SCQF level 5
Unit Specification

Psychology: Research

SCQF: level 5 (6 SCQF credit points)

Unit code: J2CY 75

Unit outline

The general aim of this Unit is to introduce learners to the research process, research methods and ethics used in psychology. Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of factors to consider when planning and carrying out psychological research. They will also develop numerical skills and an understanding of psychological terminology.

Learners who complete this Unit will be able to:

1 Explain the research process used in psychology

This Unit is available as a free-standing Unit. The Unit Specification should be read in conjunction with the *Unit Support Notes*, which provide advice and guidance on delivery, assessment approaches and development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. Exemplification of the standards in this Unit is given in *Unit Assessment Support*.

Recommended entry

Entry to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. However, learners would normally be expected to have attained the skills, knowledge and understanding required by one or more of the following or equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- National 4 People and Society Course or relevant component Units
- National 4 Biology Course or relevant component Units
- Social studies or social sciences Courses at SCQF level 4 or relevant component Units

Equality and inclusion

This Unit Specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence. For further information, please refer to the *Unit Support Notes.*

Standards

Outcomes and assessment standards

Outcome 1

The learner will:

1 Explain the research process used in psychology by:

1.1 Describing the stages of the research process
1.2 Explaining experimental and non-experimental methods of research
1.3 Describing ethical guidelines
1.4 Explaining sampling methods used in psychology
1.5 Calculating measures of central tendency from straightforward data
1.6 Applying and justifying choice of method to research scenarios

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Assessors should use their professional judgement, subject knowledge and experience, and understanding of their learners, to determine the most appropriate ways to generate evidence and the conditions and contexts in which they are used.

Exemplification of assessment is provided in *Unit Assessment Support*. Advice and guidance on possible approaches to assessment is provided in the *Unit Support Notes*.

Assessment standard thresholds

If a candidate successfully meets the requirements of the specified number of Assessment Standards they will be judged to have passed the Unit overall and no further re-assessment will be required.

The specific requirements for this Unit is as follows:

- only one advantage and one disadvantage is required for assessment standard 1.2 and this can be either an experimental or a non-experimental method

It should be noted that there will still be the requirement for candidates to be given the opportunity to meet all Assessment Standards. The above threshold has been put in place to reduce the volume of re-assessment where that is required.

Development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

It is expected that learners will develop broad, generic skills through this Unit. The skills that learners will be expected to improve on and develop through the Unit are based on SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work* and are drawn from the main skills areas listed below. These must be built into the Unit where there are appropriate opportunities.

1 Literacy

1.2 Writing

2 Numeracy

2.3 Information handling

3 Health and wellbeing

3.1 Personal Learning

5 Thinking skills

5.3 Applying
5.4 Analysing and evaluating

Amplification of these is given in SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work.* The level of these skills should be at the same SCQF level as the Unit and be consistent with the SCQF level descriptor. Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work is given in the *Unit Support Notes.*

Appendix: Unit support notes

Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance on approaches to delivering and assessing this Unit. They are intended for teachers and lecturers who are delivering this Unit. They should be read in conjunction with:

- the *Unit Specification*
- the *Unit Assessment Support packs*

Developing skills, knowledge and understanding

Teachers and lecturers are free to select the skills, knowledge, understanding and contexts which are most appropriate for delivery in their centres.

Approaches to learning and teaching

This Unit is designed to provide flexibility and choice for both the learner and delivering centre. Approaches to learning and teaching should enhance opportunities for all learners to achieve their full potential, whether working in a whole-class, small group or supported self-study situation.

It is good practice to use a variety of learning and teaching methods so that learners' interest and motivation are maintained and individual preferences for different learning styles are promoted. Throughout learning and teaching activities, account should be taken of the prior knowledge that learners may have.

This Unit readily provides opportunities for a variety of learning and teaching opportunities such as for learner-centred problem-solving activities, pair and group discussion, consideration of research scenarios experimental demonstrations, questionnaire design, games and quizzes, IT/web-based activities and formal presentation. Discussion groups or personal investigation and research are excellent ways of promoting some independence in learning.

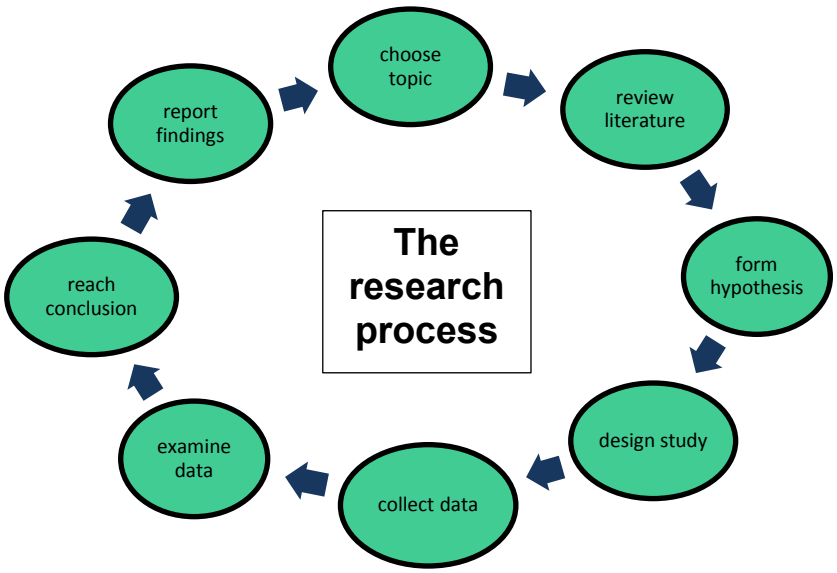
Stimulus materials, visual aids and familiar situations may be used to stimulate learner interest. Relevant online video clips may be shown in a classroom situation followed by group discussion and analysis of the content.

Learning tasks should allow for personalisation and choice as well as enabling learners to work at a suitable pace with appropriate support.

Teaching approaches should support Curriculum for Excellence's four capacities to enable each learner to develop as a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.

The research process

Learners will be expected to describe the stages of the research process used in psychology by covering the following points:



Approaches to teaching and learning can include small-scale or class-based research activities. With teacher support, learners may collaborate to develop ideas and consider ethical and methodological issues for research proposals. A small piece of research focused on a feature of social behaviour such as conformity or an aspect of individual behaviour such as memory may be carried out.

Research methods
Learners will be expected to explain what is meant by experimental methods, including independent, dependent and extraneous variables; validity and reliability; and to develop their knowledge and understanding about the need for the experimental research method if we want to show cause and effect. Laboratory experiments, field experiments and naturalistic experiments should be explained.

Learners will also develop knowledge and understanding of non-experimental research methods including:

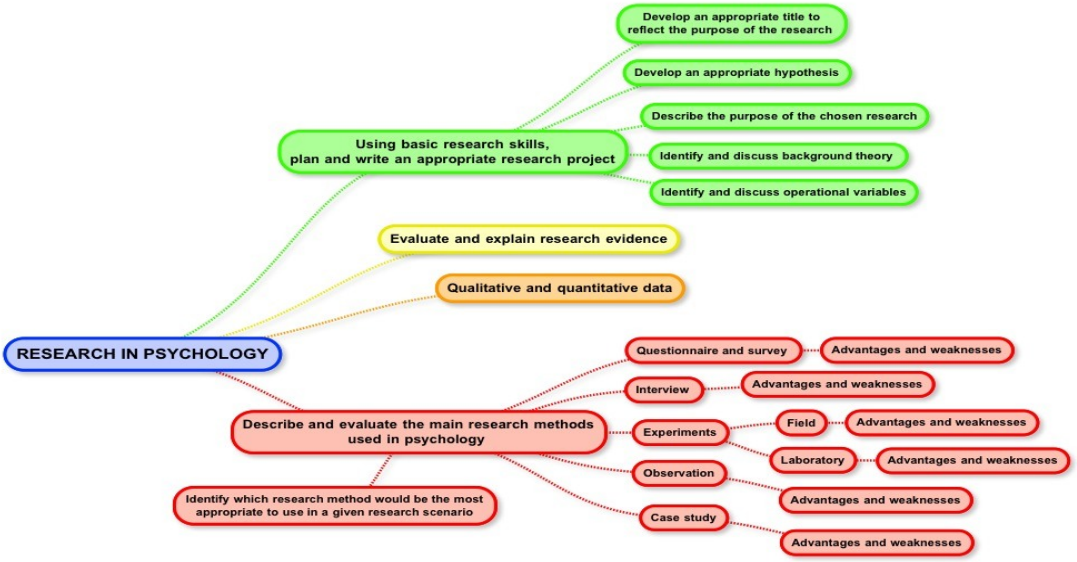
- questionnaires/surveys
- interviews
- observation
- case studies
- correlational studies

Learners could be encouraged to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods. This may be achieved by a variety of learning and teaching methods including learner-centred problem-solving activities, pair and group discussion and consideration of research scenarios.

The Unit also develops the learner's knowledge and understanding of research terminology. Opportunities should be offered, through discussion and activities to practice using this terminology. For example learners should be able to use the following research terminology accurately:

- theory
- hypothesis
- methods, either experiment or survey (questionnaires)
- sample, including a basic explanation of why sampling is used
- ethics (learners will be aware of BPS guidelines and will identify straightforward ethical issues)
- data (learners will be able to interpret simple descriptive statistics)

Overview of research in Psychology



Ethics
Ethical practice is essential in psychology. Some topics may be sensitive for individual candidates, based on stages of development or personal experiences, and discretion should be used. To this end, care should be taken in the delivery of material and sensitivity should be shown. Teachers should be alert to any signs of discomfort or distress. Such concerns are particularly relevant to delivery methods involving classroom research demonstrations.

Teachers should be familiar with current British Psychological Society ethical guidance.

Learners should be introduced to ethical guidelines and be able to consider what makes a piece of research ethical or unethical, in terms of ethical guidelines. A focus on ethical practice in psychology is to be emphasised in this Unit.

Sampling
Learners could be encouraged to investigate how participants in research are obtained. A group exercise could be used to allow learners to find out about sampling or by learners finding out about a method and reporting back to the class. Sampling methods that should be described and evaluated can include:

- opportunity sampling
- random sampling
- self-selection
- systematic sampling
- quota sampling
- stratified sampling

Calculating and presenting data
Learners should develop their knowledge and understanding of the use of descriptive statistics and demonstrate their ability to calculate mean, median, mode.

Teachers could present learners with simple number sets to practice calculations and follow with a discussion of the merits and disadvantages of the measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode).

As a way of consolidating the knowledge and understanding of the research process, learners could be given a variety of research scenarios and, working either in groups, in pairs, or individually, could plan a research study using appropriate method, sampling and data collection and justifying their choices.

Learners could be presented with research scenarios and consider ethical issues that may arise in the research scenarios. Learners could present their findings in a variety of ways: presentation, essay, academic poster. Such activities can enable learners to self-assess, peer assess and get feedback from teachers/lecturers on their progress.

Approaches to assessment

There are a number of ways in which evidence for Unit assessment could be generated. **This Unit has one Outcome with a set of coherent Assessment Standards designed to promote holistic assessment.**

Evidence may be gathered in a variety of forms that best suit the needs of the learner and individual centres. Ideas for generating assessment evidence are recorded/oral responses; academic posters, individual or group presentations, information leaflets; traditional question papers or a portfolio of evidence.

Learning opportunities should enable learners to work on planning and conducting research collaboratively, but for Unit assessment learners should work independently.

Example

Learners could create a portfolio of evidence which includes:

- a description of the stages of the research process
- an explanation of experimental and non-experimental methods of research
- a description of ethical guidelines
- an explanation of sampling methods used in psychology
- calculation of measures of central tendency from straightforward data
- applying and justifying choice of method to research scenarios

Alternative assessment approaches include:

- open-book tests, eg providing a stimulus piece with associated questions

Evidence could be able to be generated and held in a variety of formats that best suits the needs of the learner and centre. Assessors must choose an assessment format which takes into account the needs of all learners and implement the assessment at an appropriate stage in the Unit.

Combining assessment within Units

Assessment could be combined in this Unit by holistically assessing all the Outcomes of the Unit in a single assessment. When assessment within the Unit is holistic, teachers and lecturers should take particular care to track the evidence for each individual Outcome.

Authenticity

When the teacher/lecturer does not have this *direct evidence*, they will need to take steps to confirm that the learner's evidence was genuinely produced by them.

There are a number of techniques and strategies for ensuring that learners present work which is their own. For more guidance, please refer to SQA's *Guide to Assessment*

Guidance on assessment and re-assessment is available in SQA's Guide to Assessment available on SQA's website.

Administrative information

Published: July 2019 (version 2.0)

Superclass: PK

History of changes to National Unit Specification

Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date
1.1	Unit Support Notes added. Assessment standard threshold added.	Qualifications Manager	September 2018
2.0	Unit code updated	Qualifications Manager	July 2019