

Next Generation Higher National Unit Specification

Criminology A: Introducing Theories and Concepts (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J72H 47
SCQF level: 7 (8 SCQF credit points)
Valid from: session 2024–25

Prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 2.0) August 2024

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

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

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Unit purpose

This unit develops learners' knowledge and understanding of criminology. It explores the historical and intellectual foundations of criminology and key features of criminological theories and concepts. The unit examines the contested nature of the definition of crime, as well as the complex nature of crime statistics.

The unit is aimed at learners who have a general interest in criminology, as well as those who want to use it as the basis for further study.

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

- ◆ good communication skills
- ◆ previous study of criminology, for example, National Progression Awards or units at SCQF levels 5 or 6, or other similar qualifications
- ◆ other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the unit

This unit works well alongside Criminology B: Applied Criminology.

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

If learners study the unit as part of HNC Social Sciences, they may be able to progress to HND Social Sciences or a degree programme in a related subject.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

- 1 explain key theoretical developments in criminology
- 2 evaluate how crime is defined and measured

Evidence requirements

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

Written responses must consist of approximately 1,500 words, and oral responses must be 10 to 12 minutes in duration.

Learners' responses must include:

- ◆ explanation of the historical and intellectual foundations of criminology
- ◆ explanation of key theoretical developments in criminology, including the key features of at least four criminological theories and associated concepts
- ◆ evaluation of how crime is defined
- ◆ evaluation of how crime data is collected and measured

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

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

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

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

Knowledge and skills

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

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 1 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ how criminology began as an area of study ◆ the key theoretical developments in criminology, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — classical theories from the 18th and 19th centuries — genetic or biological explanations — sociological theories ◆ associated concepts 	<p>Outcome 1 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ explain classical criminological theories from the 18th and 19th centuries ◆ explain more recent developments in criminological theory — 20th century psychological theories or more recent sociological theories
<p>Outcome 2 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ how crime can be defined ◆ the contested nature of defining crime ◆ how crime is measured ◆ the issue with unreported or undiscovered crime ◆ strengths and weaknesses of different sources of statistics such as official statistics, victim surveys and methods of self-reporting, including issues with manipulation for political gain 	<p>Outcome 2 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ evaluate how crime is defined and measured

Meta-skills

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

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

Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ focusing: completing assessments and project work to clear deadlines; producing appropriate work
- ◆ integrity: acting in an ethical way to complete assessments and carry out work for projects, for example, by not cheating; including citations and referencing for assessments
- ◆ adapting: acquiring new knowledge and skills; using different technologies to communicate and complete assessments; using a virtual learning environment (VLE); reflecting on performance to improve approach
- ◆ initiative: starting work as early as possible; decision making; self-motivation; reading and thinking about theories, research evidence and sources; using library facilities; setting own deadlines

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ communicating: listening to information on theories, research and sources; explaining ideas; producing suitable, understandable assessment responses; sharing written or oral ideas and opinions on theories and topics
- ◆ feeling: discussing theories and expressing opinions; understanding other perspectives; respecting other viewpoints in discussions
- ◆ collaborating: working together to produce formative presentations and project work; taking account of others in planning and carrying out tasks; building relationships with peers

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ curiosity: seeking knowledge of theories and research; making the most of library research time; participating in class discussion and debates; questioning motives, ideas, information and research evidence
- ◆ creativity: developing new ways of working and approaching tasks; analysing case studies
- ◆ sense-making: participating in class discussions; blending a range of ideas; considering and evaluating different ideas
- ◆ critical thinking: making logical connections and reasoned judgements through discussion, debate and drawing conclusions based on evidence; reviewing and evaluating research evidence

Learners could develop other meta-skills in the unit, depending on the learning and teaching activities you carry out. These include:

- ◆ social intelligence: leading

Literacies

Learners develop core skills in the following literacies:

Numeracy

Learners develop numeracy skills by understanding facts and statistics related to crime. They can analyse data related to criminology.

Communication

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

Digital

Learners develop digital skills and computer literacy by using digital packages to produce assessment responses, and internet sources to research information on crime data and theories. You can give them guidance on appropriate sources. Using a VLE also supports digital skills.

Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability aims to build the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence needed to develop practices and make decisions that are compatible with a sustainable and equitable society. In this unit, there are opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of social sustainability while studying key topics and theories related to crime and deviance, with links to [the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

This unit fits with the following UN Sustainable Development Goal:

- 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions: through discussing ways of measuring crime and explaining criminality.

Delivery of unit

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

It is one of two Criminology units within HNC Social Sciences. This unit works well alongside Criminology B: Applied Criminology.

The overall unit delivery time is a notional 40 hours of contact time for delivery and assessment. We expect learners to commit a further 40 hours of self-directed study.

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

Outcome 1 — Explain key theoretical developments in criminology (20 hours).

Outcome 2 — Evaluate how crime is defined and measured (20 hours).

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

This unit aims to provide an interesting and engaging introduction to criminology, particularly with regard to how crime has historically been understood and defined.

You can consider different sources of information when exploring the contested nature of crime and its definition. For example, *Oxford English Dictionary* defines crime as: 'An action or omission which constitutes an offence and is punishable by law.' *Oxford Dictionary of Law* defines crime as being: 'An act (or sometimes a failure to act) that is deemed by statute or by the common law to be a public wrong and is therefore punishable by the state in criminal proceedings.' *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* defines crime in a more complex way: 'An offence which goes beyond the personal and into the public sphere, breaking prohibitory rules or laws, to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached, and which requires the intervention of a public authority.' The difference between these definitions gets to the heart of issues surrounding crime.

You should introduce learners to key theories of criminology to form a historical and philosophical foundation for their understanding of crime. You could start with what is generally accepted as the first recognised school of criminology, the classical school of the 18th century, which focuses on the need to develop rational and systematic ways of delivering justice. You could also consider positivist theorists such as Cesare Lombroso and his systematic typing of criminals on the basis of cranial and physiological characteristics. You may decide to look at a range of debates and theories of crime causation to help learners understand the development of criminological theory. You can use these debates to compare explanations that focus on the innate characteristics and psychology of the individual, with more sociological explanations that consider wider social and environmental causes of crime.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ genetic and biological explanations: twin studies, adoptive studies, alcohol and drug abuse
- ◆ psychological explanations: Sigmund Freud's theory of the mind, Hans Eysenck's theory of personality, Michael Stone's 'Scale of Evil', and Albert Bandura's social learning theory
- ◆ sociological explanations: Chicago School and ecological approaches, labelling theories, feminist theories, Marxist approaches, and radical criminology

Typically, criminologists approach crime in a more sociological way, drawing attention to the law and whose interests it seeks to protect, as well as the criminal act itself. Criminologists, therefore, look beyond this strict legal definition to examine the social and cultural roots of crime and criminalisation. This raises pertinent questions about why certain activities are labelled 'criminal' while others are not.

You could include debate from opposing key theorists such as Sutherland, who expands theories to white collar and corporate crime, and Tappan, who considers that view political rather than scientific.

You may also consider biological theories of crime that assert a link between certain biological conditions and an increased tendency to engage in criminal behaviour. You could explore twin or adoptive studies, biochemical research, or other biological factors associated with increased violence and aggressiveness, including alcohol intoxication and drug abuse.

In contrast, psychological approaches tend to explain delinquent and criminal behaviour by focusing on an individual's personality. You could examine psychodynamic theories, behavioural theories or cognitive approaches in criminology.

Whichever theories you decide to cover, learners should be able to explain early criminological theories and more recent explanations for criminal behaviour.

Having established the contested nature of defining crime, you should consider the problems with measuring crime, since these are inextricably linked. You should cover methods such as official statistics (typically figures recorded by the police), victim surveys, self-reporting and larger crime surveys such as the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey. All these methods have limitations, and you should encourage learners to consider these as well as wider problems of using legalistic definitions of crime. You could cover the ideas of the dark figure of crime, police 'manufacturing' crime and the work of Steven Box, who explores the manipulation of crime statistics for political gain.

Approaches to delivery

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

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

Learners can benefit from a varied and active learning approach, where they engage in supported, independent and collaborative learning. You should encourage learners to take a participative and practical approach. Delivery methods could include:

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

It would be useful for learners to have access to a laptop or other digital device.

You should deliver the unit in a learner-centred manner and always encourage a questioning approach. In doing so, you engage learners and encourage them to think like social scientists and be analytical and enquiring, rather than passively accepting facts. Developing essential transferable skills also helps learners access further study and employment.

The section on meta-skills provides further guidance on incorporating different skills into delivery and evidence.

Approaches to assessment

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

Learners can choose to submit their assessment evidence in any format that meets each outcome. We recommend that you assess the unit holistically, as that is best to reduce the learners' assessment burden. You can decide to use a portfolio approach with two or more assessment tasks issued at different times in the unit delivery, if that is better for your learners.

The assessment could take the form of an open-book essay question or set of structured questions. Learners must provide a response of approximately 1,500 words, or an oral presentation or poster exhibition of 10 to 12 minutes in duration, or any other method that appropriately meets the evidence requirements. For example, learners could provide the evidence in the form of an individual blog or website, consisting of approximately 1,500 words.

You can choose to use a mix of methods across a group, as it may be more suitable for some learners to give a written response and for others to use an oral method. Whichever method learners choose, they must be able to access notes, textbooks and other materials, as it is an open-book assessment.

If learners choose an oral method, we recommend that you record this in some form or provide assessor notes on the presentation for external verification purposes. Learners must show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements. Ideally, they would complete oral presentations or poster exhibitions individually. If a group presentation is used, individual learners must show coverage of all evidence requirements. To do this, they may need to provide an essay or additional responses to structured questions. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.

Learners can combine a poster exhibition with an oral presentation. For example, a learner could produce a detailed poster of named theories, definitions of crime and ways of measuring crime, and cover the detail of the theories, and evaluation of the definition and measurement of crime in an oral presentation. In this case, the total time across both outcomes and all evidence requirements would be 10 to 12 minutes. So, the learner would spend 10 to 12 minutes orally presenting the poster content.

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

If learners are creating a blog or website for their assessment, it should not be in the public domain. Rather, it should be on an intranet or private area of your VLE to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism.

Authenticating learners' work is essential. You could collect notes or visual presentation materials from learners as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 7. You should monitor learners' progress throughout to authenticate submitted work. Where possible, you should use plagiarism detection software.

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

Opportunities for e-assessment

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

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

Equality and inclusion

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

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

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

www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Information for learners

Criminology A: Introducing Theories and Concepts (SCQF level 7)

This information explains:

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

Unit information

This unit introduces you to criminology. It explores the historical and intellectual foundations of criminology and the key features of criminological concepts. You also explore the contested nature of the definition of crime, as well as the complex nature of crime statistics.

Before you start the unit, you should have good communication skills and an interest in criminology. It would also be helpful to have some basic digital skills.

On completing the unit, you are able to:

- 1 explain key theoretical developments in criminology
- 2 evaluate how crime is defined and measured

You are encouraged to develop an enquiring and critical mind, thinking about ideas such as:

- ◆ the birth and development of criminology as a subject in the study of social sciences
- ◆ the key developments of criminological theory since early classical theories
- ◆ the contested nature of defining crime in society
- ◆ the problematic nature of measuring crime in society

You are assessed using an open-book assessment covering both unit outcomes. This means that you have access to materials such as textbooks, notes and your virtual learning environment (VLE). You can give your assessment response in writing or orally. If your response is written, it must be approximately 1,500 words, and if it is oral, it must be between 10 and 12 minutes long.

During the unit, you develop academic skills such as time management, multi-tasking ability, digital skills, essay writing skills and questioning ability.

You also develop key literacies such as communication. You learn to convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way, with references where appropriate. Your lecturer may also use oral presentations and discussions to help you improve your communication skills. You develop digital skills and computer literacy by using digital packages to complete assessments, and internet sources to research information.

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The unit introduces you to Learning for Sustainability ideas, with links made to UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly while studying ways of measuring crime and explaining criminality, and institutions involved in the justice system.

The unit can support learning in other related units, such as Criminology B: Applied Criminology. You may be able to study HND Social Sciences or a degree programme in a related subject if you study the unit as part of HNC Social Sciences.

Meta-skills

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

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

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

Administrative information

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Superclass: EE

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Removed reference to the requirement to use holistic assessment in 'Evidence requirements', and in 'Information for learners'.◆ In 'Approaches to assessment' additional words that a holistic or portfolio approach can be used were added. Also, additional information allowing group presentations was added.	May 2024

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