

Unit 34: Criminal Psychology

Unit code:	J/502/5579
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to enable learners to gain an understanding of selected perspectives in psychology and to consider how they are used to explain criminal behaviour and issues within the Criminal Justice System.

● Unit introduction

Crime and its consequences is a continuing social issue that affects everyone. But why do some people commit crime while others do not, and what are the effects of crime on victims and the wider community? These are the kinds of questions that are of concern to those involved in criminal psychology, as well as those responsible for preventing and investigating crime and dealing with those who break the law.

This unit examines the way in which psychology helps us to understand criminal behaviour and how it may be applied to aspects of the Criminal Justice System (CJS).

Learners will consider what psychology is in comparison to natural sciences and explore some of the approaches used in applying it to the study of crime and criminals. They will examine how different psychological perspectives have been applied to explain criminal behaviour and aspects of victims' and others' perceptions of crime. Learners will examine the research methods employed, including the ethical issues involved, and have the opportunity to apply these research methods to investigating crime issues. During the unit learners will learn how to design and run a psychological study and apply appropriate statistical analysis skills to data. Learners will apply Level 3 statistical skills to their own data and must be aware that this is an essential skill in psychology. This will help learners to understand the influence psychological studies have had on our understanding of behaviour in the CJS, including eyewitness testimony, courtroom behaviour, jury deliberation and the treatment of offenders.

The knowledge and skills gained during this unit provide an excellent start for learners who wish to pursue criminal psychology further by giving them a basic understanding of the investigative, scientific nature of psychology and how it applies to crime. It forms the foundation for exploring forensic psychology and criminology.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Understand how psychological perspectives have been applied to criminal behaviour
- 2 Be able to undertake a psychological study into a crime issue
- 3 Know how psychological theories have been applied to different issues within the Criminal Justice System
- 4 Understand the influence psychological research has had on aspects of the Criminal Justice System.

Unit content

1 Understand how psychological perspectives have been applied to criminal behaviour

Psychology and crime: psychology as the study of human behaviour; criminal, forensic, differences and similarities; social science compared with natural sciences

Psychological perspectives: biological, eg xyy syndrome, body types; personality theories, eg Eysenck; cognitive approaches, eg hostile attribution bias; social theories and factors, eg social learning theory

Psychopathology: psychopaths; mental illness, eg schizophrenia

2 Be able to undertake a psychological study into a crime issue

Experimental design: ethical issues; aims; hypothesis; independent, dependent and confounding variables

Methods: experiment; survey; interview; observation; case study

Results: appropriate statistical analysis

Evaluation: interpretation of analysis; conclusions

3 Know how psychological theories have been applied to different issues within the Criminal Justice System

Eyewitness testimony: attention; perception; memory; cognitive interview

Social influence: social identity theory; conformity; obedience

Treating crime: anger management; social skills training

4 Understand the influence psychological research has had on aspects of the Criminal Justice System

Psychology in the courtroom: sentencing; jury decision-making

Investigative interviewing: vulnerable witnesses; confessions

Victims of crime: fear of crime; support for victims

Mental health issues: mental disorder and crime; intention and responsibility

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 explain how psychological perspectives have been used to explain criminal behaviour [IE3, CT4]	M1 compare and contrast psychological perspectives used to explain criminal behaviour	D1 evaluate psychological perspectives as explanations of criminal behaviour
P2 plan a psychological study into a crime issue [IE1; CT5, 6]		
P3 carry out a psychological study into a crime issue [IE2, CT5, 6]	M2 explain how the results of the psychological study contribute to the understanding of a crime issue	D2 evaluate the psychological study, comparing the results and conclusions with other reports
P4 report on a psychological study into a crime issue [IE4, 6]		
P5 describe how psychological theories have been applied to different issues in the Criminal Justice System [CT2; EP2, 5, 6]	M3 apply psychological theories to different issues in the Criminal Justice System	D3 assess how effective psychological theories and research have been to the Criminal Justice System.
P6 explain the influence psychological research has had on aspects of the Criminal Justice System [CT2].	M4 discuss the influence of psychological research on aspects of the Criminal Justice System.	

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers CT – creative thinkers	RL – reflective learners TW – team workers	SM – self-managers EP – effective participators
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Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

This unit introduces learners to the discipline of psychology, how it is applied to the study of criminal behaviour and responses to it. Tutors have the opportunity to use a wide variety of techniques to motivate and stimulate learners, including lectures, presentations, discussions, group work, research using the internet and library resources, practicals and site visits.

As this unit may be the first time learners have encountered psychology, it will be necessary to discuss what it is and the nature of psychology. In contrast to the natural sciences studied in other units, learners need to understand that there can be several, often competing, perspectives or theories about the causes of behaviour.

Criminal psychology is one label used to describe this applied area of psychology and is sometimes used interchangeably with other labels such as forensic, police, criminological and legal psychology. Learners should be encouraged to consider the similarities and differences between these, particularly between criminal and forensic psychology.

Understanding why people are antisocial or commit crime is a key aspect of criminal psychology. Learners should examine how the major perspectives try to explain the causes of criminal behaviour, and some of the studies that support their theories.

Learners need to consider the strengths and limitations of these approaches, concluding that the causes of criminal behaviour are complex and that perhaps a multi-perspective approach is more useful. Learners might research an issue and hold a debate in which two sides present their arguments.

It is important that learners have an appreciation of the research methods used by psychologists to explore causes of behaviour. Reading journal articles about how studies were carried out and understanding how the results were interpreted is one way of considering research methods. Examining research into crime issues such as eyewitness testimony also serves to demonstrate how psychology has been applied and has influenced the Criminal Justice System. There are opportunities to test learners' own skills at recall. Learners might role play an investigator and interview a witness.

For learning outcome 2, learners need to plan and carry out a research study. This may include trying to replicate a previous study, such as on whether gender has an impact on eyewitness testimony, or a survey where learners design and construct a questionnaire, administer it to a sample of people, and analyse and report the results. An issue such as the level of fear of crime in the local community is a possible example of this approach. A basic understanding of statistics will be required and this might be linked to *Unit 8: Using Statistics for Science*. Ethical issues in carrying out research are important and learners have the opportunity to consider this in designing their own studies. This work offers opportunities for working with others to carry out research.

Reading journal articles and carrying out research are just two approaches to understanding psychological theories and how they are applied within the Criminal Justice System. A visit to the Crown Court offers learners the opportunity to consider psychology in the courtroom and experience first-hand how the different players involved interact in this arena. Learners may consider what influences juries in their decision-making and examine such issues as social influence theories, physical attraction, jury selection and competence. Discussion of the influence this research has had on the Criminal Justice System is linked to learning outcome 4.

Learners may benefit from other visits, such as to a police station or prison. Alternatively, speakers from agencies within the Criminal Justice System or academic institutions may offer learners an insight into their work.

Academics from universities often carry out research and may be willing to discuss their findings. Prison psychologists can describe some of the treatment programmes used. Organisations such as the Howard League for Penal Reform also conduct research into criminal psychology.

Both visits and external speakers provide insight into how psychological theories have been applied to the issues in learning outcome 3, and the influence they have had on the Criminal Justice System (learning outcome 4).

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
<p>Introduction of unit and assignment programme.</p> <p>Explain how psychological perspectives have been applied to criminal behaviour.</p> <p>Assignment 1 – Why Did They Do It ?(P1, M1, D1)</p> <p>Introduction to Psychology as a science and comparison with natural sciences and definitions web quest of key terms in psychology.</p> <p>Introduction to the idea of perspectives, using a case study example of a basic act, eg crossing the road.</p> <p>Biological approaches – Lombroso theory, drawing perceptions of criminals, writing a newspaper article imagining his theories were used in policy making. Brain chemistry, drawing the brain, using study by Raine.</p> <p>Body types and personality theories; drawing body type theory, completing a personality questionnaire. Guided questions on these theories.</p> <p>Cognitive approaches: Input-process-output applying this principle to an example. Attribution bias with examples.</p> <p>Social factors in crime: Social Learning Theory. Re-creation of Bandura's aggression study. Using media violence as a contemporary setting.</p> <p>Assignment workshops in lesson.</p> <p>Home study including assignment work and various assigned tasks throughout the outcome.</p>
<p>Plan a psychological study into a crime issue.</p> <p>Assignment 2 – Investigating a Crime Issue (P2, P3, P4, M2, D2)</p> <p>Introduction to research methods in psychology; experimental method – IV/DV, aim, hypotheses, ethical issues.</p> <p>Types of study – questionnaire (use of quantitative/qualitative data) experiment (field or lab), observation (overt or covert), case study.</p> <p>Guided support on choosing an issue and planning a study.</p> <p>Carry out a psychological study into a crime issue</p> <p>Time to prepare materials and complete the study.</p> <p>Report on a psychological study into a crime issue</p> <p>Guidance in lesson on structure of psychology report writing: Introduction, procedure, results, conclusion.</p> <p>Special emphasis on using appropriate statistical analysis.</p> <p>Assignment workshops in lesson.</p> <p>Home study including assignment work and various assigned tasks.</p>

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Describe how psychology theories have been applied to different issues in the Criminal Justice System.

Assignment 3 – How is Psychology Used in the Criminal Justice System? (P5, P6, M3, M4, D3)

Explain the influence psychological research has had on aspects of the Criminal Justice System.

Teach these two outcomes in unison as they work well together.

Eyewitness testimony – use of case examples to explore theories of attention, perception and memory. How has this led to the cognitive interview?

Other forms of interviewing – investigative and confessions.

Victim support as part of a case.

Social Identity Theory, Conformity and Obedience, how this has led to research and change in jury decision making and sentencing. Use of a trial scenario to encourage students to make joint decisions and how this applies to the jury.

Treating crime: social skills training and anger management – running ‘therapy role-play sessions’ in class. Learners can debate the use and success of treatment in offender populations.

Mental health issues – using a case example of insanity defence.

Assignment workshops in lesson.

Home study including assignment work and various assigned tasks.

Review of unit and programme of assignments.

Assessment

All the pass grade criteria must be met in order for a learner to achieve this unit.

For P1, learners must describe psychological perspectives to explain criminal behaviour; it is recommended that at least three perspectives are covered in P1. For P2, learners must plan and design a study into a crime issue. They must show evidence that ethical issues have been considered and design decisions regarding research methods, variables and hypotheses have been made before the study is conducted. For M1, learners must compare the similarities and differences in the psychological perspectives. This might include some of the basic assumptions behind the perspectives and the methods used to study criminal behaviour; eg biological perspectives may use brain scanning techniques and social perspectives may use questionnaires or observations. For D1, learners must evaluate how well the perspectives can explain criminal behaviour using their strengths and limitations, such as evidence for the perspective, the validity of the assumptions perspectives are based on and real life applications that can be drawn from the perspectives.

For P3, learners must carry out a study into a crime issue; evidence can be samples of their original results and ethical forms. Learners or groups of learners could design an experiment to show males and females a short video of a crime and then test their recall abilities. Learners could also use a questionnaire to assess teenagers, and adults’ opinions of police or conduct a naturalistic observation of breaking a law, eg smoking in bus shelters. For P4, they should write a report of the study, which should be in the standard format of a psychological report; including an introduction, procedure, results (including tables and charts where appropriate) and a short conclusion. For M2, learners must explain what the findings of a psychological study indicate about the issue under investigation. In order to do this, learners must begin to analyse their own results in more detail and draw conclusions from their data about the issue at hand. For D2, learners must evaluate the psychological study carried out. This should include whether it supports previous research, strengths and limitations of the method used, difficulties encountered, and what might have been done differently.

Psychological theories have been applied to a variety of different issues in relation to crime and criminal behaviour. For P5, learners must describe how theories have been applied to different aspects of the Criminal Justice System. This might include how theories on memory have been applied to interviewing witnesses, or how theories explaining criminal behaviour have been applied to the treatment of offenders. Psychological theories have often influenced criminal justice policy. Changes have been made in the way crimes are investigated by police, how victim, witnesses and suspects are dealt with, what happens in court and the treatment of offenders. For P6, learners must describe how psychological research has influenced one of these aspects of the Criminal Justice System.

For M3, learners must show how these psychological theories have been applied in more detail. For example a learner working at pass level may be able to describe a theory of memory and briefly describe how this links to the cognitive interview, whereas a learner working at merit level may go into detail about exactly how the interview uses psychological theory in practice. For M4, learners must discuss the influence of psychological research on aspects of the Criminal Justice System. Learners must discuss the appropriateness of the links between research and policy development. For example, psychological research into conformity has significantly influenced the jury decision making process, however all research is done using artificial tasks and mock juries so learners should discuss the influence from a more critical point of view.

For D3, learners must assess how effective the theories and studies described and demonstrated for P5 and M3 and P6 and M4 respectively have been when applied to the Criminal Justice System. Learners should consider evidence outlining how successful these applications have actually been, eg has the accuracy of eyewitness testimony improved when using the cognitive interview? Learners must also assess the effectiveness of psychological research in improving the Criminal Justice System. Learners should consider the validity of the psychological research and use real life examples where changes have been made to the Criminal Justice System as a result of psychological research, eg changes in the penal system in terms of offender treatment programmes may have been based on psychological pilot studies – do these treatment programmes reduce recidivism?

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	Why Did They Do It?	Working as a criminal psychologist who must use their knowledge to explain why given criminal is committing crime.	Report/Presentation
P2, P3, P4, M2, D2	Investigating a Crime Issue	Working as a research psychologist attempting to demonstrate their investigative skills in a chosen issue in order to secure a promotion!	Report including evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning (design decisions) procedure analysis of results evaluation of results (M2/D2).
P5, P6, M3, M4, D3	How is Psychology Used in the Criminal Justice System?	The local authority needs to justify why they should carry on funding criminal psychologists	Crime analysis

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Applied Science sector suite. This unit has particular links with the units shown below in the BTEC Applied science suite of qualifications:

Level 2	Level 3
Investigating Human Behaviour	Using Statistics for Science
	Criminology
	Forensic Fire Investigation
	Criminal Investigation Procedures

Essential resources

Learners need to research information when investigating areas of, and roles within, the Criminal Justice System and criminal psychology. They need access to academic journals, books and websites. Access to organisations and practitioners, by way of visits and/or guest speakers, and case studies will support and enhance delivery and assessment of this unit. Psychology practicals used in other courses and available online might be adapted to examine criminal issues.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Visiting speakers may come from academic institutions in order to gain an insight into the role of research in the development of the field. Visits to local courts or police stations can give learners an idea of the role a psychologist might play in the Criminal Justice System.

Professional Body – British Psychological Society – www.bps.org.uk

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network – www.stemnet.org.uk

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Brewer K – *Heinemann Themes in Psychology: Psychology and Crime* (Heinemann Educational Secondary Division, 2000) ISBN 9780435806538

Coolican H – *Research Methods and Statistics in Psychology* (Hodder Arnold, 2004) ISBN 9780340812587

Harrower J – *Applying Psychology to Crime* (Hodder Arnold, 1998) ISBN 9780340705568

Howitt D – *Introduction to Forensic and Criminal Psychology* (Prentice Hall, 2008) ISBN 9781405874465

Kapardis A – *Psychology and Law: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2002) ISBN 9780521531610

Milne R and Bull R – *Investigative Interviewing: Psychology and Practice* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007) ISBN 9780470016275

Towl G J and Crighton D A – *The Handbook of Psychology for Forensic Practitioners* (Routledge, 1996) ISBN 9780415128889

Journals

Law and Human Behavior

Legal and Criminological Psychology

Websites

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/science-research/

www.internetjournalofcriminology.com

www.newcriminologist.co.uk

www.police.homeoffice.gov.uk

www.psypress.co.uk

The Home Office Research and statistics site

The internet Journal of Criminology

New Criminologist Online Journal

The Home Office Police site

Psychology Press

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	[IE1,2] planning and carrying out an investigation into a crime issue [IE3] describing criminal behaviour using various perspectives [IE4] using data to draw conclusions and support psychological theories
Creative thinkers	[CT2,4] questioning the assumptions of psychological perspectives [CT5,6] adapting and changing ideas and solutions when planning and carrying out a study into a crime issue
Effective participators	[EP2,5,6] presenting a case suggesting that psychological theories have influenced the processes involved in the criminal justice system

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	[IE4] analysing and evaluating psychological theories and studies [IE6] considering strengths and weaknesses of a psychological study and deducing conclusions
Reflective learners	[RL5] evaluating their own performance in terms of carrying out their investigation into a crime issue
Team workers	[TW1] collaborating with others towards a common goal [TW4] showing fairness and consideration to others opinions and confidence in own views when debating topics such as the success of criminal treatment programmes
Self-managers	[SM3] managing their own time
Effective participators	[EP2,5] presenting persuasive cases for action and influencing the views of others in class debates or decision making as part of a jury.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	researching psychological theories and studies using appropriate software to produce graphs for displaying collected data in learning outcome 2 using appropriate software to present a chosen topic or outcome
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	doing independent research into topics and using search engines
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • text and tables • images • numbers • records 	producing tables and graphical displays as part of learning outcome 2
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	bringing together information gathered from research
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	producing a leaflet to summarise complex information using publisher program
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	collaborating effectively using ICT
Mathematics	
Understand routine and non-routine problems in a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations	identifying mathematical problems that may arise from their data selecting the correct mathematical skill to analyse data evaluating the use of their chosen mathematical skill interpreting the analysis from gathered data and drawing conclusions based on mathematical justifications
Identify the situation or problem and the mathematical methods needed to tackle it	
Select and apply a range of skills to find solutions	
Use appropriate checking procedures and evaluate their effectiveness at each stage	
Interpret and communicate solutions to practical problems in familiar and unfamiliar routine contexts and situations	
Draw conclusions and provide mathematical justifications	

Skill	When learners are ...
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	<p>discussing contemporary issues on a weekly basis, eg the explanations of criminal behaviour, the influence of psychology on the Criminal Justice System</p> <p>taking part in class debates on topics such as the success of criminal treatment programmes</p>
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	<p>comparing psychological perspective to criminal behaviour</p> <p>understanding higher level texts and selecting appropriate information from them</p>
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	writing psychological reports and critical essays