# Government of South Australia LogoSACE Board Logo2023 Psychology Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2023 assessment cycle, gives an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements (changes implemented for 2024 are available in the [*Summary of subject outline changes for 2024*](https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/documents/652891/5209335/Summary+of+subject+outline+changes+for+2024.pdf/63117fcf-9c2d-a178-3be3-3181b721f3e4?version=1.6)) and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

School Assessment

Teachers can support the online moderation process by:

* ensuring the uploaded tasks are legible all facing up (and the same way); and remove blank pages, student notes, exemplars, and formula pages; to ensure moderators can easily differentiate between student evidence to be moderated and teacher scaffolds
* ensuring the uploaded responses have pages of the same size (i.e. not a mixture of A4 and A3 pages) and in colour so teacher marking and comments are clear
* labelling page numbers clearly (A3 and A4 sizing of pages are sometimes indistinguishable when a document is scanned in online)
* clearly identifying the work of each individual student in collaborative tasks
* thoroughly checking that all grades entered in Schools Online are correct
* ensuring Learning and Assessment Plans have been uploaded and identifying any adjustments made by the teacher
* ensuring the PSR matches the performance standards identified on the LAP and on the assessment tasks themselves
* encouraging students to avoid pale and/or hard to read text colours, as well as similar background and text colours that become difficult to differentiate when scanned in online
* ensuring student work has word counts indicated on student samples for the investigations folio tasks
* uploading each student sample for each assessment type in a single accessible file, where possible.

Operational Advice

If students present their responses in oral or multimodal form, 6 minutes is the equivalent of 1000 words. Students should not speed up the recording of their videos excessively to condense more content into the maximum time limit.

From 2023, if a video is flagged by moderators as impacted by speed, schools will be requested to provide a transcript and moderators will be advised to moderate based on the evidence in the transcript, only considering evidence up to the maximum word limit.

If the speed of the recording makes the speech incomprehensible, it affects the accuracy of transcriptions and it also impacts the ability of moderators to find evidence of student achievement against the performance standards.

Assessment Type 1: Investigations Folio (30%)

This assessment type requires students to complete:

* at least one psychological investigation. Where only one investigation is undertaken, it must include deconstruction of a problem and design of a psychological investigation
* one investigation with a focus on science as a human endeavour.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* ensuring students adhere to maximum word count (page count for deconstruction)
* ensuring that the four pages of Deconstruction and Design are clearly numbered and submitted to moderation along with the 1500-word report
* assessing KA3 for the science as a human endeavour task, as this is the only performance standard that specifically mentions the interaction between science and society
* emphasising the importance of including a justification for the choices made in the Deconstruction and Design
* avoiding tasks that are excessively scaffolded, ensuring that students have the opportunity to show evidence of critical thinking and achieve at the highest levels.

Deconstruct and design

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* commonly used a predefined research program
* provided evidence to demonstrate initiative in applying constructive and focused approaches
* critically deconstructed their problem, considering a range of possible psychological investigation designs and methods in their deconstruction, and explaining how each will influence the success of their design
* featured a discussion with a detailed analysis of data and evaluation of the design, method, and procedures used as well as a critical analysis and evaluation of strengths, limitations, validity, reliability, improvements, and ethics
* considered how the research topic could be investigated using the different research designs, justifying choices made throughout
* used the four-page limit effectively, leaving little blank space on the pages.

*The less successful responses commonly:*

* were confused by explicit features of different design types and applied these incorrectly
* lacked justification of the factors that would impact the success of the investigation
* submitted a deconstruction that did not relate specifically to the area of focus (or was not submitted with the report)
* did not evaluate and justify choices throughout
* were heavily scaffolded in the deconstruct and design
* featured a limited discussion of the different design and data types that could be used
* provided a generic mind map and evaluations that could apply to other reports.

Investigation report

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* included discussion on the target population and limitations in the actual sample used, as well as suggested improvements
* appropriately displayed data, including and/or table conventions
* discussed a range of strengths and weaknesses including but not limited to; the sample, data type, design type used, and extraneous variables
* discussed a range of realistic improvements that were appropriate and provided clear explanations about how each improvement would improve the quality of the findings
* included conclusions which were connected to relevant theory or psychological knowledge
* reflected on the researched information and used this information to justify and evaluate the effectiveness their research
* interpreted results accurately and provided a systematic and in-depth discussion of the evidence leading to the formulation of logical and highly-relevant conclusions
* discussed research ethics specific to the investigation
* used psychological terms effectively and communicated ideas concisely and clearly
* evaluated reliability and validity thoroughly, including strengths and weaknesses of replicability of the study and valid means of measurement.

*The less successful responses commonly:*

* provided a recount of what they did
* included raw data or too many graphs and tables in their report, making it difficult to interpret
* used personal language instead of formal scientific language
* gave a generic interpretation of results with no or with little justification of what the results meant for the conclusion of the study
* repeated the same design without real or adequate changes (when using previous research program)
* lacked explicit and relevant psychological terminology
* struggled to provide evidence of IAE3 when assessed
* did not include a method that could be easily followed
* provided control and extraneous variables that were superficial
* confused independent and dependent variables.

Science as a Human Endeavour

In general, students performed better on the science as a human endeavour (SHE) task when IAE3 was not assessed. Successful students analysed SHE elaborations highly effectively in their response, integrating their psychological knowledge throughout the task, not just in the background psychology section.

The more successful responses commonly:

* used multiple articles to prompt the SHE discussion rather than just one source based on research that was current
* used psychological terms effectively and communicated ideas concisely and clearly
* selected topics that were particularly relevant to current society, could apply psychological concepts to the real world, and featured a detailed discussion of the interaction between science and society (in both directions)
* focused specifically on only one or two of the SHE key concepts in Psychology to allow for more in-depth discussion, as opposed to trying to briefly cover all SHE key concepts, or only briefly covering one
* linked their chosen topic to these SHE concepts authentically with specific examples (e.g. quotes from articles).

*The less successful responses commonly:*

* focussed on research that was outdated and not current
* provided answers that reflected historical research and recounts of theories that did not enable students to critically explore and show understanding of the contemporary interaction between science and society
* provided very little reference to the society-society interaction
* demonstrated a poor application of psychological concepts to specific context
* included a word count where the majority was spent on psychological background information
* lacked evidence showing an understanding of the interaction between science and society as a 'feedback loop' — the students were only able to discuss one direction e.g. science interacting with society
* discussed ideas related to SHE but did not link the ideas well, making it hard to determine what SHE key concepts were being discussed
* were severely under the 1500-word limit
* referred to language of SHE key concepts in other sciences, which are different to those in Psychology.

Assessment Type 2: Skills and Applications Tasks (40%)

This assessment type requires students to complete at least three skills and applications tasks which must include at least one task from each of the non-examined topics. At least one skills and applications task should be under the direct supervision of the teacher.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* clearly identifying whether a task has been done under the direct supervision of the teacher or not
* ensuring each of the three non-examined topics are assessed
* encouraging students to adhere closely to the maximum word count
* ensuring time provided for ‘timed assessment pieces’ fits within the SACE guidelines as stipulated in the subject outline (for example, SASTA trial examinations, mid-year, or trial examinations may be longer than the maximum time limit permitted and should not be used for this Assessment Type)
* including tasks that provide an appropriate balance of routine and more complex problems that effectively differentiate student psychological knowledge and understanding of concepts across the grade bands
* finding a good balance of ‘traditional’ standalone test style assessments focussed on the technical aspects of the subject mixed with innovative approaches that allow students to develop other capabilities, including video presentations and assessments that build on one another throughout the subject.

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* were able to identify and explain psychological terminology well and link them to relevant scenarios
* applied psychological concepts and terms effectively to diverse contexts
* showed depth in their understanding because the task design allowed the students to elaborate and present their knowledge in a variety of ways
* benefited from strong task design (e.g. were given choice, but still given clear and explicit direction and instruction from the teacher)
* analysed the researched information rather than simply recounted it
* showed a variety of types of assessments, e.g. an assignment, a supervised task, and a test
* allowed students some agency in what they focussed on for the assessment
* included timed tasks that were of a similar style, structure, and standard to the end-of-year examination
* included application questions allowing the students to demonstrate their knowledge in new and unfamiliar contexts
* provided evidence for a range of performance standards, providing detailed responses with appropriate use of psychological terminology
* acknowledged information from a wide range of sources appropriately.

*The less successful responses commonly:*

* only provided evidence in the form of assignments, not a timed task/test. These students were unable to provide evidence (depth of analysis, evaluation, and critical thinking) required for the higher grade bands
* misunderstood the nature of the question(s) posed in a task and demonstrated a weak understanding of the course content
* included marking rubric only for in-class presentations that were not recorded, meaning there was insufficient evidence to support the grade given
* came from tasks that did not align with the knowledge and skills covered in the current SACE Stage 2 subject outline
* featured tests that were based on the old curriculum and marked according to old standards. Diverse questions are preferable, and students should be rewarded for responses that align with the current curriculum
* responded to sets of tasks that were only made up of tests, limiting student choice and reducing the opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding of selecting sources
* provided very brief responses, especially in tests
* provided definitions of the psychological concepts but could not effectively elaborate or apply these to scenarios
* included multiple questions on the same concept in a SAT, double penalising some students
* were significantly over or under the word or time limit
* relied too heavily on research tasks, not allowing the students to demonstrate their knowledge of psychology in new and unfamiliar contexts
* used only a few sources of information or cited unreliable sources of information in research assignments.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Students undertook a 130-minute online examination, using their understanding of psychology to answer questions that assess their Stage 2 Psychology science inquiry skills; science understanding of Topic 4: Social Influence and of Topic 5: The Psychology of Learning.

Section A

Question 1 (a)

The more successful responses:

* discussed self-concept, specifically linking to social media behaviour, often referring to seeking validation via social media usage, and/or how anonymity impacts this. in their response.

The less successful responses:

* did not provide any reference to the scenario or show any understanding of self-concept.

Question 1 (b)

The more successful responses:

* identified one ethical concern such as anonymity, confidentiality, breach of privacy, harm, right to withdraw, etc.

The less successful responses:

* wrote ‘common sense’ responses that did not refer to ethical concerns that specifically related to the Psychology curriculum.

**Question 1 (c)**

The more successful responses included explanations of:

* ecological validity
* how observational design allows for investigations of variables that would otherwise be impossible/unethical to investigate
* how more authentic behaviours could be observed.

The less successful responses:

* confused observational design with experimental design
* did not explain an advantage (only discussed features)
* discussed disadvantages of observational designs.

Question 2 (a)

The more successful responses:

* included an explanation of proximity, prestige, or deindividuation and linked this to the scenario of mobile phone usage.

The less successful responses:

* did not reference the scenario (e.g. explained proximity but did not reference the school context)
* gave vague explanations about why students were not following the policy with no psychological understanding conveyed.

Question 2 (b)

The more successful responses:

* explained either the central or peripheral route in some detail and explained how the students’ attitude was changed
* included specific features of the central (use of facts, statistics, higher cognitive processing, expert opinion) or peripheral route (use of celebrity endorsement, jingles, humour) relevant to the context in their answers.

The less successful responses:

* explained the central or peripheral route (or both) but did not link to the scenario
* confused central and peripheral features.

Question 2 (c)

The more successful responses:

* described situational pressures (e.g. where they are and who they are with) and self-monitoring (e.g. high self-monitors are more concerned with the image they portray than low self-monitors) and how this impacts the attitude-behaviour link.

The less successful responses:

* did not address one part of the question (e.g. wrote about situational pressures or self-monitoring)
* did not include adequate reference to the scenario
* confused high and low self monitors.

Question 2 (d)

The more successful responses:

* outlined the 5–7 steps/processes involved in behaviour modification (although it was not essential to answer it this way) and linked to the mobile phone scenario.

The less successful responses:

* spoke about operant conditioning generally
* talked about observational learning.

**Question 3 (a)**

The more successful responses:

* clear interpretation of the graph and two conclusions drawn (e.g. in Dec 2019 and Dec 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reported the most discrimination with over 50% in both years).

The less successful responses:

* made general and/or incorrect interpretations (e.g. from 2019 to 2021 all groups reported less discrimination overall).

Question 3 (b)

The more successful responses:

* included descriptions of rating scales (such as Likert, Thurstone, or Semantic Differential) or self-report inventories.

The less successful responses:

* described a questionnaire or survey without specifying type of questions/data to be included/gathered
* gave an example of a questionnaire with open ended questions (making it qualitative).

**Question 3 (c)**

*The more successful responses:*

* included descriptions of the tricomponent (ABC) model explaining the affective (feeling), behavioural (action), and cognitive (belief) component (prejudice = affective, discrimination = behavioural, stereotype = cognitive.

The less successful responses:

* did not include any psychological terminology
* confused one or more aspects (e.g. said that discrimination was an affective component).

**Question 3 (d)**

*The more successful responses:*

* included descriptions of Education, Intergroup Contact, Superordinate Goals, Direct Experience.

The less successful responses:

* did not use psychological terminology
* used the same strategy (e.g. education) twice.

Question 4 (a)

The more successful responses:

* gave very detailed definitions of identification using psychological terms and applied this to how it would impact Dante’s study habits and grades
* wrote concise answers that only contained relevant information.

The less successful responses:

* discussed how Dante ‘identifies’ as per the mainstream use of the word identification, rather than as a type of conformity as taught in the Psychology curriculum
* made a valid prediction of how Dante’s study habits and grades would be impacted but did not relate this to identification
* only gave partial definitions of identification and did not include that conformity would only occur in the presence of the group.

Question 4 (b)

The more successful responses:

* discussed how both identification and compliance would influence Dante’s study habits and grades, and then justified which one would be more beneficial.

The less successful responses:

* only discussed one of the two types of conformity required
* did not evaluate which type of conformity would be beneficial based on the information in the scenario, and rather created their own scenario for Dante
* discussed internalisation not as a form of conformity, but as Dante’s internalising his own attitudes and beliefs and behaving consistently according to this. Students were using this to justify internalisation as being more beneficial.

Question 5 (a)

*The more successful responses:*

* described operant conditioning in the context of how it was used to train the pigeon including how food was used to increase the frequency of the pigeon’s behaviour of pecking.

The less successful responses:

* described classical conditioning
* described all types of operant conditioning (punishment and reinforcement) without indicating what type of operant conditioning was actually used with the pigeon shown in the source.

**Question 5 (b i and b ii)**

*The more successful responses:*

* defined the named schedule of reinforcement and included an example of how this could have been used with the pigeon.

The less successful responses:

* named a correct schedule but then defined it incorrectly
* defined interval schedule as being the time between when the words were displayed, rather than when reinforcement was given to the pigeon
* listed types of reinforcement instead of schedules
* wrote answers about other ways to train the pigeon including using electric shocks as punishment
* defined variable schedules as ‘unknown’ or ’random’ schedules rather than identifying them as an unpredictable number of times or varying amounts.

Question 6 (a i)

The more successful responses:

* described all components of classical conditioning correctly for Sophie’s phobia including that the spider bite was the UCS
* correctly explained how the neutral stimulus becomes the conditioned stimulus.

The less successful responses:

* simply identified components of classical conditioning without showing an understanding of the process
* contradicted themselves (e.g. saying the itchy rash was the UCS and the UCR or the spider was the UCS and CS)
* discussed the association being between a stimulus and a response instead of the NS and the UCS
* used terminology incorrectly or used the word ’controlled’ instead of ’conditioned’
* rewrote the scenario without demonstrating knowledge of classical conditioning.

Question 6 (a ii)

The more successful responses:

* understood contiguity is the time interval between the two stimuli and correctly identified what these were
* explained the importance of a shorter time interval to maximise learning.

Less successful responses:

* knew contiguity was to do with time, but incorrectly explained what the time interval was between. (e.g. many students said it was the time between a stimulus and response
* contradicted themselves.

Question 6 (b)

The more successful responses:

* discussed spiders as being dangerous or harmful to survival
* discussed how Sophie had acquired her phobia after a single pairing.

The less successful responses:

* discussed Sophie’s phobia as being hereditary
* were able to articulate that it was related to spiders being dangerous but could not explain it fully in the context of classical conditioning and preparedness.

Question 6 (c)

The more successful responses:

* described systematic desensitisation in the context of Sophie’s phobia by giving examples of what her hierarchy of fears might look like
* explained how the relaxation techniques are used during progressive exposure including that Sophie would be unable to progress to the next level until she feels calm being exposed to the current fearful scenario.

The less successful responses:

* correctly outlined the process of systematic desensitisation more generally, not in the context of Sophie’s phobia
* identified systematic desensitisation but described exposure therapy
* described what Sophie should do in more general terms, not related to psychological intervention.

Question 7 (a)

The more successful responses:

* identified specific features of a representative sample that would need to be included/considered
* explained the importance of a representative sample in terms of external validity.

The less successful responses:

* did not identify any specific features of a representative sample
* discussed ethical principles
* used words like ‘validity’ and/or ‘reliability’ incorrectly or without reference to representativeness.

Question 7 (b i and b ii)

The more successful responses:

* described factors relevant to the human trials and correctly explained their impact on validity or reliability.

The less successful responses:

* confused reliability and validity
* discussed ethical concerns
* discussed routine experimental methodology or procedures such as having a control group, pre and post testing and measures instead of a factor that should be controlled
* identified a factor but did not explain how or why it would impact reliability or validity
* discussed factors unable to be controlled.

Question 7 (c)

The more successful responses:

* demonstrated deep understanding of the SHE concepts of Development and Application using perceptive examples and by drawing original conclusions based on the information presented in the source
* discussed HOW society would benefit including improving productivity and attendance at work, lowering suicide rates, probiotics having other health benefits and those taking them experiencing less harmful side-effects compared to anti-depressants.

The less successful responses:

* simply said society would benefit, but were unable to explain how
* relisted information from the source without showing any original ideas or understanding
* discussed other SHE concepts (e.g. collaboration)
* did not address the second part of the question about how society could benefit.

Section B – extended response

Question 8

The more successful responses:

* clearly understood and described observational learning
* showed an understanding of the four factors of observational learning (attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation) in their answer
* correctly applied these factors to the scenario (including an understanding that in this scenario, lack of motivation was not the cause for learning not occurring).

The less successful responses:

* discussed observational learning as a general theory, but incorrectly applied to the given scenario
* did not understand observational learning
* failed to use correct psychological terminology
* incorrectly applied to the scenario e.g. discussed motivation as the cause for observational learning not occurring.

Question 9 – Option 1

The more successful responses:

* clearly understood features that are specific to an experimental design (e.g. random allocation, manipulation of the IV, the use of control and experimental groups)
* discussed hypothesis, controlled variables, extraneous variables, described a potential method, gave ethical considerations, and data collected
* formatted their ideas clearly and logically, similar to that of the design section structure from their school assessment.

The less successful responses:

* described a method but did not show any understanding of specific features of experimental designs
* mixed up features of an experimental design and a qualitative design feature (e.g. described content analysis process)
* merely rewrote information already provided to them in the question
* incorrectly identified variables
* gave generic and poorly-linked ethical considerations
* mixed up the designs and contradicted themselves throughout their response
* did not clearly understand the designs and what makes them unique
* did not use psychological terminology and lacked depth
* did not give enough detail or specific psychological knowledge to obtain full marks.

Question 9 – Option 2

The more successful responses:

* described a focus group in-depth and linked the potential design to the scenario
* discussed how the focus group would be conducted
* discussed the open-ended questions that could potentially be asked during the focus group
* described advantages of using this method, and how content analysis would be used.

The less successful responses:

* mixed up features of an experimental design and a qualitative (e.g. described manipulation of variables)
* rewrote information already provided to them in the question
* mentioned quantitative data in their answer
* provided generic and poorly linked ethical considerations
* only described the process of data analysis (content analysis), but not the method of data collection (focus group)
* mixed up the designs and contradicted themselves throughout their response
* did not clearly understand the designs and what makes them unique
* did not use psychological terminology and lacked depth
* did not give enough detail or specific psychological knowledge to obtain full marks.

Question 10

The more successful responses:

* used logical and clear paragraphs
* described each of the factors and gave clear improvements for each of the factors
* discussed a relevant and appropriate improvement for the scenario (e.g. a light walk for exercise, rather than running a marathon)
* linked the factors together which showed great depth of understanding of the biopsychosocial model as a whole.

The less successful responses:

* contradicted themselves when describing the factors – particularly psychological and social
* did not clearly understand what the factors entail, describing incorrect ideas
* did not describe the improvement well e.g. identifying exercise as an example of the social level, but did not explain how this would be social
* did not suggest any improvement strategies as the question required, or provided unethical or impractical improvement ideas that would not work in the scenario provided.