



The following report gives feedback to assist assessors with general issues and trends that have been identified during external moderation of the internally assessed standards in 2025. It also provides further insights from moderation material viewed throughout the year and outlines the Assessor Support available for Psychology. Please note this report does not introduce new criteria, change the requirements of the standard, or change what we expect from assessment.

## Insights

### **91873: Analyse the significance of a key piece of research and its impact on society**

#### **Performance overview:**

This standard requires students to discuss what made a key piece of research significant and how this research has had an impact on society.

Evidence that met the requirements of this standard selected research that had clearly demonstrable impacts on society, beyond its immediate research application within its field of psychology. Research was chosen that continues to have significance due to its methodology or findings.

For example:

- Yerkes' intelligence testing of U.S. Army recruits during World War I was a key piece of research with significant societal impact.
- The methodology showed considerable cultural bias and issues with validity.
- These flaws highlighted ongoing problems of cultural relativism in intelligence testing and questioned the possibility of a truly 'culture-free' IQ test.
- The research influenced psychology by shaping subsequent studies on intelligence.
- It also had a negative societal impact by supporting the eugenics movement, which contributed to changes in U.S. immigration policy.

#### **Practices that need strengthening:**

Selected research contexts should demonstrate clear societal impact beyond their immediate psychological context. Guidance should emphasise choosing studies that remain significant because of their methodology and findings and that can be linked to tangible effects on society.

Responses should avoid describing the research in isolation. Instead, they should show how the methods and findings influenced subsequent research and contributed to broader societal changes over time.

## **91874: Conduct independent psychological research with consultation**

### **Performance overview:**

Evidence that met the requirements of this standard demonstrated a strong foundation in existing psychological research. When students discussed previous studies related to the area or theory they were investigating, it strengthened their procedure by providing reasoning for the design and chosen methodology. It also supported discussion of their findings in relation to existing theory and explained why differences might have occurred. For example, when students loosely replicated a published study they could compare their results with the original findings and justify any changes to the procedure.

### **Practices that need strengthening:**

#### **Linking to Psychological Concepts**

In some instances, a stronger connection to the relevant psychological concept or theory was needed. For example, a study using a self-report assessment to measure the accuracy of horoscope readings should clearly link to underlying concepts such as the Forer effect to meet the standard. A useful support strategy would be to provide students with an extensive list of appropriate published studies or reference materials.

#### **Ethics**

The most common difficulty in this standard occurs when responses do not meet the Achieved requirement to conduct research “considering and complying with the New Zealand Code of Ethics.” Students must outline how their procedure ensured compliance with these principles. Because the criteria specifically reference the New Zealand Code of Ethics, responses that only refer to generic ethical guidelines, such as Deception, Right to Withdraw, Informed Consent, Protection from Harm, Confidentiality, and Debrief (commonly known as DRIPCD) do not meet the standard.

The most common principle breached was Principle 3, Integrity in Relationships, specifically 3.1.5: Psychologists strive to avoid deception in their work. This issue can largely be avoided by choosing an appropriate research context. Consultation should involve the teacher providing feedback to ensure the proposed research is ethical.

Research into social influence often requires some level of deception, making compliance difficult, so it should generally be avoided.

Using an in-class ‘ethics committee’ where students present a research proposal can be highly effective for meeting this criterion and checking the appropriateness of the psychological context.

Allowing students to justify ethical breaches through a cost-benefit analysis is not recommended, as this approach aligns with a high level of professional expertise and does not demonstrate compliance with ethical guidelines. However, it can be a useful discussion activity as part of the learning process for this standard.

## **Research Design and Method**

For students to meet the Excellence criterion of justifying the research design and method used when conducting an experimental research method, the term 'research design' refers to how participants will be allocated to experimental conditions. For example, experimenters may choose to use independent groups, repeated measures, or matched participants.

The response should justify how the decision was made. This involves explaining why this design and method were chosen over alternatives, possibly explaining the strengths and weaknesses and how they relate to the specific aims of the research being conducted.

For example:

- A repeated measures design may reduce the number of participants required compared to independent groups; it may also have a big advantage in reducing individual differences between participants that may impact the validity of the results.
- Independent groups may be necessary if the participant cannot take part in both conditions of the independent variable; such factors determining the decisions made should be discussed within the context of the research conducted.

The assessment criteria do not specify which research method or design must be used, but the chosen method should be appropriate for investigating the research aim. The method and design can also influence the conclusions drawn from the data, which relates to the validity of those conclusions. For example, if a single-subject design is used, the response may need to discuss the generalisability of the findings.

## **Data Interpretation**

The standard does not require the use of specific statistical tests, allowing students the freedom to select the most suitable method for their investigation. Psychology uses a wide range of methodologies, each with its own strengths and weaknesses, and students should consider these when making their choice.

Because the options include both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the standard does not require statistical analysis, as this may be inappropriate for some methods (such as case studies that produce qualitative data). However, if a quantitative method is used, such as an experimental design, a basic interpretation of the data is required to support a valid conclusion.

Students should demonstrate an understanding of how to interpret the information generated by their research method in relation to the purpose of their investigation, such as the research question or hypothesis.

For quantitative data, the expected level of analysis typically includes descriptive statistics such as mean, median, and mode. Discussion of which measure is most appropriate for the data collected is beneficial.

Further analysis to support a valid conclusion involves determining whether the aim is to identify a difference or similarity between data sets and whether that difference or similarity is statistically significant. This is usually assessed using a simple test such as a t-test or chi-squared test. Students are not expected to perform these calculations manually, but they should be able to explain what the results mean.

Students who met the standard typically selected and applied an appropriate research method and interpreted their findings to draw a valid conclusion. Evaluation of the conclusion may be supported by statistical analysis where this is appropriate for the chosen method and design. The depth of analysis should directly relate to the claims made about the data in the conclusion.

### **91875: Analyse how theories are applied within a field of psychological practice**

#### **Performance overview:**

This standard requires students to focus on how two or more theories are applied within a context within one field of psychology.

The requirements of this standard have been generally well understood by assessors. Evidence that met the requirements gave a clear description of how two or more theories have been used within the chosen context within a field of psychology. For example, the application of different theories in explaining a clinical disorder and the resulting treatments and their respective effectiveness.

#### **Practices that need strengthening:**

Responses should explicitly identify the field of psychology and analyse how the theories are applied within that field. For Achieved, students must clearly state the field of psychological practice they are focusing on and demonstrate how two or more theories are applied within a specific context.

The response should show how theory informs practice, rather than describing theory in isolation. For example, in a clinical context, students could apply two or more theories to explain when a patient might seek help or treatment, including factors and variables that could improve early help-seeking in at-risk populations.

For Excellence, the response should provide a detailed critique of the effectiveness of applying two or more theories within the chosen context. Continuing with the clinical example, this could involve evaluating treatment success compared with alternative options and discussing the advantages and limitations of each approach.

### **91846: Conduct psychological research with guidance**

#### **Updated Requirement for Version 2 (2025)**

Assessors should note that this standard has been updated. In Version 2 (2025), students must comply with the Code of Ethics for Psychologists Working in Aotearoa/New Zealand to achieve the standard.

For further guidance on meeting this criterion, refer to the discussion above for standard 91874.

To give feedback on this report click on [this link](#).

#### **Assessor Support**

NZQA offers free online support for teachers as assessors of NZC achievement standards. These include:

- Exemplars of student work for most standards.
- National Moderator Reports.
- Online learning modules (generic and subject-specific).
- Clarifications for some standards.
- Assessor Practice Tool for many standards.
- Webcasts.

Exemplars, National Moderator Reports, clarifications, and webcasts are hosted on the NZC Subject pages on the NZQA website.

### [Subject Pages](#)

Online learning modules and the Assessor Practice Tool are hosted on Pūtake, NZQA's learning management system. You can access these through the Education Sector Logon.

### [Log in to Pūtake](#)

We also may provide a speaker to present at national conferences on requests from national subject associations. At the regional or local level, we may be able to provide online support.

Please contact [assessorsupport@nzqa.govt.nz](mailto:assessorsupport@nzqa.govt.nz) for more information or to lodge a request for support.