



Cambridge Assessment
International Education

Skills Exercises

AO3 Analysis and evaluation

Cambridge International AS & A Level Psychology 9990

For examination from 2024



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Introduction

Cambridge International AS & A Level Psychology attracts a variety of learners from many different backgrounds. For some learners Psychology is a new subject and an opportunity to explore an area of study that interests them, while developing a set of transferable skills. Other learners have previously studied Psychology and are looking to continue developing their knowledge of the subject. Either way, the study of Psychology allows learners to challenge relevant issues in psychological theory and research and gain the knowledge needed to understand how psychology can be applied to improve people's lives and society in general.

Skills and why they are important?

Skills are the key to success. The performance of candidates in Cambridge International AS & A Level Psychology exams have shown a range of areas where improvement would be helpful. These areas of improvement tend to centre around the assessment objectives (AOs) of the course and we have addressed these AOs in a series of exercises and activities.

- AO1 Knowledge and Understanding
- AO2 Application
- AO3 Analysis and evaluation

Skills Exercises include topic specific exercises with suggested classroom activities and teaching approaches, such as group work and class discussion. Worksheets and possible answers are available for each activity. This resource focuses on some of the syllabus content and does not cover all possible aspects of the examinations.

How will these skills be developed?

Skills Exercises booklets aim to help learners develop skills in:

- using knowledge and understanding of terminology, studies, theories and concepts to answer examination questions
- applying psychological knowledge and understanding to a range of scenarios from everyday life and theoretical scenarios
- using skills of analysis and evaluation to recognise strengths and weaknesses of evidence and reach conclusions about arguments based on evidence.

Skills Exercises provide suggestions so you can have confidence that the materials you prepare and use in the classroom are building skills and resilience in your learners. This document should be used alongside the other teaching and learning resources provided on the [School Support Hub](#)

AO3 Analysis and evaluation

To access analysis and evaluation marks learners are required to analyse and evaluate psychological concepts, theories, studies and research methods in terms of specific issues and debates.

This means considering the strengths and weaknesses of existing research, as well as learners evaluating their own plans for psychological investigations.

By using a range of evidence, learners can explore psychological issues and debates to reach reasonable conclusions.

Exercise 1: Evaluating research

Learners must be able to evaluate how the research method they choose contributes to their specific investigation and wider psychological research.

With regards to psychological research, learners must be able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the methods and techniques used in their own planned investigations as well as research they have studied.

Activity 1: Generalisability

This activity will help learners develop the skills required to effectively evaluate different sampling techniques (opportunity, random and volunteer) which are used in psychological research.

Learners will also need to consider different features of a study's sample which will make it more or less generalisable.

This is the ability to determine how widely findings from a study can be applied, for examples to other settings and populations.

Using **Worksheet 1: Generalisability**, learners assess how representative the samples and sampling techniques of each core study are. These can be replaced with other core studies or key studies from A Level Specialist Options. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 1: Generalisability answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion and ask learners to share their evaluation, noting that the justification for the judgment is more important than where each 'X' is placed on the continuum and ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Activity 2: Reliability and replicability

An important analysis and evaluation skill is the ability to evaluate studies based on reliability, to ensure that a procedure, task or measure produces consistent results.

This requires learners to look for evidence that different aspects of studies, including studies which they plan

themselves, can be replicated to check that the results were similar each time.

Worksheet 2: Reliability and replicability can be completed by learners in small groups to facilitate discussion. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 2: Reliability and replicability answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Extension activity: learners can extend their understanding of improving the reliability of a study by suggesting ways to improve replicability.

This worksheet can be adapted for any of the AS Level core studies, Specialist Options key studies or in evaluating learners' own planned studies for Paper 2 or Paper 4.

Activity 3: Research method

Learners must understand the different features of each research method used in psychology and how each contributes to the reliability, validity and generalisability of a study's findings.

Each research method in psychology has its own advantages and disadvantages.

When choosing a suitable method to meet a study's aims, researchers (and learners) will have to balance practical and ethical considerations.

Using **Worksheet 3: Research methods**, learners develop the skills of evaluating an observational study which has already been planned by a learner. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 3: Research methods answers** and ask learners to peer assess how effectively they have linked their own evaluation to the planned study by highlighting or underlining the context. Lead a class discussion, to develop learners' understanding of the different features of research methods, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Exercise 2: Recognising bias

Learners must recognise bias in psychological data, research and studies as part of analysis and evaluation.

This skill requires that learners consider issues such as how different types of bias can influence the validity of studies, including those which learners plan themselves.

Learners also need to practise linking evaluative and analytical concepts with examples from studies or context from their own designs.

The following activities target a range of ways learners can develop their ability to recognise bias.

Activity 1: Validity

In psychology, validity refers to the extent to which a researcher is testing what they intend to test.

This makes validity an essential quality for learners to consider when evaluating their own research or the research of others.

There are several types of validity learners must consider.

Using **Worksheet 4: Validity** will help learners distinguish the specific terms and use example from key or core studies to evidence each evaluation. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

After learners have completed the activity, show them the suggested answers using **Worksheet 4: Validity answers** to allow them to self-assess the quality of their responses. They can consider:

- Which aspects of validity did I understand clearly?
- What terms should I now revisit?
- How can I improve my use of examples for validity?

Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of validity, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Activity 2: Cultural differences

Learners must be able to evaluate studies from the Specialist Options in terms of cultural differences.

The development of psychology means research has often been carried out in Western societies and more specifically, with university students.

Worksheet 5: Cultural differences asks learners to analyse the origins of each study and its sample to determine whether the findings can be applied outside of the society and culture in which the studies were carried out. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

This worksheet can be adapted for any Specialist Option.

Use **Worksheet 5: Cultural differences answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to evaluate the influence of cultural differences and/or bias on the research findings, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Activity 3: Analysing bias

Show learners one or two sentences containing analysis (explanations of causal connections).

Choose examples which relate to evaluating psychological research. For example:

- The sampling technique only include females therefore it was gender-biased.

- Random sampling can be more representative than opportunity or volunteer because there is less chance the sample will share the same characteristics.

Learners identify the research design choices and the implications for those choices in each statement. Introduce the idea of connecting words including, 'because', 'this means', 'so', and 'therefore'.

In groups learners consider other possible connecting words. Remind them that not all connecting words such as 'and' are relevant for developing analysis.

Use **Worksheet 6: Analysing bias** to encourage learners to practise spotting analysis and develop the depth of their response. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 6: Analysing bias answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of bias, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Extension activity: ask further questions such as, 'Why does this connection develop the statement?' or 'How will this help explain the evaluative point being made?'

Notes on this discussion can be used later to help learners practise for presenting ordered and coherent arguments.

Exercise 3: Evaluating issues and debates

The following activities are designed to develop learners analysis and evaluation skills using a range of evidence to demonstrate the complexity of psychological issues and debates.

Learners can also practise reaching conclusions about arguments based on a reasoned consideration of example studies, theories and explanations.

Activity 1: Issues and debates in context

Using **Worksheet 7: Issues and debates in context**, learners consider evidence from any of the twelve core AS studies from each of the four approaches.

Learners must select evidence from the study, for example the aim, method or findings and use these as supporting evidence for the issue or debate. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

The worksheet could be adapted to include other examples or key studies from A Level, or be extended to include additional AS or A Level issues and debates as required.

Use **Worksheet 7: Issues and debates in context answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion around the appropriateness of each choice of evidence and the clarity of the link between the evidence and the debate, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Activity 2: Using key concepts, issues and debates to evaluate

Learners are expected to use a range of key concepts, issues and debates to evaluate topics from the Specialist Options they have studied.

These can include key concepts, issues and debates named in the syllabus for each topic and should clearly address the named key concept, issue or debate stated in the question.

For each of the Specialist Topics, learners highlight the named key concept, issue or debate stated in the structured essay question part (b) of either a Specimen Paper or past examination paper, where relevant.

Provide learners with **Worksheet 8: Using key concepts, issues and debates to evaluate** and ask them to plan a response to this question. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Provide learners with **Worksheet 8: Using key concepts, issues and debates to evaluate answers** and ask them to self-assess their work using the guidance provided in the relevant mark scheme.

Extension activity: after planning, the question can be written up in timed conditions as assessment practice.

Activity 3: Ethical Considerations

Developed evaluation can be seen as a sequenced argument.

This activity helps learners think about the links in the sequence that go from the initial ethical issue through to the implications.

Give learners an ethical issue for a core study.

The sequences on **Worksheet 9: Ethical considerations** can be used or changed with other ethical issues or studies.

For each study, learners complete the blank boxes in the sequence. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 9: Ethical considerations answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion around the possible reasons for breaking ethical guidelines to ensure the balance between ethical considerations and validity in psychological research, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Extension activity: after planning, the question can be written up in timed conditions as assessment practice.

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