

**GCSE Subject Level
Conditions and
Requirements for Psychology**

April 2016

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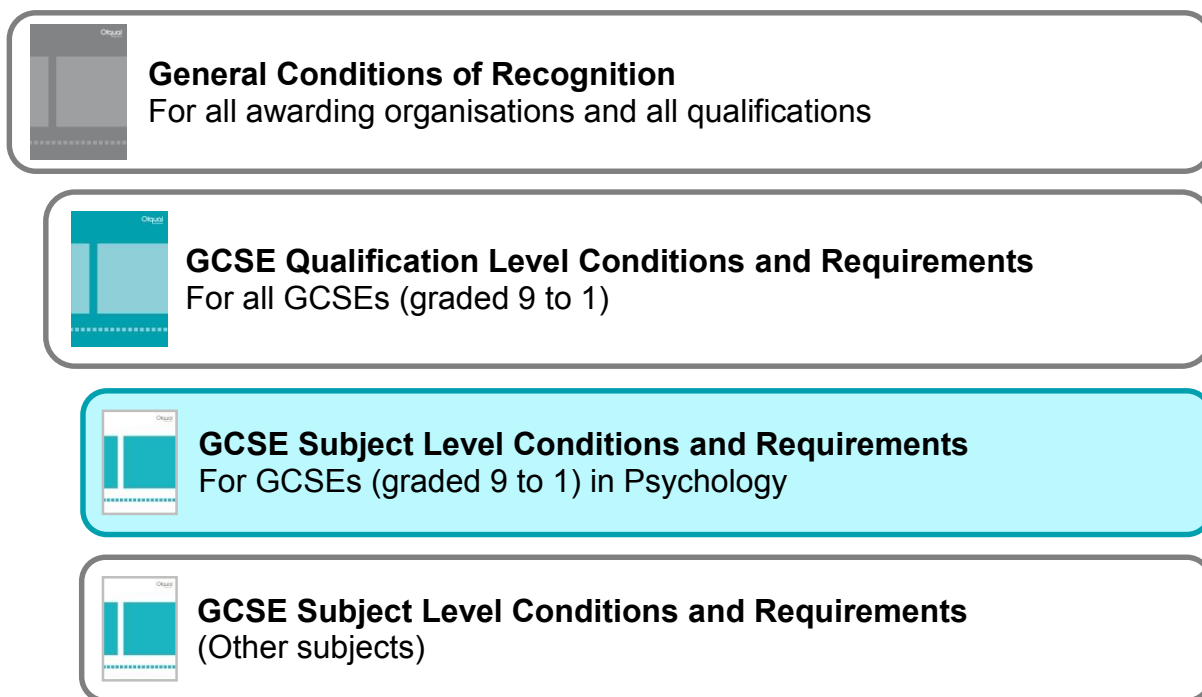
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Introduction

About this document

This document (highlighted in the figure below) is part of a suite of documents which sets out the regulatory requirements for awarding organisations offering GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1).



We have developed these requirements with the intention that GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) should fulfil the following purposes:

- To provide evidence of students' achievements against demanding and fulfilling content;
- To provide a strong foundation for further academic and vocational study and for employment; and
- To provide (if required) a basis for schools and colleges to be held accountable for the performance of all of their students.

Requirements set out in this document

This document sets out the GCSE Subject Level Conditions for Psychology. These conditions will come into effect at 9.31am on Tuesday 5 April 2016 for all GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in Psychology.

It also sets out our requirements in relation to:

- assessment objectives – awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCSE(Psychology)1.2; and
- assessment – awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCSE(Psychology)2.1.

Appendix 1 reproduces the requirements in relation to subject content for GCSE Psychology¹, as published by the Department for Education. Awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCSE(Psychology)1.1.

With respect to GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in Psychology, awarding organisations must also comply with:

- our *General Conditions of Recognition*,² which apply to all awarding organisations and qualifications; and
- our *GCSE Qualification Level Conditions*;³ and
- all relevant Regulatory Documents.⁴

With respect to GCSE qualifications graded from A* to G, awarding organisations must continue to comply with the General Conditions of Recognition, and the relevant Regulatory Documents.

Summary of requirements

Subject Level Conditions	
GCSE(Psychology)1	Compliance with content requirements
GCSE(Psychology)2	Assessment

Assessment Objectives
Assessment Objectives - GCSE Qualifications in Psychology

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-psychology

² www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-conditions-of-recognition

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-qualification-level-conditions

⁴ www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-document-list

Assessment requirements

[Assessment requirements - GCSE Qualifications in Psychology](#)

Appendix 1 – Subject content (published by Department for Education)

[GCSE Psychology: subject content](#)

Subject Level Conditions

GCSE Subject Level Conditions for Psychology

Condition GCSE(Psychology)1 Compliance with content requirements

GCSE(Psychology)1.1 In respect of each GCSE Qualification in Psychology which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must –

- (a) comply with the requirements relating to that qualification set out in the document published by the Secretary of State entitled 'Psychology GCSE subject content'⁵, document reference DFE-00213-2015,
- (b) have regard to any recommendations or guidelines relating to that qualification set out in that document, and
- (c) interpret that document in accordance with any requirements, and having regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

GCSE(Psychology)1.2 In respect of each GCSE Qualification in Psychology which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must comply with any requirements, and have regard to any guidance, relating to the objectives to be met by any assessment for that qualification which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-psychology

Condition

Assessment

GCSE(Psychology)2

GCSE(Psychology)2.1 An awarding organisation must ensure that in respect of each assessment for a GCSE Qualification in Psychology which it makes available it complies with any requirements, and has regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

Assessment objectives

Assessment objectives – GCSE Qualifications in Psychology

Condition GCSE(Psychology)1.2 allows us to specify requirements relating to the objectives to be met by any assessment for GCSE Qualifications in Psychology.

The assessment objectives set out below constitute requirements for the purposes of Condition GCSE(Psychology)1.2. Awarding organisations must comply with these requirements in relation to all GCSE Qualifications in Psychology they make available.

	Objective	Weighting
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of psychological ideas, processes and procedures	35%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of psychological ideas, processes and procedures	35%
AO3	Analyse and evaluate psychological information, ideas, processes and procedures to make judgements and draw conclusions	30%

Assessment requirements

Assessment requirements – GCSE Qualifications in Psychology

Condition GCSE(Psychology)2.1 allows us to specify requirements in relation to assessments for GCSE Qualifications in Psychology.

We set out below our requirements for the purposes of Condition GCSE(Psychology)2.1. Awarding organisations must comply with these requirements in relation to all GCSE Qualifications in Psychology they make available.

Assessment of Learners in relation to Research Methods

The subject content for GCSE Qualifications in Psychology is set out in the document published by the Secretary of State entitled 'Psychology GCSE subject content', document reference DFE-00213-2015 (the 'Content Document').

Paragraph 12 of the Content Document specifies the 'knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to psychological investigation and research methods' which Learners will be required to use and apply in GCSE Qualifications in Psychology ('Research Methods').

In designing and setting the assessments for each GCSE Qualification in Psychology which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must ensure that, taking the assessments for that qualification together –

- (a) Learners' knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to Research Methods is assessed across assessment objectives AO1, AO2 and AO3, and
- (b) the number of marks used to credit such knowledge, skills and understanding is no less than 20 per cent of the total marks for the qualification.

Mathematical skills

Appendix A to the Content Document specifies the mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding which Learners will be required to use and apply in GCSE Qualifications in Psychology ('Mathematical Skills').

In designing and setting the assessments for a GCSE Qualification in Psychology which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must ensure that –

- (a) questions and tasks rewarding the use of Mathematical Skills assess those skills within the context of Research Methods,

- (b) in each set of assessments,⁶ at least 10 per cent of the total marks for the qualification reward the use of Mathematical Skills at a Level of Demand which is not lower than that which is expected of Learners at Key Stage 3 as outlined in the Department for Education's document 'Mathematics programmes of study: key stage 3',⁷ document reference DFE-00179-2013, and
- (c) without prejudice to the above requirements and those outlined in the Content Document, in each set of assessments Mathematical Skills are assessed across a range of Levels of Demand which supports effective differentiation in relation to the qualification.

⁶ For the purposes of this guidance, a 'set of assessments' means the assessments to be taken by a particular Learner for a GCSE Qualification in Psychology. For clarity, the assessments taken by Learners may vary, depending on any possible routes through the qualification.

⁷ www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-mathematics-programmes-of-study

Subject content (published by Department for Education)



Department
for Education

Psychology

GCSE subject content

December 2015

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The content for psychology GCSE

Introduction

1. GCSE subject content sets out the knowledge, understanding and skills common to all GCSE specifications in a given subject.
2. Together with the assessment objectives it provides the framework within which awarding organisations create the detail of their specifications, ensuring progression from key stage 3 national curriculum requirements, and the possibility for progression to A level.

Aims and objectives

3. GCSE specifications in psychology must inspire and engage students by providing a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study which develops an understanding of the ideas and values that characterise 'self' and others. Students will be equipped with a psychological literacy that enables them to apply their knowledge and skills in their everyday lives, including making informed decisions about further study and career choices.
4. Specifications should encourage students to carry out ethical, investigative activities appropriate for the study of psychology at this level, but students will not be directly assessed on these specific activities.
5. GCSE specifications in psychology must enable students to:
 - use specialist vocabulary, psychological concepts, terminology and convention to engage in the process of psychological enquiry
 - acquire knowledge and understanding of psychology, developing an understanding of self and others, and how psychological understanding can help to explain everyday social phenomena
 - understand how psychological research is conducted, including the role of scientific method and data analysis
 - present information, develop arguments and draw conclusions through a critical approach to psychological evidence, developing as reflective thinkers
 - develop an understanding of the relationship between psychology and personal, moral, social and cultural issues, and develop an understanding of ethical issues in psychology
 - develop an understanding of psychological issues, the contribution of psychology to individual, social and cultural diversity, and how psychology contributes to society

Subject content

6. Specifications must require students to study the five core areas of psychology as identified at paragraph 10, and psychological ideas, processes, techniques and procedures, through:

- the five compulsory topics: development; memory; psychological problems; social influence; and the brain and neuropsychology
- two optional topics from the following: criminal psychology; language, thought and communication; perception; sleep and dreaming; or the self
- research methods

7. For each topic area, excluding social influence and the brain and neuropsychology, specifications must require students to study and critically evaluate theories or explanations, including the key features of each theory or explanation, in the context of the specific topic and area of psychology.

8. For topics in which theories or explanations are required, the theories or explanations are listed for each topic in the content below. For each of these topics, apart from development, two theories or explanations are required. For development, three theories are required.

9. For all topics, including social influence and the brain and neuropsychology, two studies, related to each topic are also required. The studies are not listed in the content below and should be set out in specifications.

Knowledge, understanding and skills

10. GCSE specifications in psychology must reflect the learning outcomes, and must require students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of key features of the following core areas of psychology through the study of the compulsory and optional topics, and research methods:

- biological – an understanding of biological concepts within psychology, including neuroscience and genetics as contributors to behaviour
- cognitive – an understanding of thought, information and mental processing as contributors to behaviour
- social – an understanding of the social area of psychology, the impact of social and environmental factors on behaviour and the influence of groups
- developmental – an understanding of how individuals change throughout their lives, with a particular focus on childhood and how both nature and nurture can affect individuals
- individual differences – an understanding of the complex nature of human behaviour and experiences and why and how people are different

11. Specifications must require students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of:

- debates within psychology, including 'reductionism/holism' and 'nature/nurture'
- how psychological knowledge and ideas change over time and how these inform our understanding of behaviour
- the contribution of psychology to an understanding of individual, social and cultural diversity
- the interrelationships between the core areas of psychology
- how the studies for topics relate to the associated theory
- research methods as outlined in the content below

Compulsory topics

Development

- stages of development, including cognitive and brain development
- the role of education and intelligence including Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, assimilation and accommodation, and the four stages of cognitive development
- the effects of learning on development including Dweck's Mindset Theory and Willingham's Learning Theory

Memory

- the structure and process of memory, including the Theory of Reconstructive Memory and the Multi-store Model of Memory
- features of short-term and long-term memory, including duration and capacity
- inputs and outputs of memory, and how different types of memory are encoded and stored

Psychological problems

- an introduction to mental health:
 - how the incidence of significant mental health problems changes over time
 - the effects of significant mental health problems on individuals and society
- students must study two from the following: clinical depression, schizophrenia, addiction, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and know and understand:
 - characteristics of each according to the International Classification of Disease (ICD)
 - one biological and one psychological explanation
- interventions or therapies for each and how these improve mental health

Social Influence

- how the influence of other people (individuals and groups), social factors and dispositional factors (for example personality) explain:
 - conformity to majority influence
 - the behaviour of crowds and the individuals within them and the effect of collective behaviour, including pro and anti-social behaviour
 - obeying the orders of authority figures

The Brain and Neuropsychology

- the structure and functions of the brain and how the brain works
- the basic actions of the brain and the nervous system, what neurons and synapses are, and how they interact
- an introduction to neuropsychology: how structure and function of the brain relate to cognitions and behaviour; an example of the impact, on behaviour, of neurological damage

Optional topics

Criminal Psychology

- explanations of why criminal/anti-social behaviour occurs, including the Social Learning Theory of Criminality and Eysenck's Criminal Personality Theory
- the effects of punishment, including prison and alternatives to imprisonment
- rehabilitation, and reducing criminal/anti-social behaviour and increasing pro-social behaviour

Language, Thought and Communication

- the possible relationship between thought and language including Piaget's Theory of the Relationship between Thought and Language
- how thoughts and the structure of language affects our view of the world and how communication is different in animals
- examples of non-verbal communication and explanations including the Evolutionary Theory

Perception

- explanations of sensation and perception, including the Direct Theory of Perception (Gibson) and the Constructivist Theory of Perception (Gregory)
- monocular and binocular depth cues, visual cues, visual illusions, and visual constancies, and the reasons for these
- perceptual set and the effects of the following factors on perception: motivation, expectation, emotion, and culture

Sleep and Dreaming

- functions, features and benefits of sleep
- internal and external influences on sleep, and the features and causes of sleep disorders
- the nature of dreaming including why and when dreaming occurs, the Freudian theory of dreaming and Activation Synthesis Theory

The Self

- definitions of 'the self', 'self-concept' and the role of identity and free will
- the Humanistic Theory of Self to explain the development of self-esteem and the development of personality and the role of internal influences such as temperament and the role of experience
- measuring personality, personality scales and personality types, including the Trait Theory of Self

Research methods

12. GCSE specifications in psychology must require students to develop the following knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to psychological investigation and research methods:

- planning to conduct a psychological investigation and writing a hypothesis including null and alternative
- identifying different types of variables, including independent and dependent variables, and explaining the effect of extraneous variables and how to control for them
- describing target populations, samples, sampling methods, their associated strengths and weaknesses and how to apply them. Understanding the principles of sampling as applied to scientific data
- designing research including consideration of how it would be conducted, using quantitative and qualitative methods including:
 - lab, field, natural, interview, questionnaire, correlation, case study and observation
 - identifying strengths and weaknesses of the above methods, and types of research objectives for which they are most suitable
- using, understanding, interpreting and analysing numerical data and graphical representation of data (see appendix A)
- knowledge, analysis and evaluation of experimental designs, including independent and repeated measures, and their strengths and weaknesses

- analysing the planning and conducting of research, through the consideration of the reliability and validity of sampling methods, experimental designs, quantitative and qualitative methods
- demonstrating knowledge and understanding of ethical issues in psychological research, ethical guidelines, and ways of dealing with ethical issues

Appendix A – Mathematical requirements

In order to be able to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in psychology, students need to have been taught, and demonstrate competence, to select and apply the following areas of mathematics relevant to Research Methods in psychology:

Arithmetic and numerical computation

- recognise and use expressions in decimal and standard form
- use ratios, fractions and percentages
- estimate results

Handling data

- use an appropriate number of significant figures
- find arithmetic means
- construct and interpret frequency tables and diagrams, bar charts and histograms
- understand the principles of sampling as applied to scientific data
- understand the terms mean, median and mode
- use a scatter diagram to identify a correlation between two variables
- know the characteristics of normal distributions
- understand range as a measure of dispersion
- understand the differences between qualitative and quantitative data
- understand the difference between primary and secondary data
- translate information between graphical and numerical forms
- plot two variables from experimental or other data and interpret graphs

All mathematical content must be assessed within the lifetime of the specification.



Department
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