

PYB3 Coursework Guidelines and Notes

The A-level psychology course involves a total of two pieces of coursework to be completed, one in the first year (AS) and another in the second year (A2). Both pieces contribute to the final grade, so it's important that you take the coursework seriously, complete it on time and do your best to get the maximum marks possible. In majority of cases, the coursework grade is the one that will increase your overall mark at the end of the year. For a lot of students, examinations aren't something to look forward to, and can get very difficult especially with other subjects to revise for.

The first piece of coursework you will be working on will contribute 30% of the overall AS grade, and if you wish to continue studying psychology at A2 it contributes a total of 15% of the overall A-level grade.

The assessment of a practical investigation at this level will be external, though the teacher is often expected to mark the coursework internally and guide you within AQA's internal assessment guidelines. One full report of a practical investigation is required from each candidate. The investigation must be drawn from the content of the AS specification i.e. based on the topics in Modules 1 and 2. The report should be organised using the headings set out below and is expected to be about 1500-2000 words in length (excluding appendices).

The AS PYB3 coursework allows students to select an area to investigate, a good idea before selecting is to go through your notes and identify which parts of Module 1 and 2 you are most familiar with. However, how the PYB3 coursework is addressed may vary from institution to institution, some students may be encouraged to select a certain area, or options may be limited as they may not have covered specific topics.

Before starting the actual coursework, ensure that you've selected a suitable topic, you should have done this beforehand. Within one of the sections of the coursework, you'll have to give some background information to base your hypothesis on, you can only gain the relevant information for this section by reading more about your topic and noting relevant points which you may want to include. There's no use adding pages and pages of information you won't need, you won't gain extra marks for it. You'll only gain marks for linking back to the introduction from the coursework write up itself. You'll learn more about how to maximise your marks as you proceed with your coursework, the AQA coursework mark scheme is an excellent resource for identifying areas to obtain marks, you can use it like a checklist and ensure you have mentioned what ever has been listed in the mark scheme.

Every section of your coursework should be brief but concise with no waffle, or you will just lose marks as the point you would be trying to make is unclear. Being accurate and brief should especially be applied to your hypothesis - the mark scheme has dedicated marks for accurate hypothesis, failing to write a suitable one will lose you easy marks.

The method section of the coursework is probably considered as the 'main' section, and is usually the most hardest and longest. It consists of four sub-areas:

- Design

- Participants
- Apparatus & Materials
- Procedure

The method section involves knowledge from the Research Methods module to be implemented into this coursework. You will have to comment on participants you used, the experiment itself (which design you used) etc. Commenting on what you used is nowhere near enough. You must go into detail and mention about why you used a particular design for the experiment over another, what advantages and disadvantages the experimental design offers, what solutions you have in place for the disadvantages etc.

Similar areas of discussion must also be addressed with the 'participants' section, as you will need to discuss your target population along with the pros and cons of the method you used to collect participant samples.

The materials section of the method is fairly straight forward, it involves listing the different materials you used for the experiment and possibly a small comment with a little more information about where and when a specific item was used and why.

Once the materials section has been completed, the 'Procedure' part of the method follows. This consists of explaining how the experiment itself is carried out, from meeting with the participant all the way to thanking the participant in taking part - everything in between is expected to be included. The procedure may take up an A4 page, again, it is important to be concise and include necessary details. Your procedure should be written in such a way, that someone else should be able to replicate your experiment by following your procedure and ending up with similar results.

After the procedure is completed, the method section is finished. Please note that not everything that should be contained in your coursework is mentioned here - ethical considerations being one of them, you should firstly seek guidance from your teacher, as well as post a question on the forum, we'll be happy to help.

The results section involves analysing the data which you have collected in the experiment. There are various ways in which you may have recorded the data, it may have been in a table format, or spread across multiple pages as you might have had a page for each participant.

Within your results, you need to calculate the mean, mode and the range for each of your group of participants. A good way to display this information is in a table format along with a brief description quoting a few figures of the table.

There are a few things to remember with the results section of PYB3:

- There should be no calculations shown under the results section
- You should not include your raw data in the results this is for the appendices

- All tables and graphs must be labelled and explained. Failure to do so will result in no marks, as the basis of the results section revolves around understanding the results

Following the results section, comes the 'Discussion'. The discussion can be seen as the section which explains what is going on in the results. It's a rather intense two pages and entails information to be drawn from every area of the experiment. Within the discussion section, you must comment on the following:

- The results: how do you feel the results/experiment turned out? You need to also mention the mean, mode and the range in this section and refer back to them.
- How can you improve the experiment? Think about other factors that might have dwindled your results - could they have been prevented using another experimental design, another participant sampling method? You must also give a bit of an explanation too; let the examiner know where the limitation was. Here's an example:

Firstly, recording the results of 20 people was a key limitation which did not offer a thorough enough set of results, and it would have been an improvement to use a sample of approximately 100 participants. This is a much wider sample and can reflect towards the college students better than that of 20 participants. 50 participants can indicate much clearer results which will end in an obvious finding.

Finally, the 'Abstract' section must be completed. This section is placed at the beginning of the coursework and usually just a page or so. It contains an overall/summary of the coursework such as results, aim, hypothesis and other general information. The abstract shouldn't be too long and should be straight to the point.

Once the discussion has been completed, the coursework is almost completed. It's highly advisable to go over everything and look for mistakes yourself, so when handing it over to the teacher; he/she can concentrate more on the content instead of picking up minor grammatical errors in your coursework.