



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 2024. It also provides further insights from moderation material viewed throughout the year and outlines the Assessor Support available for Psychology.

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 in World War I, and the subsequent analysis, is a key piece of research with significant impact on society.

This research is an effective context for the standard, as the methodology demonstrated considerable cultural bias and problems with validity, highlighting the still current problems of cultural relativism within intelligence testing and the possibility of a 'culture free' IQ test. The impact is evident, both within psychology on subsequent research and in the effect it had on society in the support of the eugenics movement which led to changes in U.S. immigration policy, demonstrating the negative impact this research had on society.

Practices that need strengthening:

Issues were evident where the research chosen to be discussed had not had impact beyond its specific field within psychology. Guidance should be given to students to support appropriate selection, ensuring the chosen research can be shown as continuing to be significant because of its methodology and/or findings, and that its impact on society can be demonstrated. It is important that the focus of the response is not in describing the chosen research in isolation. Instead, the response should demonstrate how the methods and findings are connected to subsequent research and to impacts found more widely across society 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. Where students had discussed the previous research conducted into the area/theory they intended to investigate, it supported the development of their procedure including reasoning for the design and chosen methodology. It also supported the discussion of their findings in relation to existing theory and why differences may have occurred. For example, where students chose to loosely replicate a previously published study, existing findings could be compared, and where changes to procedure were made these choices could be discussed in comparison with the original study.

Practices that need strengthening:

In some instances, a clearer link between the psychological concept and/or theory needed to be made. For example, a study using a self-report assessment measuring the accuracy of horoscope readings. To reach the standard, links to the underlying psychological concepts (such as the Forer effect) would need to be clearly integrated to meet the standard. An appropriate support strategy would be to provide an extensive list of appropriate published studies or student reference.

The most common difficulty is where the response has not met the requirement at Achieved level to conduct research “considering and complying with the New Zealand Code of Ethics”. Responses must outline how the procedure ensured the principles of the New Zealand Code of Ethics were being complied with, and how the procedure complied with the principles. As it is, with the New Zealand Code of Ethics that is stated in EN2 for Achieved, if students only refer to a generic guideline to ethics such as Deception, Right to Withdraw, Informed Consent, Protection from Harm, Confidentiality, Debrief (commonly referred to as DRIPCD), they would not meet the requirements of the standard.

The common principle breached was Principle 3, Integrity in Relationships. Specifically, 3.1.5 “Psychologists strive to avoid deception in their work”. The issue of deception can largely be avoided by appropriate choice of research context. Research into social influence often requires a degree of deception, making it difficult to comply, and therefore should be avoided. ‘With consultation’ involves the teacher providing feedback, which includes ensuring the proposed research is ethical. Utilising an in-class ‘Ethics committee’ where students present a research proposal can be extremely effective in meeting this criterion, as well as checking the appropriateness of the psychological context. Allowing students to make a cost-benefit analysis to justify ethical breaches is not advised, due to this being more aligned with the high level of expertise in this specific field. This would not mean the ethical guidelines have been complied with. It can, however, be a useful discussion task completed as part of the learning associated with this standard.

For students to meet the Excellence criterion in 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. For example, by 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. 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 the research method or design to be used, but it should be appropriate for investigating the research aim. The chosen method and design may also influence the conclusions drawn from the collected data, affecting the validity of these conclusions. For example, if using a single-subject design, the response may discuss the generalizability of the conclusion

Given the range of possible options, including both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the standard does not require specific statistical analysis, as this might be

inappropriate for some methods, such as a case study (qualitative data). However, if a quantitative method (such as an experimental method) is used, a basic level of interpretation of this quantitative data is necessary to draw a valid conclusion.

Students should demonstrate an understanding of how to interpret the information generated by their research method in relation to their investigation's purpose (research question/hypothesis). For quantitative data, common levels of data analysis include descriptive statistics, such as mean, median and mode.

Further analysis to support valid conclusions involves determining whether there is a difference or similarity between quantitative data sets and identifying if this difference/similarity is statistically significant. This is generally determined by simple tests such as a T-test or Chi-squared test. Students are not expected to perform these calculations manually, but should be able to explain the results.

Successful students in this standard select and apply an appropriate method and interpret the findings to make a valid conclusion. The evaluation of the conclusion may be supported by statistical analysis of the results, where appropriate for the method and design used. The depth of analysis will directly link to the claims about the data in the student's 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, the resulting treatments and their respective effectiveness.

Practices that need strengthening:

Responses should explicitly refer to the field of psychology and how the theory is applied within that field. Students must make clear the field of psychological practice they are focusing on to gain an Achieved grade. To ensure the response shows the required analysis of theories being applied within the field, it should explicitly demonstrate how the theory informs practice. For Achieved, the response must focus on how two or more theories are applied within a context in the chosen field. An example in a clinical context could be to apply two or more theories to understand when a patient may seek help or treatment, including understanding of the factors and variables that could be used to improve the early seeking of help in specific at-risk populations.

For Excellence, the response should give a detailed critique that focuses on the effectiveness of how two or more theories are applied within a context in the field. Continuing with a clinical context, the response could critique the effectiveness in treatment success compared with alternative treatment options, including a discussion of advantages against other options.

Assessor Support

NZQA offers 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**
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*hosted on the NZC Subject pages on the NZQA website.

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