

# Subject Benchmark Statement: Psychology

## The Basics

This document is a summary of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Psychology. It is specifically designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the main statement for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Subject Benchmark Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course or programme.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape, and boundaries of, the subject discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals specifically in relation to: equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); the requirements of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); and, enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains any features relevant to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours in the subject, with some subjects also including achievement at master's level.

Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector.



## Why study a degree in Psychology?

The purpose of a Psychology degree is to develop students' understanding of themselves, others and society through scientific investigation. The degree exposes students to the core domains of the discipline, from their historical roots to the present day. Antecedents can be found in philosophy, biology and physics, but methods of enquiry have also developed from the humanities, social and mathematical sciences.

Many Psychology graduates will pursue careers where their psychological literacy, knowledge and skills are valued when interpreting and researching real-world issues - even though their role may not be labelled 'psychologist'. For example, in the public sector, Psychology graduates pursue careers in health and education settings, including teaching, community and social support, policing and defence, and careers advice. In the private sector, many Psychology graduates will go into careers in marketing and advertising or human resources, as well as becoming involved in conducting entrepreneurial work within creative industries and driving forward innovation through interdisciplinary collaboration. In the third sector, many charities and campaigning and advocacy organisations will employ Psychology graduates to help develop and run promotional and fundraising campaigns.

Psychology degree programmes encourage openness and accessibility through embracing the diversity of human experience. They address sustainable development when exploring connections between human, economic, social and environmental factors impacting on the pursuit of a better world - as envisioned within the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). Enterprise and entrepreneurship may also be embedded in the core domains of the degree, including work placements and activities that strengthen links between academic institutions and external organisations. In particular, the strong emphasis in Psychology degrees on qualitative and quantitative research skills gives graduates a firm foundation for evidence-based policymaking and interventions.

Psychology can be studied as a Bachelor's degree in Science (BSc) or Arts (BA), or an equivalent postgraduate conversion course, as well as at a more advanced level - for example, as a Master of Science (MSc or MSci) or Arts (MA).



## What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Psychology?

Teaching and learning approaches cover a wide range of specialisms within the discipline, including Biological, Cognitive, Developmental and Social Psychology, and Individual Differences. Students obtain a sound knowledge of, and demonstrate an ability to use, interpret and disseminate a range of methods appropriate to their research questions. Quantitative skills include experimental and quasi-experimental study design, measurement and analysis. Qualitative skills include the conduct and analysis of interviews, observation, and case studies providing insights into complex social phenomena which cannot be captured through quantitative approaches alone. These skills can be gained through extensive and progressive empirical work in laboratories (physical or virtual) and naturalistic settings through all stages of a degree.

The strategies employed can prioritise student-centred and problem-based approaches, and they use a diverse range of delivery methods - incorporating experiential, practical and formal academic practices as appropriate. Teaching sessions may take place synchronously, asynchronously, or in a blended format, depending on the circumstances. Many different forms of learning and teaching are encouraged throughout the degree programme, including lectures, laboratory classes, workshops, seminars, tutorials, independent study, fieldwork, working collaboratively, project supervision and work placements.



## How are students assessed?

Assessments help students to monitor and reflect on their own development and also lead to the progressive development of transferable skills and competencies. It is good practice for assessments to be collaboratively developed with students and relevant interested parties. This includes integrity of assessment which can be linked to artificial intelligence developments, with students' appropriate use of digital skills and ethics.

Courses have coherent assessment and feedback strategies which consider the range and level of assessments employed in relation to facilitating the attainment of learning outcomes and skills development, both at a modular and course level. Throughout their studies students are provided with clear, constructive feedback and feedforward that is integrated across the degree course. A range of assessment methods is encouraged to promote equality, diversity and inclusion. Where individual students may be disadvantaged by particular assessment methods, adjustments to those assessments are considered in discussion with the student concerned, while ensuring fairness across the full cohort.

Assessment methods may include essays, research reports, reflective reports, presentations and examinations. Authentic and innovative assessments such as case studies, portfolios, artefacts and blogs are encouraged. Assessments oriented towards a variety of academic and non-academic audiences (such as information leaflets and websites) are considered to be good practice.



## Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Psychology are outlined on **page 19** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D: Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 degrees](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours: 1st, 2.i, 2.ii and 3rd.

The full statement was developed by subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on **page 23** of the full Statement.

### Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

The [full Subject Benchmark Statement](#) is available on the QAA website.



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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB  
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786  
Tel: 01452 557000 Web: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)