber realm. Examples include e-scams; viruses; malware (malicious code); hacking; phishing; smishing (SMS messaging and phishing); vishing (voice and phishing); pharming; spam; software piracy; information warfare; and viruses. It may also be interesting for learners to think about cybercrime trends and patterns.

State crime

This is defined as illegal or deviant behaviours committed by the state, or with the co-operation of state agents (see *State Crime: Governments, Violence and Corruption* by Penny Green and Tony Ward, 2004). Nation states commit crimes for their own agenda and purpose. Genocide, war crimes, torture, supporting organised crime and terrorist organisations, assassinations, corruption, and prejudice are examples of state crimes.

According to Eugene McLaughlin in *The Problem of Crime*, (edited by John Muncie and Eugene McLaughlin (2001)), there are four types of state crimes:

- security forces' crimes, including genocide, torture, detention without charge and the disappearance of dissidents
- political crimes, such as corruption or censorship
- economic crimes, such as breaking laws on health and safety
- social and cultural crimes, such as institutional racism

Some more recent theoretical approaches focus on social harm, for example zemiology. These extend analysis further by drawing connections between state crime and natural disasters. You could ask learners to consider how geophysical events such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, cyclones, hurricanes and floods might be considered crimes. The effects of natural disasters, including the political and economic responses to those affected, may be highlighted. Penny Green and Tony Ward (*State Crime: Governments, Violence and Corruption*, 2004) believe that the state is directly responsible for these 'complex situations' because of unlawful and careless behaviours.

Again, giving examples may help learners to explore this in greater and more critical detail. In the instance of Hurricane Katrina, structural inequality appears to have been a significant factor in the disproportionate harm experienced by socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Resource disparities played a key role in determining who could and could not escape the hurricane's most severe effects. Social harms caused by the state's ineffective response strategies can demonstrate power disparities, which undoubtedly played a role in selecting which groups were eligible for state support and which ones were not. This is a useful example, as you could link it with policing and criminal justice.

Policing and criminal justice

You could examine the impacts of policing across a range of academic, practitioner and public contexts. In recent decades, we have re-assessed what we mean by 'policing' because of changes both within and beyond policing. For example, policing is subject to the whims of competing political agendas. Recent years have seen government, media and academics subject the police to greater degrees of scrutiny, and this has continued to fuel our interest in the police, its role and relationship with the public, and the behaviour of its officers.

Rod Morgan and Tim Newburn (*The Future of Policing*, 1997) see the emergence of policing as a political issue as a recent phenomenon. You could exemplify this by looking at the administrations of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, which placed greater emphasis on police accountability in what became known as the 'crime problem'.

You could consider the role of various policing policies and Acts of Parliament. Some of the policies may even cross over into other topics. For example, the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act (1984) or the USA PATRIOT (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act (2001) could be used to consider the changing role and increased power of the state and policing in terms of social control and surveillance. You could examine the disproportionate arrest rates among specific populations (for example, people from some minority ethnic backgrounds), which would help support lessons in the topic of victimology. There are also significant debates surrounding police culture that could be explored in greater detail.

Green crime

Recently, green criminology has emerged as a set of intellectual, empirical and political orientations toward offences related to the environment, different species and the planet. Also known as eco-crime or conservation criminology, the topic studies ecological and environmental harm and related matters of speciesism, and environmental justice and injustice. There is a common interest in the bio-physical and socio-economic consequences of different sources of threat and damage to the environment, whether biodiversity loss, climate change, pollution or resource degradation.

You could focus on both macro and micro aspects of green crime, as this is a broad topic. For example, you could include issues such as:

- pollution and its causes, consequences and control
- corporate criminality and its impact on the environment
- the involvement of organised crime and official corruption in the illegal disposal of toxic waste
- the scope of criminal law to prevent environmental plundering and punish perpetrators of harm

One way to explore this unit is to take an intersectional perspective when explaining crime.

Highly recommended text by British Society of Criminology

- Newburn, T. (2017) *Criminology*, 3rd edn. Abingdon: Routledge.

This textbook provides a good introduction to criminology. It also has a companion website, including exam, review and multiple-choice questions, and social media channels.

PDA History

You can teach History A and History B units individually as self-standing units — but if you teach them together, you should deliver History A first because of the timeframes studied in the topics.

History A: Exploring an Historical Period

The information given here supplements the additional guidance in the unit specification.

Any activities that involve using sources (both primary and secondary) are helpful to engage learners and show the value of different sources to inform about a specified period of history. History is not a passive subject. Historians actively seek out and analyse primary sources to tell the stories of our past. Behind those streamlined narratives are hundreds of messy sources. Provide learners with opportunities to practise analysing, questioning and following up information contained in a range of primary sources.

USA 1600–1787

This is a new context that has not appeared in previous versions of the History A unit. There are many topics within this time period that could be engaging for learners. Themes of colonisation, revolution and independence form the basis of this period. Below is a list of key events. You are not restricted to this list. There may be other events or aspects that would be suitable for the specified period. All websites below were accessed on 23 June 2023.

- 1607 — Jamestown
Library of Congress, *Primary Source Set: Jamestown*. Available at:
<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/jamestown/>.
Lumen Learning, *Jamestown Charter* [copy of original document with transcript].
Available at: <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-ushistory1os2xmaster/chapter/primary-source-reading-jamestown-charter/>.
Digital History, University of Houston, *John Smith's letter to Queen Anne (Pocahontas)* [primary source]. Available at:
https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/pocahontas/pocahontas_smith_letter.cfm.
Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, *Settler describes life in Virginia* [primary source]. Available at: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/jamestown-settler-describes-life-virginia-1622>.
- 1619 — House of Burgesses – first English representative government
- 1620 — Mayflower Compact
The Mayflower Society, *The Mayflower Compact*, Available at:
<https://themayflowersociety.org/history/the-mayflower-compact/>.
- 1765 — Quartering Act
- 1766 — Declaratory Act
- 1770 — Boston Massacre
- 1773 — Tea Act
- 1773 — Boston Tea Party — selection of sources
Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), *The Boston Tea Party*. Available at:
<https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/the-boston-tea-party>
- 1774 — Intolerable Acts / Coercive Acts
- 1774 — First Continental Congress
- 1775 — Battles of Lexington and Concord (start of American Revolution)
America in Class (Gilder Lehrman Center, NYU), *Sermons on war* [PDF].
Available at:
<https://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/crisis/text8/sermonsonwar.pdf>
Colonist responses to the outbreak of war
America in Class (Gilder Lehrman Center, NYU), *Outbreak of war* [PDF].

Available at:

<https://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/crisis/text8/outbreakofwar.pdf>

- 1775 — Second Continental Congress
America in Class (Gilder Lehrman Center, NYU), *Delegates decline independence* [PDF]. Available at:
<https://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/rebellion/text8/delegatesdecision.pdf>
- America in Class (Gilder Lehrman Center, NYU), *Olive Branch Petition* [PDF].
Available at:
<https://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/crisis/text8/olivebranchpetition.pdf>
- 1775 — Mecklenburg Resolves (North Carolina)
- 1776 — publication of *Common Sense* pamphlet, supporting independence
- 1776 — Halifax Resolves
- 1776 — Declaration of Independence (4 July)
National Archives and Records Administration, *Transcript of the Declaration of Independence*. Available at:
<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
- 1780 — Massachusetts Constitution
- 1781 — Articles of Confederation
- 1783 — Treaty of Paris (end of Revolution)
- 1786 — Shays' Rebellion (exposed weaknesses in Articles of Confederation)
- 1787 — Northwest Ordinance

Useful resources for further support

- Assumption University, *E Pluribus Unum: America in the 1770s*. Available at:
<http://www1.assumption.edu/ahc/1770s/default.html> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- BBC, *British History in Depth: Was the American Revolution Inevitable?* Available at:
https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire_seapower/american_revolution_01.shtml#:~:text=It%20was%20not.,of%20the%20Seven%20Years'%20War
[accessed 15 April 2025].

- Berkin, C. *Teaching the Revolution*, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Available (behind paywall) at: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/teacher-resources/teaching-revolution> [accessed 22 May 2024].
- Reynolds, D. (2009) *America, Empire of Liberty*, London: Penguin Books.
- Shi, D.E. and Tindall, G.B. (2016) *America: A Narrative History*, New York: W.W. Norton.
- Zinn, H. (2015) *A People's History of the United States 1492–present*, London and New York: Routledge.

Afghanistan 1919–1996

This is another new context for the History A unit. This specified period covers a range of important events in Afghanistan, from when Britain ruled it to the rise of the Taliban. The information below gives some of the key events. You can use any other aspects as a focus. Alliances, women's rights and the rise of the Islamic State of Afghanistan could be strong themes.

- 1919 — Amanullah Khan accedes to the throne after the Amir Habibullah Khan is assassinated, followed swiftly by the Third Anglo-Afghan War. Afghanistan declares independence from Britain.
- 1919 — Britain is defeated in the Third Anglo-Afghan War.
- 1926 — Afghanistan is declared a monarchy. Amanullah declares himself King. Fighting breaks out, leading to his abdication in 1929.
- 1934 — United States recognises Afghanistan.
- 1947 — Britain withdraws from India, creating two states (India and Pakistan). Pakistan and Afghanistan share a long border, with incursions.
- 1953 — Afghanistan looks to the Soviet Union for economic and military assistance. Over the next few years, a closer alliance is formed. Afghanistan, through social reforms, allows women a stronger public presence.
- 1973 — General Mohammed Daoud Khan overthrows his cousin the King, abolishes the monarchy, and declares himself president.
- 1975–1977 — a new constitution is formed that gives rights to women.
- 1978 — Khan is killed in a communist coup. The new government bases its policies on Islamic principles, Afghan nationalism and socio-economic justice. It is

still backed by the Soviets. The Mujahadeen, a guerrilla movement, is created to battle the government.

- 1979 — America cuts off its assistance to Afghanistan following the murder of the American ambassador. The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan in December to support the Afghan government.
- 1980 — battles ensue between the Mujahadeen and Soviet troops, as well as the Afghan army.
- 1984 — Osama Bin Laden travels to Afghanistan to support the Mujahadeen.
- 1986 — the Mujahadeen receives arms from Britain, the United States and China to aid the fight against the Soviet Union.
- 1988 — Osama Bin Laden forms Al-Qaida ('the base') to create Afghanistan as an Islamic state. The Mujahadeen continues fighting the Soviet army, while bin Laden declares a Jihad (holy war) against America.
- 1989 — Afghan independence is assured after America, Afghanistan, the Soviet Union and Pakistan sign a peace accord in Geneva. The Soviet Union withdraws its troops.
- 1992 — The Mujahadeen ousts Dr Mohammad Najibullah from power. Burhanuddin Rabbani is declared president. Afghanistan is declared an Islamic state.
- 1995 — the Taliban, an Islamic militia, is formed. The Taliban crack down on crime and the opium trade. Women's rights are curtailed, requiring them to be fully veiled and always accompanied by a male relative, and restricting education and employment. America does not recognise the Taliban's authority.

Useful sources of information

- The National Security Archive has a range of declassified materials that could be useful across the History A unit. Available at: <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/> [accessed 25 April 2025]. National Security Archive (primary sources). Available at: <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/afghanistan/2021-08-19/afghanistan-2020-20-year-war-20-documents> [accessed 22 May 2024].
- Mustafa, G. and Khan, A. 'Afghanistan: A Study in Internal Conflict and National Cohesion', *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*.

Available at:

https://www.academia.edu/14529753/Afghanistan_A_Study_in_Internal_Conflict_and_National_Cohesion [accessed 15 April 2025].

- National Archives — Afghanistan (lots of resources in this section)
<https://www.archives.gov/>.
- Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan Digital Archive. Available at:
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/collection/76/soviet-invasion-of-afghanistan>
[accessed 15 April 2025].
- Stewart, J. (2007) *The Savage Border: The Story of the North-West Frontier*.
Stroud: Sutton Publishing.
- Stewart, J. (2011) *On Afghanistan's Plains: The Story of Britain's Afghan Wars*.
London: I.B. Tauris.

History B: Historical Debates

USA 1788–1877

This is new context for the History B unit. This specified period covers a range of important events in the life of the United States of America. Enslavement could be a strong focus in this unit. The Civil War and Western Expansion could also be strong, detailed topics.

- 1787 — Founding Fathers — constitution brought into effect.
National Archives and Records Administration, *The Founding Fathers Online*.
Available at:
<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2010/winter/founders.html>
[accessed 15 April 2025].
National Archives and Records Administration, *The Constitution of the United States*. Available at: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution>
[accessed 15 April 2025].
- 1789 — George Washington elected first president of the United States.
George Washington — A Secondary Source Project. Available at:
<https://everythingaboutgeorgewashington.weebly.com/> [accessed 15 April 2025].

- 1791 — Bill of Rights — Individual Freedom.
Bill of Rights Institute, *Bill of Rights*. Available at: <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- 1803 — Louisiana Purchase.
Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Louisiana Purchase: United States history*. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Louisiana-Purchase> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- 1808 — The Atlantic slave trade is abolished.
The Bibliography of Slavery and World Slaving. Available at: <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/bib/> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- 1812–1815 — War of 1812 between US and Britain (British restrictions on US trade during Napoleonic Wars).
Avalon Project, Yale Law School. *British-American Diplomacy: War of 1812 and associated documents*. Available at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/brtreaty.asp [accessed 15 April 2025].
- 1819 — Transcontinental Treaty (Spain cedes Florida to the United States).
- 1823 — Monroe Doctrine: the Supreme Court rules in *Johnson v McIntosh* that Native Americans have no land rights.
National Archives (1823) *Monroe Doctrine*. Available at: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/monroe-doctrine> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- 1836 — Texas draws up Declaration of Independence from Mexico.
- 1842 — Frémont explores California.
- 1845 — Manifest Destiny — John L. O’Sullivan. Texas becomes a state.
History.com, *Manifest Destiny*. Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion/manifest-destiny> [accessed 15 April 2025].
Gast, J. (1875) *American Progress* [image]. Available at: <https://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/john-gast-american-progress-1872/> [accessed 15 April 2025].
Primary and secondary sources on Manifest Destiny — early United States history through local college online resources:
Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), *Manifest Destiny*. Available at: <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/manifest-destiny> [accessed 15 April 2025].

- 1846 — Mexican-American War begins.
- 1848 — Mexican-American War ends. Mexico cedes the Californian territory. Gold discovered in California.
- 1850 — California becomes a state.
- 1854 — Abolitionists set up the Republican Party.
- 1860 — Lincoln is elected the first Republican president.
Christopher Newport University, *Lincoln — Primary sources: US Presidents*. Available at: <https://cnu.libguides.com/primarypresidents> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- 1861–1865 — American Civil War — 11 pro-enslavement Southern states secede from the Union and form the Confederate States of America, effectively starting the Civil War.
Foner, E. (1974) 'The Causes of the American Civil War: Recent Interpretations and New Directions', *Civil War History*, 30(3), pp. 197–214.
Hummel, J. (2014) *Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men: A History of the American Civil War*. Chicago: Open Court.
- 1863 — Emancipation Proclamation — Southern slaves are freed.
- 1865 — Confederate defeat. Enslavement is abolished under the 13th Amendment. Lincoln is assassinated.

Useful resources for further support

- Aptheker, H. (1989) *Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement*, New York: Twayne Publishers.
- Carwardine, R. (2003) *Lincoln*. London: Pearson Longman.
- Collins, B. (1981) *The Origins of America's Civil War*. New Jersey: Holmes & Meier.
- Escott, P. (ed.) (1999) *Major Problems in the History of the American South, Volume 1: The Old South: documents and essays*. Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Fogel, R. and Engerman, S. (2013) *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Slavery*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Foote, S. (2006) *The Civil War: A Narrative*. New York: Random House.
- Genovese, E. (1976) *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. New York: Vintage.

- Harris, J.W. (1992) *Society and Culture in the Slave South*. London: Routledge.
- Heale, M. (1977) *The Making of American Politics, 1750–1850*. Harlow: Longman.
- Shi, D.E. and Tindall, G.B. (2016) *America: A Narrative History*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Stamp, K.M. (ed.) (1992) *The Causes of the Civil War*. New York: Touchstone.
- Stamp, K.M. (1967) *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865–1877*. New York: Vintage.

Afghanistan 1997–Present

This is another new topic, covering more recent history in Afghanistan. You could focus on Britain and America's role in the recent conflict, or the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Themes of the role of women or religion in society could be a possible focus.

- 1998 — Al-Qaida bombs two American embassies in Africa. America retaliates with cruise missile attacks against Bin Laden's training camps in Afghanistan. The leaders of the terrorist group escape.
- 2000 — America requests that Osama Bin Laden is extradited to stand trial for bombing the embassies. The Taliban refuses. The UN sanctions the Taliban with economic and trade restrictions.
- 2001 — the Taliban destroys Buddhist statues in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, saying they are an affront to Islam. America declares Osama Bin Laden as the prime suspect after aeroplanes are hijacked and crashed on 11 September. America and Britain launch airstrikes in Afghanistan against assumed Al-Qaida training camps. Hamid Karzai, after an eight-year exile, is sworn in as the leader of the interim government in Afghanistan. America recognises the new government.
- 2003 — NATO takes over security in Kabul in August because of increased violence.
- 2004 — a new constitution calls for women to have equality.
- 2005 — Afghanistan holds its first parliamentary elections in more than 30 years.
- 2006–2009 — fighting continues across Afghanistan, with the USA, NATO peacekeeping forces and the Afghan National Security Forces against the Taliban.

- 2009 — America announces the deployment of 17,000 more troops to support the war in Afghanistan, including assistance to Pakistan in its efforts to combat militants.
- 2011 — American forces kill Osama Bin Laden in May.
- 2013 — the Afghan army takes over all military and security operations from NATO forces.
- 2014 — NATO ends its combat mission. American troops remain to train the Afghan army. A timetable is given for American military withdrawal.
- 2018 — America and the Taliban sign a peace accord that has troops leaving by May 2021.
- 2021 (August) — the Taliban takes over Kabul. American and British troops withdraw in a hurried and chaotic evacuation. Women and girls are not allowed to return to education and employment.
- 2022 — from May, all women in Afghanistan are required by law to wear full-body coverings when in public, leaving only the eyes uncovered. Female television presenters are told to wear a face veil.

Useful sources of information

- The National Security Archive has a range of declassified materials that could be useful across History B. Available at: <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- Brivati, B. (2022) *Losing Afghanistan: The Fall of Kabul and the End of Western Intervention*. London: Biteback Publishing.
- Haring, E. (2010) 'Mobilizing Identity in the Pashtun Tribal Belt', *Small Wars Journal*. Available at: <https://archive.smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/mobilizing-identity-in-the-pashtun-tribal-belt> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- Maley, W. (2009) *The Afghanistan Wars*, 2nd edn. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Mustafa, G. and Khan, A. 'Afghanistan: A Study in Internal Conflict and National Cohesion', *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/14529753/Afghanistan_A_Study_in_Internal_Conflict_and_National_Cohesion [accessed 15 April 2025].

- A collection of declassified materials taken from Osama Bin Laden’s compound: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Bin Laden’s bookshelf: declassified materials recovered from Abbottabad, Pakistan*. Available at: <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/features/bin-laden-s-bookshelf?start=1> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- Robson, B. et al (2002) *The Afghans: Their History and Culture*. Washington, DC: The Center for Applied Linguistics. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/32816136/The Afghans Their History and Culture](https://www.academia.edu/32816136/The_Afghans_Their_History_and_Culture) [accessed 15 April 2025]. There are many interesting articles on this website.

Age of Revolutions

This is another new context for this subject. You should cover more than one revolution (two or three would give a balanced sense of how revolutions affect society). Although the Age of Revolutions is often considered to be a period in history between 1775 and 1848, for this unit you can look at revolutions from the mid-18th century to the present day. More recent revolutions have had an impact on all aspects of society (political, economic and societal) and led to changes on a scale seen in earlier revolutions. You can cover any revolutions that have had an impact on society. The focus should be on how political, economic, environmental or social aspects changed as a result of the events surrounding the revolution. The suggestions below are not mandatory or exhaustive.

Revolutions could include:

- Industrial Revolution (1760–1840)
- American Revolution (1765–1783)
- French Revolution (1789–1799)
- Haitian Revolution (1791–1804)
- Russian Revolution (1917)
- Chinese Communist Revolution (1949)
- Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–1976)
- Digital Revolution or Fourth Industrial Revolution (21st century)
- Arab Spring (2010–2012)

Useful sources of information

- World Atlas, *The Most Important World Revolutions That Shaped World History*. Available at: <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-10-most-important-revolutions-of-all-time.html> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- InfoBooks, *15+ Industrial Revolution Books for Free! [PDF]*. Available at: <https://www.infobooks.org/free-pdf-books/history/industrial-revolution/> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- History.com, *American Revolution*. Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- French Revolution. Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/france/french-revolution> [accessed 22 May 2023].
- The Haitian Revolution. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Haitian-Revolution> [accessed 15 April 2025].
Sky History TV Channel, *Post-war dictators: Saddam Hussein to Kim Jong-il* [TV programme]. Available at: <https://www.history.co.uk/articles/post-wwii-dictators-from-saddam-hussein-to-kim-jong-il>
Sky History TV Channel, *Toussaint Louverture and the birth of Haiti* [TV programme]. Available (behind paywall) at: <https://www.history.co.uk/article/toussaint-louverture-and-the-birth-of-haiti>
- Office of the Historian, US Department of State, *The Chinese Communist Revolution*. Available at: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/chinese-rev> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- History.com Editors, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution*. Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/asian-history/cultural-revolution> [accessed 22 May 2024].
- ThoughtCo, *The causes of the Russian Revolution*. Available at: <https://www.thoughtco.com/causes-of-the-russian-revolution-1221800> [accessed 15 April 2025].
- World Economic Forum (2016) *The Fourth Industrial Revolution: what it means, how to respond*. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-fourth-industrial-revolution-what-it-means-and-how-to-respond/> [accessed 15 April 2025].

- History.com Editors, *Arab Spring*. Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/arab-spring> [accessed 27 January 2026].
- Sky History TV Channel, *6 Revolutions and Uprisings That Changed History*. Available at: <https://www.history.co.uk/articles/revolutions-uprisings-that-changed-world-history> [accessed March 2026].

PDA Politics

Politics A: Political Ideas helps learners recognise how political concepts and political ideologies shape and explain the relationships between the state and individuals within it. Politics B: Governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom develops learners' understanding of the political systems we are governed by in Scotland. You could choose to deliver Politics B before Politics A if you think learners would benefit from understanding our political system before embarking on the study of political concepts and political ideologies.

Politics A: Political Ideas

Outcome 1 asks learners to explain political concepts and political ideologies. Political ideologies provide frameworks for understanding the world and offer guidance on how societies should be governed, how resources should be allocated and how social issues should be addressed. They often address questions related to the role of government, individual rights and freedoms, economic systems, social justice, and the distribution of power.

Different political ideologies vary significantly in their core principles. Some common political ideologies include socialism, communism, liberalism, conservatism, fascism and nationalism. Each ideology has its own set of values, goals and preferred methods of achieving them. These ideologies can influence political parties, political movements and individual politicians, shaping their policies and decision-making processes. Individuals and societies can hold a combination of ideological beliefs or fall outside the traditional ideological spectrum.

You can broaden study to cover neo-ideologies. There are several suggested in the unit specification, such as neoliberalism or neonationalism. A neo-ideology refers to a contemporary political belief that challenges or deviates from existing ideologies. It emerges as a response to new social, economic or political conditions. A neo-ideology can also be a critique of established ideologies.

Political concepts refer to ideas and theories that help to explain or analyse political phenomena. These concepts are listed in the unit specification and include concepts such as power, authority and democracy. Outcome 2 asks learners to apply political concepts to political ideologies. You should introduce learners to a range of concepts to allow them to apply two concepts confidently in their assessment.

Politics B: Governance of Scotland and the United Kingdom

Debating is a useful skill for those interested in politics. Giving learners formative work can support their understanding of ideas. You could ask learners to produce structured notes to support a debate. You could use a debate format for learners to compare the nature of the Scottish and United Kingdom constitutions and institutions, and the decision-making processes taking place in Westminster and Holyrood.

You could prepare papers for a debate to include structured arguments on the nature and purpose of different electoral systems, as well as factors influencing contemporary Scottish and United Kingdom politics, such as pressure groups, and the impact of proportional representation on the Scottish political system and the parties operating within it. You could also prepare debate papers regarding the concepts of devolution, devolution max and separatism.

You can use group work by asking learners to collaborate on preparing debate papers, as this helps them develop teamwork skills (the meta-skill of collaborating). Ensure that learners can clearly demonstrate an awareness of the stated position within their debate. If this takes the form of a group debate, it should include evidence of an individual learner's participation on more than one occasion in the debate, with them making a viable contribution.

A summative assessment could take the form of preparing papers for a debate, an essay, or a set of structured questions.

It must be appropriate to meet the evidence requirements and could also take the form of:

- a report
- an individual oral presentation
- a poster exhibition with oral explanation
- a podcast
- a combination of assessment approaches in accordance with the open-book nature of the assessment

An individual summative assessment submission as a debate should provide evidence from a prepared speech framework, a note of research materials and appropriate references, and use a structure that is clear and logical. Cue cards may be used as evidence, rather than a full speech. It would be helpful to record audio presentations or digital submissions. These should be supported by appropriate references, and a clear and logical framework.

If the position in the debate shows evidence of one point of view, the learner should give evidence of their knowledge of the opposing viewpoint. This could be in the form of a written or oral submission to accompany the debate event, with details of what they would expect the alternative view to be.

You can use portfolio approaches here to assess the evidence requirements. You can include tasks in a portfolio assessment such as watching a documentary, a parliamentary debate or a debate between other learners, and producing:

- research notes
- oral or written evidence of the prepared argument
- a speech framework
- cue cards or briefing papers
- observation feedback by peers
- answers to structured questions

The items in the portfolio should demonstrate the knowledge and skills required by the evidence requirements.

It is important that you record how evidence has been generated for each outcome. You must make these records available for external verification.

PDA Psychology

Psychology A: The Shaping of Modern Psychology

Guidance for this unit is contained in the unit specification.

Psychology B: Applied Psychology

The information given here supplements the additional guidance given in the unit specification.

It is important to ensure that you cover three topics in outcome 1, although you only assess one topic, combining it with outcome 2 research. You should cover at least one topic that could lend itself to ethical research.

Learners carry out research into one of the three topics and produce a report on the findings.

This report of the research should also cover the evidence requirements for outcome 1, specifically:

- 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

A written psychology lab report follows a standard structure, which typically includes the following sections:

- **Abstract:** this is a brief summary of the report, typically no more than 150 words. Learners should provide an overview of the research question, a brief mention of

theories used in the introduction and literature review section, the methods used, the main results, the conclusions and the implications of the study.

- Introduction and literature review: learners should provide an overview of the research question, including its importance and relevance to the field of psychology. They should also include a brief review of the relevant literature, including key theories and findings related to the topic.
- Methods: learners should describe the methods used to conduct the study, including the sample size, how they selected participants, and any procedures or materials they used in the study. They should provide enough detail so that the study could be replicated by someone else. Learners should ensure participants are 16 or older for informed consent in psychology research, upholding ethical standards and research integrity.
- Results: learners should present the findings of the study, including any tables or graphs used to display the data. They should state what statistical analysis has been carried out on the data, as well as give the statistical significance of the results, as learners should use a relevant inferential test of the data.
- Discussion: learners should interpret the findings of the study in the context of their research question and the relevant literature. They should also discuss the limitations of the study and potential avenues for future research.
- References: learners should list all the sources cited in the report, following a specific citation format such as APA or Harvard.

Inferential statistics

Feedback from universities strongly suggests that entrants to year 2 would benefit from experience of some inferential statistical testing, such as Spearman's Rho correlation for correlation data, Mann-Whitney U for unrelated non-parametric data, Wilcoxon signed rank for related non-parametric data or chi-square for category data. Probability is not required but significance should be considered, particularly for entrants to year 2 psychology degrees. They get this experience during the research analysis required for outcome 2.

You should use contact time to ensure that learners plan data collection that produces data that can be analysed in this way. This is part of the planning process

and helps learners to operationalise their research. It is important that learners collect quantitative data.

You should plan some classroom activities around identifying types of data and research designs in different research scenarios. This would give learners an idea of what method and statistics may best suit their research. Although parametric data may be collected and analysed, at this level we suggest that non-parametric data analysis be used for assessment of skills. Non-parametric statistics are more robust and can be used for either parametric or non-parametric data. Learners should be able to comment on the statistical significance of their results, and class time should include how to read tables of significance and interpret how this relates to their own research.

You test learners on their ability to collect, analyse and interpret data appropriately. They are not required to memorise equations nor carry them out under closed-book conditions. You should be able to authenticate a learner's work from classroom supervision. You should encourage learners to use statistical software, as free versions of some widely used packages are available.

We outline four statistical tests below: Chi-square, Wilcoxon signed ranks, Mann-Whitney U, and Spearman's Rho (sometimes called Spearman's rank correlation).

Many textbooks on research methods give information on these statistical tests. You might already use Hugh Coolican's *Research Methods and Statistics in Psychology*. Using this and other similar texts will help support learners as they apply statistical tests.

Each learner would use just one of these tests in their analysis for their research project. You can show the whole class the various options and how they work, or just the test that fits with the type of data they are collecting. Tables of significance should be available in college libraries or online.

The following information on the statistical tests is addressed to learners.

Chi-square (X²) quick guide

Nominal (category) data.

You compare the actual results to the results you would expect if the null hypothesis were true. You collect random data, drawn from independent variables from a large enough sample. Only use data that can fit into a category, for example colour (red or blue) or educational level (below SCQF level 4, SCQF level 4, SCQF level 5).

For this calculation, you only need to work out two different numbers:

- the observed value (O): this is the result you have measured
- the expected value (E): this is what you would expect the result to be if the null hypothesis is true

To calculate the expected results for a chi-squared test, you use probabilities based on the assumption that there is no real difference between the groups you are comparing.

An example could be of people who prefer shopping in person to online shopping in two towns. Suppose town A has 60% who prefer shopping in person and 40% who prefer online, and town B has 50% who prefer shopping in person and 50% who prefer online. If there is no real difference between the towns, you would expect the proportions of shopping in person and online in each town to be similar.

To calculate the expected values, you apply these proportions to the total number of people in each town. For example, if town A has 100 people, you note that 60 of them prefer shopping in person and 40 prefer online. Similarly, if town B has 80 people, you note 40 of them prefer shopping in person and 40 prefer online.

So, in simple terms, you calculate the expected results by assuming that each group follows the same pattern of preferences based on the proportions you have observed in the entire sample.

Use the equation:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Follow these steps:

1. Draw out a table. The first data line in this example would be for town A and the second data line would be for town B. The first data column would be for shopping in person and the second data column for shopping online. We call each part with a statistic a 'cell'.

[add observed values here]	Shopping in person	Shopping online	Row totals
Town A	60	40	100
Town B	50	50	100
Column totals	110	90	200

2. Put your observed values into the top left corner of the cell.
3. Calculate expected values for each box:

$$E = \frac{\text{row total} \times \text{column total}}{\text{total number of observations}}$$

4. Write in the expected values at the right side of the cell.

[add observed values here]	Shopping in person	Shopping online	Row totals
Town A	60 E = 55	40 E = 45	100
Town B	50 E = 55	50 E = 45	100
Column totals	110	90	200

5. For each cell calculate O – E.

6. Square this number and write it in the middle.

[add observed values here]	Shopping in person	Shopping online	Row totals
Town A	60 $(O-E)^2 = 25$ E = 55	40 $(O-E)^2 = 25$ E = 45	100
Town B	50 $(O-E)^2 = 25$ E = 55	50 $(O-E)^2 = 25$ E = 45	100
Column totals	110	90	200

For each cell, calculate:

$$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

7. Now add up the figure for each cell from step 6:

0.46; 0.46; 0.56; 0.56 = 2.04. This is χ^2

8. Now check for significance using the 'Table of Significance'. To be of statistical significance, your value must be equal to or larger than the critical value in the table.

Degrees of freedom (df) is calculated by looking at your table. It is:

$$(\text{number of rows} - 1) \times (\text{number of columns} - 1)$$

In the example given we would need to see a critical value of 3.84 or more at the $p < 0.05$ level of significance. As 2.04 is less than 3.84, we can conclude no significant difference between the two towns for shopping preferences.

Wilcoxon signed ranks

Two conditions; related design (each participant does both conditions). Ordinal data.

- Calculate differences between A and B, taking note of the sign (+ or –).
- Rank the differences (ignoring the sign).
- Separate positively scored ranks from negatively scored ranks.
- Calculate Σ for each signed rank column (+ and –).
- The smaller rank total is W .
- Count the number of pairs, ignoring ties. This is N .

Worked example:

Participant	Score A	Score B	$d (A - B)$	Rank of difference	Sum of the ranks of positive differences $+d$	Sum of the rank of negative differences $-d$
1	3	5	-2	5	N/A	5
2	4	5	-1	2	N/A	2
3	3	2	+1	2	2	N/A
4	1	5	-4	8.5	N/A	8.5
5	5	4	+1	2	2	N/A
6	2	5	-3	7	N/A	7
7	3	5	-2	5	N/A	5
8	4	4	0	Omit tie	N/A	N/A
9	1	5	-4	8.5	N/A	8.5
10	3	5	-2	5	N/A	5
Σ (totals)	29	45	N/A	N/A	4	41
Mean	2.9	4.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

For the table:

T is the smaller value from the sum of the ranks, so $T = 4$ (note: sometimes T is given as W).

Nine results were counted in, as one is omitted due to zero difference between the scores, so $N = 9$.

Look for critical value in an appropriate table of critical values of T in Wilcoxon signed ranks.

The observed value of T must be less than the critical value to reject the null hypothesis. In the case above, 4 is less than the critical value for a two-tailed test for significance levels at $p < 0.1$ and $p < 0.05$.

Mann-Whitney U

Two conditions; unrelated design (different participants in each group). Ordinal data.

The smaller U is, the greater the difference between groups.

The following is an old version that can be carried out in less than two minutes. Longer, more complex versions are available.

Worked example: Give one set of people (group A) a list of organised words to remember while you give a second set of people (group B) a list of random words to remember. The dependent variable (DV) is the number of words recalled (out of 20). Figures are given below.

- Choose the smallest total. $\sum B$ is smallest, therefore, U is calculated from $\sum B$.
- Beside each number in group B, write the number of times it beats the scores in group A. In the final column, award 1 point if it is greater, 0.5 points if it is equal.

Group A	Group B	Number of times B beats any A	Points
16	12	1 (greater than 11 only)	1
16	11	= 11 in Group A	0.5
19	10	0	0
19	9	0	0
13	11	= 11 in Group A	0.5
11	13	1 (>11) and 2 where it is =	2
15	13	1 (>11) and 2 where it is =	2
13	9	0	0
18	9	0	0
20	15	3 and 1 where it is =	3.5
160	112	N/A	9.5

$$\sum A = 160$$

$$\sum B = 112$$

- Now add up the total. Here, it is 9.5. This is U .
- That's it!
- Now compare this figure to the critical values to see if it is significant.

$$U = 9.5. \text{ Critical value} = 16. \quad p < 0.01$$

U is less than the critical value, therefore there is a statistically significant difference.

Critical values of r_s :

To be a statistically significant correlation, your calculated value must be the same or more than the value in the table.

Spearman's Rho correlation

Relationship between two co-variables; participants have measures for both. Ordinal data.

Calculating Spearman's Rho correlation:

- Ensure that each participant's pairs of scores are correctly written.
- Rank each co-variable's scores separately.
- Calculate the difference between each participant's ranked scores. The sign does not matter as it is the difference between their rank for the first variable and their rank for the second variable that matters. (A perfect correlation means that they have the same ranked position for each, irrespective of the value of their actual scores.)
- Square the differences in ranks.
- Add up the squared differences in ranks.
- Enter all your figures into the formula below. You do not need to memorise it, but you do need to know what information goes where.

Spearman's Rho correlation: formula and significance.

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$$

\sum = 'sum of'; that is, add them up.

$\sum d^2$ = the sum of the squared differences in rank.

N = the number of pairs of scores (usually the number of participants).

Calculate in stages. You can use as many stages as you feel comfortable with. Don't worry if it takes a while. Be confident in your approach and always double-check every stage.

1. $\sum d^2$ will have been calculated. Multiply this by 6 to calculate the numerator (top row).

2. Square N , subtract 1, then multiply this number by N for the denominator (bottom row).
3. The numerator (top number) is then divided by the denominator (bottom number). This is written to three decimal places (look at the fourth decimal place — if it is 5 or more, round your third place up by one; if it is 0 to 4, the third place stays the same).
4. The final stage is to calculate 1 minus your answer. This is your correlation. Make sure you write the correct sign in front of the correlation.
5. Comment on what this figure means. Refer to the direction, as well as the strength of the correlation. Relate this result to the aim or hypothesis of your investigation. What have you found? What does this mean?
6. How significant is this result? Compare your result to the Table of Significance. Identify the number of participants (pairs of scores). Find the corresponding critical value. If your value is more than or the same as this value, then you have a statistically significant correlation. If it is not statistically significant then any correlation found may be a chance relationship, or you may have tested too few participants. Perhaps the relationship is just not strong enough. Look at your raw data and your scatter graph to further explain your results.

PDA Sociology

Sociology A: The Sociological Imagination

This information supplements the additional guidance in the unit specification.

Approaches to assessment

It is essential that you help learners develop the ability to understand society from different perspectives. Inspiring learners towards higher-level reasoning involves supporting them to develop the intellectual skills needed to move beyond individual 'troubles' and recognise them instead as public 'issues' with collective dimensions in both their causes and their solutions (Mills, 1959). You should design assessments that support learners in developing this skill, as a sociological imagination is a cognitive ability. You may require differentiated assessment practice.

Learners could create individual biographies in which they consider their own experiences within social contexts. You could encourage them to explore how their biographies intersect with history and consider how these interactions take place in a particular space and time. You can draw upon interpretation from both sociological and non-sociological perspectives. This should help you to illustrate how a sociological standpoint fosters the connections between private troubles and public issues.

For example, a learner may have experience of migration, and may have crossed one or many borders. This learner could examine how migration had an impact on their life and the lives of their relatives in terms of physical, emotional and financial challenges. Then, they could use the sociological perspective to discover the structural forces that resulted in the need to migrate — for example, the wider economic, political and social conditions of the country they have left — and compare this to the country they have migrated to. A learner could review migratory policies and how they influence the migratory experience, along with the overall impact of migration. A conversation should follow on how our individual experiences cannot exist or be fully understood without history and society, and vice versa.

Other examples that you could apply the sociological imagination to include:

- climate change
- poverty
- arranged marriage
- tattooing and body modification
- eating disorders
- addiction
- abortion
- domestic violence and sexual assault
- racism

Some topics could upset learners, so it may be beneficial to start developing the sociological imagination with less demanding topics. For example, Kari Marie Norgaard states in her journal article 'The sociological imagination in a time of climate change' (2018) that 'despite rising calls for social science expertise in the face of local weather change, too few sociologists have been engaged in the conversations about how we have arrived at such perilous climatic circumstances, or how society can change course.' You can encourage learners to think about how their own behaviours contribute to climate change, together with aspects of social order between individuals, social norms, cultural mores and political economy. This topic also supports Learning for Sustainability.

In 'Visual sociology: using sociological images to develop the sociological imagination' (2021), Georgiana Bostean and Lisa Leitz emphasise the growing evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of digital and visible media in sociological learning and teaching. You could use image essays and blogs to engage learners, helping them recognise that sociology is not only relevant but also connected to their personal lives and experiences. Learners could use photography to document aspects of their everyday lives, analyse current events and news through popular media, and engage with podcasts or other media such as YouTube. Margot Belet's work '[The importance of relevance to student lives: the impact of content and media in introduction to sociology](#)' demonstrates that the use of manipulated videos and YouTube can help disadvantaged students engage with

learning. These approaches help to strengthen and develop learners' essential questioning skills.

[Sociological Images](#) is a blog 'presenting brief discussions of compelling and timely imagery that span the breadth of sociological inquiry.' It was developed by sociologist Lisa Wade of Occidental College, Los Angeles. Anyone may submit images for inclusion, such as advertisements, products, news coverage or music videos. The blog moderator and guest bloggers write the accompanying analysis of the images. Posts stimulate the sociological imagination by evoking questions about the distinction between personal troubles and public issues. For instance, one post highlights the problematic nature of news reporting on terrorism and its use by the state. The author explains how such reporting can constitute fearmongering, exaggerating the incidence of terror recruitment by emphasising rates, when the actual number of cases is very small (Stewart, 2018).

[The Society Pages](#) website is a forum for sociological discourse, engaging the public as well as academics from various disciplines. The blog is written in an accessible manner, making it ideal for introductory courses. You can use the website to introduce sociological concepts through visuals and to stimulate discussion of those concepts.

Other scholars have shown that blogs are a valuable learning and teaching strategy (see Davies and Merchant, 2009; Pearson, 2010). The effectiveness of blogs and other forms of social media stems from learner familiarity and is supported by educational research highlighting the importance of context and the practical application of concepts (Lave and Wenger, 1991; McLellan, 1996).

The integration of visual sociology with the sociology of learning and teaching has demonstrated the importance of using visuals to communicate information and assist students with applying course theory to their daily lives (Whitley, 2013). Such connections are essential to understanding daily life, personal experiences and the sociological imagination.

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Sociology B: Applied Sociology

Guidance for this unit is contained in the unit specification.

Information for centres

Equality and inclusion

The units in this PDA are designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

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

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and those with additional support needs is available on the [assessment arrangements web page](#).

Internal and external verification

You must make sure all assessment methods you use in this qualification are internally verified according to your centre's policies and Qualifications Scotland's guidelines. Information on how to request prior verification for your assessment from Qualifications Scotland is available on our [prior verification web page](#).

Qualifications Scotland carries out external verification to ensure that internal assessment meets the national guidelines for this qualification.

More information on internal and external verification is available in our [Guide to Assessment](#) and in [NextGen: HN Quality Assurance — Guidance for Centres](#).

Glossary

Qualifications Scotland credits: 1 Qualifications Scotland credit equals 8 SCQF credit points.

Qualifications Scotland credit value indicates the contribution the unit makes to a Qualifications Scotland qualification. A Qualifications Scotland credit value of 1 represents approximately 40 hours of learning, teaching and assessment.

SCQF: the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is Scotland's national framework for describing qualifications. We use SCQF terminology in this guide to refer to credits and levels. [For more information on the SCQF, visit the SCQF website.](#)

SCQF credit points indicate the amount of learning required to complete a qualification. NextGen HNCs and HNDs are worth 120 SCQF credit points.

SCQF levels indicate how difficult the qualification is to achieve. The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. NextGen HNCs are at SCQF level 7 and NextGen HNDs are at SCQF level 8.

Information for learners

PDA Criminology

PDA History

PDA Politics

PDA Psychology

PDA Sociology

This information explains:

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

Qualification information

Each social sciences Professional Development Award (PDA) at SCQF level 7 provides you with a comprehensive grounding in a specific discipline. Each social sciences subject has value in its own right, and each PDA recognises the importance of subject content and the development of specialist skills.

Before you begin the qualification, you should have one or more of the following:

- good communication and literacy skills; for example, Core Skill Communication at SCQF level 6
- previous study of social science subjects; for example, National Qualifications at SCQF level 6
- other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the qualification

It would also be helpful to have some basic digital skills.

You can study any of the following PDAs at SCQF level 7:

- Criminology
- History
- Politics
- Psychology
- Sociology

Each PDA has two units (24 SCQF credit points/3 Qualifications Scotland unit credits). Each PDA also follows the structure of an A unit (8 SCQF credit points/ 1 Qualifications Scotland unit credit) and one B unit (16 SCQF credit points; 2 Qualifications Scotland unit credits), for example History A and History B.

In the units, you study theories, concepts and ideas about society, which encourages you to think about how it operates and how it affects the lives of individuals. The units help you to develop an enquiring and critical mind. Each PDA requires you to go beyond the basic knowledge and understanding of conflicting theories to analyse and evaluate.

Each unit is assessed by an open-book assessment in which you provide written or oral evidence. For each A unit, you must produce a written response of approximately 1,500 words, or an oral response of 10 to 12 minutes. For each B unit, you must produce a written response of approximately 2,000 words, or an oral response of 12 to 15 minutes (dependent on specific subject).

Completing a PDA may support progression to the HNC or HND Social Sciences, or entry into a degree programme or employment.

Meta-skills

In each PDA, you develop meta-skills to enhance your employability in the social sciences sector.

Meta-skills include:

- self-management — focusing, integrity, adapting, initiative
- social intelligence — communicating, feeling, collaborating, leading
- innovation — curiosity, creativity, sense-making, critical thinking

You develop these naturally as you take part in a 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) are useful for future study and employment, as well as during this qualification.

Other transferable skills

Each PDA also supports the development of higher-order transferable skills, literacies and academic skills that are valuable across a range of employment and higher education contexts. Through teaching and learning activities, as well as formative and summative assessment, you develop skills such as data handling, critical analysis, complex thinking, citation, referencing, and essay-writing. These skills can help you progress to the HNC Social Sciences or to degree-level study.

Learning for Sustainability

Each unit introduces you to Learning for Sustainability ideas, making relevant links to the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Administrative information

Published: April 2026 (version 1.0)

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Please check [our website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this unit.

If a unit is revised:

- no new centres can be approved to offer the previous version of the unit
- centres should only enter learners for the previous version of the unit if they can complete it before its finish date

For more information on NextGen: HN Qualifications please visit the [NextGen: HN web page](#).

Thank you to everyone who helped us develop this qualification. Your expertise, time and thoughtful input was invaluable.

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