

# External assessment

Two different methods are used to assess students.

- Detailed markschemes specific to each examination paper
- Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria are published in this guide.

For paper 1, there are markschemes and assessment criteria.

For paper 2, there are markschemes and assessment criteria.

For paper 3, there are markschemes.

The assessment criteria are related to the assessment objectives established for the psychology course and the group 3 grade descriptors. The markschemes are specific to each examination.

## External assessment details—SL

### Paper 1

**Duration: 2 hours**

**Weighting: 50%**

Paper 1 assesses the core of the syllabus: the biological, cognitive and sociocultural levels of analysis. The paper is divided into two sections (section A and section B).

Students have two hours to answer paper 1. It is recommended that students spend approximately one hour on section A and one hour on section B.

The maximum mark for the paper is 46.

The assessment weighting of paper 1 at SL is 50%.

### Section A

The purpose of this section is to assess students' knowledge and understanding of all three levels of analysis.

Students are required to answer three short-answer questions, one on the syllabus content of each level of analysis.

Assessment objective 1 (knowledge and comprehension) and 2 (application and analysis) command terms will be used in section A questions, students could be required to:

- analyse
- apply
- define
- describe

- distinguish
- explain
- outline
- state.

The maximum mark for section A is 24.

## Section B

The purpose of this section is to assess students' knowledge and understanding of the levels of analysis.

Theoretical and/or empirical support is required in all answers.

Students are required to answer one out of a choice of three essay questions drawn from the learning outcomes of the levels of analysis.

In order to access the full range of marks available in the assessment criteria, all questions in section B of paper 1 will include an assessment objective 3 command term (synthesis and evaluation). Within a question, assessment objective 1 and 2 command terms may also be used.

Each question is worth 22 marks.

The maximum mark for section B is 22.

## Paper 2

**Duration: 1 hour**

**Weighting: 25%**

The purpose of this paper is to assess students' knowledge and understanding of the option studied and to give students the opportunity to demonstrate application of psychological research, analysis, synthesis and evaluation in relation to the option.

Theoretical and/or empirical support is required in all answers.

Paper 2 consists of fifteen questions on the five options, three on each of the following options.

- Abnormal psychology
- Developmental psychology
- Health psychology
- Psychology of human relationships
- Sport psychology

Evidence of critical thinking is expected to be an important element of student responses (see "Critical thinking in psychology: A framework for evaluation" in section "Approaches to the teaching of psychology").

SL students spend one hour on paper 2 and are required to answer one question.

Each question is worth 22 marks.

The maximum mark for the paper is 22.

The assessment weighting of paper 2 at SL is 25%.

## External assessment criteria—SL

### Markbands for paper 1: Section A

The framework below provides a general guide for teachers to the assessment of responses to paper 1 section A questions. Mark schemes prepared for each examination question guide the awarding of marks by examiners.

Markband	Level descriptor
0	The answer does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
Low	There is an attempt to answer the question, but knowledge and understanding is limited, often inaccurate, or of marginal relevance to the question.
Mid	The question is partially answered. Knowledge and understanding is accurate but limited. Either the command term is not effectively addressed or the response is not sufficiently explicit in answering the question.
High	The question is answered in a focused and effective manner and meets the demands of the command term. The response is supported by appropriate and accurate knowledge and understanding of research.

### Assessment criteria for paper 1: Section B

#### A Knowledge and comprehension

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The answer does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	The answer demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding that is of marginal relevance to the question. Little or no psychological research is used in the response.
4–6	The answer demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding relevant to the question or uses relevant psychological research to limited effect in the response.
7–9	The answer demonstrates detailed, accurate knowledge and understanding relevant to the question, and uses relevant psychological research effectively in support of the response.

#### B Evidence of critical thinking: Application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The answer does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	The answer goes beyond description but evidence of critical thinking is not linked to the requirements of the question.

Marks	Level descriptor
4–6	The answer offers appropriate but limited evidence of critical thinking or offers evidence of critical thinking that is only implicitly linked to the requirements of the question.
7–9	The answer integrates relevant and explicit evidence of critical thinking in response to the question.

### C Organization

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The answer does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The answer is organized or focused on the question. However, this is not sustained throughout the response.
3–4	The answer is well organized, well developed and focused on the question.

## Assessment criteria for paper 2

### A Knowledge and comprehension

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The answer does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	The answer demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding that is of marginal relevance to the question. Little or no psychological research is used in the response.
4–6	The answer demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding relevant to the question or uses relevant psychological research to limited effect in the response.
7–9	The answer demonstrates detailed, accurate knowledge and understanding relevant to the question, and uses relevant psychological research effectively in support of the response.

### B Evidence of critical thinking: application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The answer does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	The answer goes beyond description but evidence of critical thinking is not linked to the requirements of the question.
4–6	The answer offers appropriate but limited evidence of critical thinking or offers evidence of critical thinking that is only implicitly linked to the requirements of the question.
7–9	The answer integrates relevant and explicit evidence of critical thinking in response to the question.

## C Organization

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The answer does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The answer is organized or focused on the question. However, this is not sustained throughout the response.
3–4	The answer is well organized, well developed and focused on the question.

## External assessment details—HL

The external assessment at HL is the same as at SL but with the following differences.

### Paper 1

**Duration:** 2 hours

**Weighting:** 35%

The questions on HL paper 1 are the same as those on SL paper 1 and are marked according to the same markscheme (for section A) and assessment criteria (for section B).

The assessment weighting of paper 1 at HL is 35%.

### Paper 2

**Duration:** 2 hours

**Weighting:** 25%

The questions on HL paper 2 are the same as those on SL paper 2 and are marked according to the same assessment criteria.

HL students spend two hours on paper 2 and are required to answer two questions. Each of the questions must be chosen from a different option.

Each question is worth 22 marks.

The maximum mark for the paper is 44.

The assessment weighting for paper 2 at HL is 25%.

### Paper 3

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Weighting:** 20%

The purpose of paper 3 is to assess students' knowledge and understanding of qualitative research methodology. This paper consists of questions based on an abstract or an extract from a study, interview, observation or scenario (approximately 500 words) including, for example:

- the aim
- participant characteristics
- the research method used
- results and/or findings.

Students must answer all the questions.