UniSC

COURSE OUTLINE

PSY401 Advanced Theoretical Issues in Psychology

School: School of Health - Psychology

2026 | Trimester 1

UniSC Sunshine Coast UniSC Moreton Bay	**BLENDED LEARNING**	Most of your course is on campus but you may be able to do some components of this course online.

Please go to usc.edu.au for up to date information on the teaching sessions and campuses where this course is usually offered.

1. What is this course about?

1.1. Description

This course introduces you to an in-depth analysis of major theoretical issues that have influenced the direction of contemporary psychology, including the scientist-practitioner philosophy of professional practice, the prominence of cognitivism within cognitive developmental, cognitive behavioural and cognitive motivational research and practice, and the emphasis on social and cultural contexts of thought and action. The course provides you an opportunity to explore one or more of these theoretical paradigms in relation to a core psychological interest and the opportunity to extend existing content to focus on theoretical understanding of responsiveness to cultural similarities and differences.

1.2. How will this course be delivered?

ACTIVITY	HOURS	BEGINNING WEEK	FREQUENCY
BLENDED LEARNING			
Tutorial/Workshop 1 – On campus tutorial/workshop - 3 hours	3hrs	Week 1	12 times

1.3. Course Topics

The topics of the course are based on using psychological theories to understand the complexities of human interactions. These topics will include a psychological understanding of current affairs, the diversity of cultural experiences in everyday life, decisions about selecting and implementing interventions, and understanding the theoretical basis of the work of psychologists and non-psychologists who are involved in assisting individuals to improve their lives, improve mental health outcomes, and improve occupational outcomes.

2. What level is this course?

400 Level (Graduate)

Demonstrating coherence and breadth or depth of knowledge and skills. Independent application of knowledge and skills in unfamiliar contexts. Meeting professional requirements and AQF descriptors for the degree. May require pre-requisites where discipline specific introductory or developing knowledge or skills is necessary. Normally undertaken in the third or fourth full-time study year of an undergraduate program.

3. What is the unit value of this course?

12 units

4. How does this course contribute to my learning?

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES	GRADUATE QUALITIES MAPPING	PROFESSIONAL STANDARD MAPPING *
On successful completion of this course, you should be able to...	Completing these tasks successfully will contribute to you becoming...	Australian Psychology Accreditation Council
1 Articulate and explain the theoretical perspectives that are central to the science and practice of psychology, highlighting the relative strengths and limitations of these perspectives.	Knowledgeable Creative and critical thinker Empowered	2.1, 2.3, 2.4
2 Demonstrate critical evaluation of the research literature and associated research methods, observations, and theoretical developments.	Creative and critical thinker Engaged	2, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4
3 Consider and evaluate future directions in the field of psychology and potential applied applications.	Creative and critical thinker Ethical Engaged	2, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4
4 Demonstrate understanding and responsiveness to culturally and linguistically diverse populations and critical analysis of relevant literature	Knowledgeable Creative and critical thinker Ethical Communication Problem solving	

* Competencies by Professional Body

CODE	COMPETENCY
AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGY ACCREDITATION COUNCIL	
2	PRE-PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES: Graduates of programs at this level have basic knowledge and skills in the professional practice of psychology and the independent conduct and evaluation of scientific research. Programs for pre-professional competencies are typically a Bachelor Honours Degree or Graduate Diploma (if the graduate competencies in research can be met).
2.1	Taking into account broad diversity, and consistent with current relevant legal frameworks and codes of ethical practice, graduates apply psychological knowledge to competently and ethically demonstrate successful (prior or concurrent) achievement of foundational competencies.
2.3	Taking into account broad diversity, and consistent with current relevant legal frameworks and codes of ethical practice, graduates apply psychological knowledge to competently and ethically demonstrate basic assessment strategies in situations appropriate to psychological practice and knowledge of psychometric theory and principles of the construction, cultural considerations, implementation and interpretation of some of the more widely used standardised psychological test instruments.
2.4	Taking into account broad diversity, and consistent with current relevant legal frameworks and codes of ethical practice, graduates apply psychological knowledge to competently and ethically explain how basic psychological intervention strategies can be applied across a range of contexts.

5. Am I eligible to enrol in this course?

Refer to the UniSC Glossary of terms for definitions of "pre-requisites, co-requisites and anti-requisites".

5.1. Pre-requisites

(PSY300, PSY301, PSY302, PSY303, PSY304, PSY305, PSY306, PSY307 and enrolled in AR405) or (Enrolled in AR403 and SC407)

5.2. Co-requisites

Not applicable

5.3. Anti-requisites

Not applicable

5.4. Specific assumed prior knowledge and skills (where applicable)

> Not applicable

6. How am I going to be assessed?

6.1. Grading Scale

> Standard Grading (GRD)

High Distinction (HD), Distinction (DN), Credit (CR), Pass (PS), Fail (FL).

6.2. Details of early feedback on progress

In Week 3, the draft plan for the presentation will be peer reviewed in your workshop. This formative assessment will help you to prepare for the presentation, by considering the scope of your topic, the literature and theory you are using, and how you structure your presentation.

6.3. Assessment tasks

DELIVERY MODE	TASK NO.	ASSESSMENT PRODUCT	INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP	WEIGHTING %	WHAT IS THE DURATION / LENGTH?	WHEN SHOULD I SUBMIT?	WHERE SHOULD I SUBMIT IT?
All	1	Oral	Individual	35%	30 minutes	Refer to Format	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check and in class
All	2	Report	Individual	35%	1800 words	Refer to Format	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check
All	3	Examination - Centrally Scheduled	Individual	30%	2 hours	Exam Period	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check

All - Assessment Task 1: Oral

GOAL:	The goal of this assessment is to communicate your understanding of a current topic in psychology and consider the types of solutions and interventions that could be applied to the topic. The list of topics will be given on Canvas in Week 1 of the trimester. In the first class (i.e., in Week 1), you will form groups for the presentations and topics will be allocated at that time. It is imperative that you attend this class to be part of this process.
PRODUCT:	Oral
FORMAT:	This assessment task will be due between weeks 5 and 7 of the teaching trimester. The final date of submission for this task will be determined once public holidays and the course timetable have been published prior to the commencement of trimester. Please refer to your course Canvas site at the commencement of the teaching trimester to confirm the due date for this assessment task. Part A (10%): 5-minute presentation in class, with 5 minutes for feedback and questions (10 minutes in total). You and your group will deliver a 5-minute (maximum) overview of your topic in class, using one slide, and with one or more of the group presenting the information. You will use one PowerPoint slide, which should state the issue or problem being considered, the theoretical framework, a brief summary of research, and briefly, the solutions or interventions that could be applied to change or mitigate the issue or problem. The slides will also have a title and the names of all group members. Part B (25%): 20 minute video, submitted following the presentation of Part A. Building on Part A, the in-class presentation, you and your group will prepare a longer version of the presentation, which will be submitted by the end the week in which presentations are scheduled. One of the group will submit on behalf of the group (and notifying the whole group that this has been done). The presentation will identify the issues involved, key constructs, appropriate theoretical/conceptual framework/s, applying and critically analysing appropriate current research to present possible solutions and interventions to change, moderate, or improve the issue/s. You will use a narrated PowerPoint display (or a similar video format) to deliver your oral presentation and the recording will last 20 minutes (maximum).

CRITERIA:	No.		Learning Outcome assessed
	1	A: Quality of delivery and answers to questions	①②④
	2	A: Coverage of the topic and Design of the slide	①②③④
	3	B: Key constructs and issues, Use and integration of appropriate theory/conceptual framework	①②③④
	4	B: Extent and relevance of current research literature and Critical analysis of topic, theory, and literature	①②③④
	5	B: Exploration of future directions and potential for applied application	①②③④
	6	B: Quality of delivery and design of slides	①②

GENERIC SKILLS:	Collaboration, Problem solving, Organisation, Applying technologies

All - Assessment Task 2: Briefing Paper

GOAL:	The goal of this assessment is to demonstrate your ability to consider the theoretical perspectives and literature on a current topic in psychology. You will prepare a Briefing Paper for an organisation to explain one of the topics used for the Seminar Presentations (Task 1). You may choose the same topic as your presentation or chose one of the topics presented by another group. The list of topics will be given on Canvas in Week 1 of the trimester.
PRODUCT:	Report
FORMAT:	This assessment task will be due between weeks 7 and 10 of the teaching trimester. The final date of submission for this task will be determined once public holidays and the course timetable have been published prior to the commencement of trimester. Please refer to your course Canvas site at the commencement of the teaching trimester to confirm the due date for this assessment task.
	The Briefing Paper will be a maximum of 1800 words, excluding the title page and reference list. Whilst there is no minimum word count, be aware that assignments that are much shorter may not cover the topic in sufficient depth. An abstract is not required for this assignment.
	The Briefing Paper will consist of three sections: first, a statement of the topic, second, theoretical perspective and research literature applied to the topic, and third, solutions and interventions on the topic. Headings are recommended to provide structure for the assignment.
	The first section should include the organisation to which you are pitching your briefing paper (and why topic would be important to the organisation and the people with whom they work), explain the topic and it's prevalence, benefits, and/or costs to society. The second section should include the relevant theoretical framework and current, peer-reviewed research literature that explain the topic and show how it would be applicable to the organisation. The last section should include how the organisation would implement your proposal, and explain how these interventions, solutions, and/or strategies could change, moderate, and/or improve issues identified about the topic.
	It is expected that the word count for the first, second, and third sections will be approximately 300, 1200, and 300 words respectively.

CRITERIA:	**No.**		**Learning Outcome assessed**
	1	Statement of the topic - Identifies suitable organisation and provides rationale for BP	② ③ ④
	2	Statement of the topic - Situation of BP in topic area, definition of key terms, and direction of BP	③ ④
	3	Theoretical framework and research background - Identification and use of appropriate theory	① ④
	4	Theoretical framework and research background - Extent and relevance of current experimental research applied to topic	② ③ ④
	5	Solutions and interventions - Evaluation and explanation of the proposed processes of change, moderation or improvement	③ ④
	6	Writing style and APA - Evidence of critical analysis and original thinking, and careful and accurate use of APA and use of formal academic language	① ② ④

GENERIC SKILLS:	Communication, Problem solving, Organisation, Information literacy

All - Assessment Task 3: Examination

GOAL:	The goal of this assessment is to assess your ability to apply theory and literature to practical scenarios, which will be based around the guest lectures given during the trimester. Firstly, you will reflect on the the topics covered by the guest speakers and secondly, you will write about applied scenarios that extend on the areas of practice of the guest speakers. The outline of these applied scenarios will be discussed in class in Week 12.
PRODUCT:	Examination - Centrally Scheduled
FORMAT:	The examination will consist of two related parts. Part A will involve reflections on the guest speakers and their areas of practice to consider existing knowledge of theory and literature, and therefore any gaps in what is known about each of these areas of practice. The reflections will be completed within one week of the guest speakers attendance in class, with the structure and format of Part A, the reflections to be explained in Week 1.
	Part B will involve short answer questions (SAQs) that extend on the topics covered by the guest speakers. Answers to Part B should show development of the ideas and the content of the reflections completed for Part A. The structure and format of Part B, the SAQs will be explained in Week 1.
	A combined reference list of all sources used in Part A and Part B is required for the assignment, which should be formatted using APA 7th, and font for the assignment may be in Calibri or Times New Roman.

CRITERIA:	**No.**		**Learning Outcome assessed**
	1	Explanation and application of theoretical or conceptual frameworks used to answer the questions.	① ④
	2	Explanation and application of appropriate and current research literature used in the answers	② ④
	3	Sophistication and complexity of the written expression	① ② ③ ④
	4	Reflection on existing knowledge, gaps, and what has been learnt from each guest speaker	① ②
	5	Demonstration of sustained development of understanding and application of critical analysis to the process	① ②
	6	Evidence of critical analysis and original thinking to synthesise the information presented	② ④

GENERIC SKILLS:	Problem solving, Organisation, Information literacy

6.4. Assessment to competency mapping

PROGRAMME DELIVERY MODE	ASSESSMENT TYPE	TITLE	COMPETENCY	TEACHING METHODS
APAC AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGY ACCREDITATION COUNCIL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS: GRADUATE COMPETENCIES				
All delivery modes	Examination - Centrally Scheduled	Examination	2.1	Assessed
			2.4	Assessed
	Oral	Oral	2.1	Assessed
			2.2	Assessed
			2.4	Assessed
	Report	Briefing Paper	2.1	Assessed
			2.3	Assessed
			2.4	Assessed

7. Directed study hours

A 12-unit course will have total of 150 learning hours which will include directed study hours (including online if required), self-directed learning and completion of assessable tasks. Student workload is calculated at 12.5 learning hours per one unit.

8. What resources do I need to undertake this course?

Please note: Course information, including specific information of recommended readings, learning activities, resources, weekly readings, etc. are available on the course Canvas site– Please log in as soon as possible.

8.1. Prescribed text(s) or course reader

> There are no required/recommended resources for this course.

8.2. Specific requirements

Nil

9. How are risks managed in this course?

Health and safety risks for this course have been assessed as low. It is your responsibility to review course material, search online, discuss with lecturers and peers and understand the health and safety risks associated with your specific course of study and to familiarise yourself with the University's general health and safety principles by reviewing the online induction training for students, and following the instructions of the University staff.

10. What administrative information is relevant to this course?

10.1. Assessment: Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the ethical standard of university participation. It ensures that students graduate as a result of proving they are competent in their discipline. This is integral in maintaining the value of academic qualifications. Each industry has expectations and standards of the skills and knowledge within that discipline and these are reflected in assessment.

Academic integrity means that you do not engage in any activity that is considered to be academic fraud; including plagiarism, collusion or outsourcing any part of any assessment item to any other person. You are expected to be honest and ethical by completing all work yourself and indicating in your work which ideas and information were developed by you and which were taken from others. You cannot provide your assessment work to others. You are also expected to provide evidence of wide and critical reading, usually by using appropriate academic references.

In order to minimise incidents of academic fraud, this course may require that some of its assessment tasks, when submitted to Canvas, are electronically checked through Turnitin. This software allows for text comparisons to be made between your submitted assessment item and all other work to which Turnitin has access.

10.2. Assessment: Additional Requirements

Eligibility for Supplementary Assessment

Your eligibility for supplementary assessment in a course is dependent of the following conditions applying:
(a) The final mark is in the percentage range 47% to 49.4%; and
(b) The course is graded using the Standard Grading scale

Task 2 and Task 3 to be completed in Cadmus to secure the assessments

10.3. Assessment: Submission penalties

Late submissions may be penalised up to and including the following maximum percentage of the assessment task's identified value, with weekdays and weekends included in the calculation of days late:
(a) One day: deduct 5%;
(b) Two days: deduct 10%;
(c) Three days: deduct 20%;
(d) Four days: deduct 40%;
(e) Five days: deduct 60%;
(f) Six days: deduct 80%;
(g) Seven days: A result of zero is awarded for the assessment task.

The following penalties will apply for a late submission for an online examination:
Less than 15 minutes: No penalty
From 15 minutes to 30 minutes: 20% penalty
More than 30 minutes: 100% penalty

10.4. SafeUniSC

UniSC is committed to a culture of respect and providing a safe and supportive environment for all members of our community. For immediate assistance on campus contact SafeUniSC by phone: 07 5430 1168 or using the SafeZone app. For general enquires contact the SafeUniSC team by phone 07 5456 3864 or email safe@usc.edu.au.

The SafeUniSC Specialist Service is a Student Wellbeing service that provides free and confidential support to students who may have experienced or observed behaviour that could cause fear, offence or trauma. To contact the service call 07 5430 1226 or email studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au.

10.5. Study help

For help with course-specific advice, for example what information to include in your assessment, you should first contact your tutor, then your course coordinator, if needed.

If you require additional assistance, the Learning Advisers are trained professionals who are ready to help you develop a wide range of academic skills. Visit the Learning Advisers web page for more information, or contact Student Central for further assistance: +61 7 5430 2890 or studentcentral@usc.edu.au.

10.6. Wellbeing Services

Student Wellbeing provide free and confidential counselling on a wide range of personal, academic, social and psychological matters, to foster positive mental health and wellbeing for your academic success.

To book a confidential appointment go to Student Hub, email studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au or call 07 5430 1226.

10.7. AccessAbility Services

Ability Advisers ensure equal access to all aspects of university life. If your studies are affected by a disability, learning disorder mental health issue, injury or illness, or you are a primary carer for someone with a disability or who is considered frail and aged, AccessAbility Services can provide access to appropriate reasonable adjustments and practical advice about the support and facilities available to you throughout the University.

To book a confidential appointment go to Student Hub, email AccessAbility@usc.edu.au or call 07 5430 2890.

10.8. Links to relevant University policy and procedures

For more information on Academic Learning & Teaching categories including:

- Assessment: Courses and Coursework Programs
- Review of Assessment and Final Grades
- Supplementary Assessment
- Central Examinations
- Deferred Examinations
- Student Conduct
- Students with a Disability

For more information, visit https://www.usc.edu.au/explore/policies-and-procedures#academic-learning-and-teaching

10.9. Student Charter

UniSC is committed to excellence in teaching, research and engagement in an environment that is inclusive, inspiring, safe and respectful. The Student Charter sets out what students can expect from the University, and what in turn is expected of students, to achieve these outcomes.

10.10. General Enquiries

In person:

- **UniSC Sunshine Coast** - Student Central, Ground Floor, Building C, 90 Sippy Downs Drive, Sippy Downs
- **UniSC Moreton Bay** - Service Centre, Ground Floor, Foundation Building, Gympie Road, Petrie
- **UniSC SouthBank** - Student Central, Building A4 (SW1), 52 Merivale Street, South Brisbane
- **UniSC Gympie** - Student Central, 71 Cartwright Road, Gympie
- **UniSC Fraser Coast** - Student Central, Student Central, Building A, 161 Old Maryborough Rd, Hervey Bay
- **UniSC Caboolture** - Student Central, Level 1 Building J, Cnr Manley and Tallon Street, Caboolture

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