



Government of **Western Australia**
School Curriculum and Standards Authority

PSYCHOLOGY

ATAR COURSE

Year 11 syllabus

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This syllabus is effective from 1 January 2017.

Users of this syllabus are responsible for checking its currency.

Syllabuses are formally reviewed by the School Curriculum and Standards Authority on a cyclical basis, typically every five years.

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Rationale

Psychology is the scientific study of how people think, feel and act. It aims to answer important questions such as what factors influence human development. While there are other disciplines that overlap with psychology's main aim to understand humans, psychology is rigorous in its use of scientific method. This allows for systematic exploration into the complexities of human behaviour based on evidence gathered through planned investigations.

This course introduces students to a breadth of knowledge focusing on the psychology of self and others. Psychological knowledge helps us understand factors relating to individuals, such as: cognition, or the way we think; biological bases of behaviour; and personality, the enduring traits that distinguish individuals. Psychological knowledge also helps us understand the way that individuals function within groups. This consists of knowledge associated with socialisation, moral development, the formation of attitudes and also how people relate and communicate. On a larger scale, psychological knowledge can help us to understand how individuals function within different contexts and how this is influenced by culture, shaping people's values, attitudes and beliefs.

Psychology is very useful, both to individuals assisting us to improve ourselves and our relationships, and to society as a whole. It can be applied to any context in which humans are involved. Through this course, students gain valuable insights and understandings into both themselves and their worlds. Methods of communication studied enhance personal communication skills, both within the field of psychology and in the context of daily life. Students also develop important research skills as they engage in the exploration and evaluation of data to illustrate how empirical procedures are used to examine phenomena such as intelligence and personality.

This course is designed to integrate the understanding of scientific principles, the acquisition of psychological knowledge and the application of both in an enjoyable and contemporary way. The study of psychology is highly relevant to further studies in the health professions; education, human resources, social sciences, sales, media and marketing and management.

Course outcomes

The Psychology ATAR course is designed to facilitate achievement of the following outcomes.

Outcome 1 – Psychological understandings

Students understand the bases of human behaviour.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- understand how human behaviour can be defined, and the relationship between the internal and external factors that influence how humans think, feel and act
- understand the different theoretical approaches to the various areas or domains of psychology
- understand psychology provides scientific explanations of behaviour with particular principles, procedures and approaches to data.

Outcome 2 – Investigating in psychology

Students use information gathering methods to explore and answer questions about human thinking, emotion and behaviour.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- develop and select questions and ideas or hypotheses and plan and conduct research to test these ideas in a reliable, valid and ethical way
- collect, record, classify, quantify and process data and information in organised, logical and ethical ways
- interpret and evaluate findings in relation to ideas or hypotheses being tested and reflect on the design of the research.

Outcome 3 – Applying and relating psychological understandings

Students select and apply knowledge, understandings and skills to the study of human behaviour.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- use psychological knowledge and understandings to explain thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- apply knowledge and understandings reflecting the values of the discipline of psychology
- explore and interpret human behaviour in the everyday world using psychological theory and principles.

Outcome 4 – Communication in psychology

Students use appropriate skills and processes to communicate their understanding of human behaviour.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- use psychological discourse
- interpret information received and communicate feelings, thoughts and ideas with purpose, understanding and critical awareness
- explain psychological understandings to a range of audiences for a range of purposes.

Organisation

This course is organised into a Year 11 syllabus and a Year 12 syllabus. The cognitive complexity of the syllabus content increases from Year 11 to Year 12.

Structure of the syllabus

The Year 11 syllabus is divided into two units, each of one semester duration, which are typically delivered as a pair. The notional time for each unit is 55 class contact hours.

Unit 1

This unit focuses on a number of concepts that enable students to gain an understanding of how and why people behave the way they do. Students learn about the human brain and explore the impact of external factors on behaviour, such as physical activity and psychoactive drugs. Cognitive processes, such as sensation and perception, and selective and divided attention are investigated. Students examine different types of relationships and the role of verbal and non-verbal communication in initiating, maintaining and regulating these. Students are introduced to ethics in psychological research and carry out investigations.

Unit 2

This unit focuses on developmental psychology. Students analyse twin and adoption studies to gain insight into the nature/nurture debate and look at the role of play in assisting development. Students explore what is meant by the term personality and examine historical perspectives used to explain personality. They also explore behaviour and causes of prejudice. Psychological research methods studied in Unit 1 are further developed.

Each unit includes:

- a unit description – a short description of the focus of the unit
- unit content – the content to be taught and learned.

Organisation of content

For each unit, the content is organised as follows:

Content organisers	Sub-organisers	
	Unit 1	Unit 2
Self	Biological influences/bases of behaviour	Developmental psychology
	Cognition	Personality
Others	Relational influences	Social psychology
	Communication	Culture and values
Research methods	Planning and conducting psychological research	
	Processing and evaluating psychological research	

Mathematical skills expected of students studying the Psychology ATAR course

The Psychology ATAR course requires students to use the mathematical skills they have developed through the Year 7–10 Mathematics Curriculum, in addition to the numeracy skills they have developed through the Science Inquiry Skills strand of the Science Curriculum.

Within the Science Inquiry Skills strand, students are required to gather, represent and analyse numerical data to identify the evidence that forms the basis of scientific arguments, claims or conclusions. In gathering and recording numerical data, students are required to make measurements using appropriate units to an appropriate degree of accuracy.

It is assumed that students will be able to:

- perform calculations involving addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of quantities
- perform approximate evaluations of numerical expressions
- express fractions as percentages, and percentages as fractions
- calculate percentages
- recognise and use ratios
- transform decimal notation to power of ten notation
- translate information between graphical, numerical and algebraic forms
- construct and interpret frequency tables and diagrams, pie charts and histograms
- describe and compare data sets using mean, median and inter-quartile range
- interpret the slope of a linear graph.

Progression from the Year 7–10 curriculum

This syllabus continues to develop science inquiry skills, building on those acquired in the Year 7–10 Science Curriculum. Science inquiry involves identifying and posing questions; planning, conducting and reflecting on investigations; processing, analysing and interpreting data; and communicating findings. Science inquiry is also concerned with evaluating claims, investigating ideas, solving problems, reasoning, drawing valid conclusions, and developing evidence-based arguments.

Investigations in psychology are activities in which ideas, predictions or hypotheses are tested and conclusions are drawn in response to a question or problem. The collection and analysis of data to provide evidence plays a major role. This can involve collecting or extracting information and reorganising data in the form of tables, graphs, flow charts, diagrams, text, keys, spreadsheets and databases. The analysis of data to identify and select evidence, and the communication of findings, involve the selection, construction and use of specific representations, including mathematical relationships, symbols and diagrams.

Representation of the general capabilities

The general capabilities encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that will assist students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century. Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate the capabilities into the teaching and learning program for the Psychology ATAR course. The general capabilities are not assessed unless they are identified within the specified unit content.

Literacy

Students develop literacy skills as they are introduced and become familiar with the specific discourse used in psychology. This course provides a specific and rich context for students to develop reading and writing abilities and skills in viewing and speaking, as they apply language in different contexts and for different purposes. Students develop literacy capability as they learn key research and investigative skills which enhance their ability to access, interpret, analyse and challenge information, and evaluate the changing knowledge base in psychology. Students use language structures to formulate hypotheses, relate information, provide explanations and construct evidence-based arguments. Students communicate research findings using multiple ways of representing data to articulate and illustrate relationships they have observed or constructed.

Numeracy

Students develop numeracy skills as they consider and evaluate psychological research, including the ability to display and interpret quantitative data, and apply processes of correlation and probability to inform the development of evidence-based conclusions.

Information and communication technology capability

In the Psychology ATAR course, students develop and apply information and communication technology (ICT) capability as they learn to effectively and appropriately access, create and communicate information and ideas, solve problems and work collaboratively. Students research psychological concepts, collect and analyse data and communicate understandings using a range of technologies.

Critical and creative thinking

Students develop critical and creative thinking as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, consider alternatives and solve problems. In this course, critical and creative thinking is embedded in the skills of planning, conducting, processing and evaluating psychological research. Students generate and examine hypotheses, make predictions, solve problems and analyse and evaluate evidence.

Personal and social capability

Psychology seeks to explain how individuals think, feel and act. In this course, students develop personal and social capabilities as they engage in the study of key theories which seek to explain how emotions, self-understanding and relationships influence decisions and actions. Students learn about the impact of groups and effective communication processes, and are encouraged to reflect on how relationships can be improved. Personal and social capability is also enhanced as students apply psychological knowledge to make informed choices about issues that impact their lives and consider the application of psychological concepts to meet a range of personal and social needs.

Ethical understanding

In this course, students learn about key psychological theories and the way in which the rights, integrity and propriety of people, who are the subject of psychological research, are held in high regard. Students develop the capacity to form and make ethical judgements through the study of ethics in psychology, and explore and apply ethical guidelines as they engage in planning, conducting, processing and evaluating psychological research.

Intercultural understanding

Cultural attitudes and perspectives are important influences on behaviour and relationship development. Students examine how culture impacts on beliefs, attitudes and practices.

Representation of the cross-curriculum priorities

The cross-curriculum priorities address contemporary issues which students face in a globalised world. Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate the priorities into the teaching and learning program for the Psychology ATAR course. The cross-curriculum priorities are not assessed unless they are identified within the specified unit content.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have longstanding scientific traditions. They have developed knowledge about the world through observation, prediction, creating hypotheses and making generalisations. In this course, scientific methods which propose to explain human behaviour are consistent with those which have been practised and transmitted in Aboriginal culture from one generation to the next. The study of the scientific method used in psychology has close links to the way in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples view their world and therefore contributes to a better understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia provides rich and engaging contexts for developing students' scientific knowledge, understanding and skills. In this course, students learn about the diversity of cultures, traditions and beliefs and their impact on human behaviour, including the influence of traditional and contemporary Asian cultures.

Sustainability

Through the process of scientific investigation, students identify and understand relationships between variables and the notion of cause and effect. They develop skills in observation and analysis which enable them to examine relationships in the world around them and appreciate the contribution of science toward the development of a sustainable future.

Unit 1

Unit description

This unit focuses on a number of concepts that enable students to gain an understanding of how and why people behave the way they do. Students are introduced to the human brain, focusing on the major parts and lobes of the cerebral cortex, and review case studies, illustrating the link between the brain and behaviour. They also explore the impact of external factors, such as physical activity and psychoactive drugs, on individuals' behaviour. Cognitive processes, such as sensation and perception and selective and divided attention, are investigated. The impact of others on behaviour is also studied. Students examine different types of relationships and look at the role of verbal and non-verbal communication in initiating, maintaining and regulating relationships. Students are introduced to ethics in psychological research and carry out investigations, following the steps in conducting scientific research. They identify the aims of psychological investigations and apply appropriate structure to sequence data using correctly labelled tables, graphs and diagrams.

Unit content

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below.

Self

Biological influences/bases of behaviour

- functions of the major parts of the brain
 - hindbrain
 - midbrain
 - forebrain
 - left and right hemispheres
 - corpus callosum
- main features of the four lobes of the cerebral cortex
- structure of the neuron
 - cell body
 - axon
 - dendrites
 - myelin sheath
- methods for investigating brain function
 - external recordings – electroencephalography (EEG)
 - scanning techniques
 - still pictures – computed axial tomography (CAT) scan, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)
 - dynamic pictures – functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), positron emission tomography (PET) scan
 - case study – Phineas Gage
- factors that affect behaviour, emotion and thought
 - physical activity
 - psychological and physiological responses to recreational drugs – cannabis, alcohol and amphetamine

Cognition

- theories of intelligence
 - general intelligence – Galton, Spearman
 - measuring mental age and intelligence quotient – Binet and Simon, Terman
 - empirical approaches to intelligence – Wechsler
 - multiple intelligences – Gardner
 - emotional intelligence – Golman
- intelligence testing
 - advantages and disadvantages of group and individual testing
- the role of sensation and perception in cognition
 - sensory organs and stimuli
 - perception – illusions and distortions of visual perception
 - attention – selected, divided, habituation, dishabituation
- physiological responses indicating different states of consciousness
 - electrical activity of the brain
 - heart rate
 - body temperature
 - galvanic skin response

Others

Relational influences

- types of relationships
 - pro-social
 - anti-social
- determinants of liking
 - proximity
 - similarity
 - reciprocity
- relationship development in adolescence
 - changing structure of adolescent groups – Dunphy

Communication

- non-verbal communication
 - body language
 - gestures
 - physical distance
 - facial expressions
 - touch and smell
- effective communication
 - listener/receiver attributes
 - active listening
 - working collaboratively
 - assertive communication
 - the impact of hearing impairment and language delay

- role of language in initiating, maintaining and regulating interpersonal relationships – Robinson’s social skills

Research methods

Planning and conducting psychological research

- research terminology
 - experimental, non-experimental
 - scientific, non-scientific
 - sample
 - population
- ethics in psychology research
 - informed consent
 - confidentiality
 - voluntary participation and withdrawal rights
 - deception in research
- steps in the scientific method
- differences between sample and population data
- experimental research methods
 - independent and dependent variables
 - operational hypotheses
 - controlled and uncontrolled variables
 - experimental and control groups
 - reliability and validity
- non-experimental (descriptive) research methods
 - case studies, surveys, correlational studies and archival research
 - behavioural variables (not dependent and independent variables) in correlational studies
- qualitative methods of data collection
- quantitative methods of data collection – fixed response, rating scales

Processing and evaluating psychological research

- methods of displaying quantitative data – tables, graphs and diagrams
- interpretation of the following forms of data:
 - mode
 - mean
 - median
 - range
- role of probability
- use of correlation to establish association between variables
- sources of error in data and ways of reducing them
- evidence-based conclusions related to the hypothesis

Unit 2

Unit description

This unit introduces students to developmental psychology by looking at the concept of average development and changes expected as people age. They analyse twin and adoption studies to gain insight into the nature/nurture debate and look at the role of play in assisting development. Students explore what is meant by the term personality and examine several historical perspectives used to explain personality such as Freud's psychodynamic approach. Students investigate the influence of others on self-concept, identity and attitudes. They explore the behaviours observed within groups, such as deindividuation and social loafing, and causes of prejudice. Psychological research methods introduced in Unit 1 are further explored.

Unit content

This unit builds on the content covered in Unit 1.

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below.

Self

Developmental psychology

- aspects of human development across the life span
 - cognitive
 - physical
 - social
 - emotional
- nature/nurture debate
 - twin studies
 - adoption studies
 - intelligence as measured by intelligence quotient (IQ)
- role of play in physical, cognitive, emotional and social readiness and skill development

Personality

- definition of personality
- historical perspectives
 - psychodynamic – Freud
 - trait – Eysenck, Allport
 - humanistic – Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
- approaches to measuring personality
 - projective – Rorschach, thematic apperception test (TAT)
 - non-projective – self-reports

Others

Social psychology

- definition of a group and its purposes
- individuals and groups
 - self-concept and group membership
 - social identity
- behaviour within groups
 - cooperation
 - competition
 - deindividuation
 - social loafing
 - brainstorming
 - impact of group size
- social categorisation
 - stereotypes
 - social values and behaviour

Culture and values

- attitude formation – Tripartite model
- tools for measuring attitudes
 - observational methods
 - qualitative self-report methods – interviews and focus groups
 - quantitative self-report measures – rating scales
- racism
 - causes of prejudice
 - reducing prejudice
- cultural influences on attitudes
 - individualistic cultures
 - collectivist cultures

Research methods

Planning and conducting psychological research

- research terminology
 - experimental, non-experimental
 - scientific, non-scientific
 - sample
 - population
- ethics in psychology research
 - informed consent
 - confidentiality
 - voluntary participation and withdrawal rights
 - deception in research

- steps in the scientific method
- differences between sample and population data
- experimental research methods
 - independent and dependent variables
 - operational hypotheses
 - controlled and uncontrolled variables
 - experimental and control groups
 - reliability and validity
- non-experimental (descriptive) research methods
 - case studies, surveys, correlational studies and archival research
 - behavioural variables (not dependent and independent variables) in correlational studies
- qualitative methods of data collection
- quantitative methods of data collection – fixed response, rating scales

Processing and evaluating psychological research

- methods of displaying quantitative data – tables, graphs and diagrams
- interpretation of the following forms of data:
 - mode
 - mean
 - median
 - range
- role of probability
- use of correlation to establish association between variables
- sources of error in data and ways of reducing them
- evidence-based conclusions related to the hypothesis

School-based assessment

The Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Manual contains essential information on principles, policies and procedures for school-based assessment that needs to be read in conjunction with this syllabus.

Teachers design school-based assessment tasks to meet the needs of students. The table below provides details of the assessment types for the Psychology ATAR Year 11 syllabus and the weighting for each assessment type.

Assessment table – Year 11

Type of assessment	Weighting
<p>Investigation</p> <p>Students plan and conduct a study to answer a research question that can include predicting, hypothesising, designing, controlling variables, gathering and organising data and interpreting and/or evaluating research findings.</p> <p>Evidence can include: an experimental design brief, a formal investigation or laboratory report, research notes, journals, quantitative and/or qualitative analyses of data from observation checklists, and/or self or peer evaluation tools.</p>	20%
<p>Response</p> <p>Students apply knowledge and skills to analyse, interpret and evaluate data, and identify ethical issues.</p> <p>Evidence can include: reports, literature searches, tests, observations during the analysis process, evaluation forms and/or journals.</p>	30%
<p>Project</p> <p>Students communicate psychological knowledge, skills and processes in familiar and unfamiliar contexts.</p> <p>Evidence can include: observation checklists, evaluation forms, questionnaires, posters, observations during discussion, journals, video and/or audio recordings, group work, role plays and/or oral presentations.</p>	20%
<p>Examination</p> <p>Typically conducted at the end of each semester and/or unit. In preparation for Unit 3 and Unit 4, the examination should reflect the examination design brief included in the ATAR Year 12 syllabus for this course.</p>	30%

Teachers are required to use the assessment table to develop an assessment outline for the pair of units (or for a single unit where only one is being studied).

The assessment outline must:

- include a set of assessment tasks
- include a general description of each task
- indicate the unit content to be assessed
- indicate a weighting for each task and each assessment type
- include the approximate timing of each task (for example, the week the task is conducted, or the issue and submission dates for an extended task).

In the assessment outline for the pair of units, each assessment type must be included at least twice. In the assessment outline where a single unit is being studied, each assessment type must be included at least once.

The set of assessment tasks must provide a representative sampling of the content for Unit 1 and Unit 2.

Assessment tasks not administered under test/controlled conditions require appropriate validation/authentication processes. For example, student performance for an investigation could be validated by a task (such as a structured essay or extended response) which is completed in class after the assessment is submitted.

Grading

Schools report student achievement in terms of the following grades:

Grade	Interpretation
A	Excellent achievement
B	High achievement
C	Satisfactory achievement
D	Limited achievement
E	Very low achievement

The teacher prepares a ranked list and assigns the student a grade for the pair of units (or for a unit where only one unit is being studied). The grade is based on the student's overall performance as judged by reference to a set of pre-determined standards. These standards are defined by grade descriptions and annotated work samples. The grade descriptions for the Psychology ATAR Year 11 syllabus are provided in Appendix 1. They can also be accessed, together with annotated work samples, through the Guide to Grades link on the course page of the Authority website at www.scsa.wa.edu.au

To be assigned a grade, a student must have had the opportunity to complete the education program, including the assessment program (unless the school accepts that there are exceptional and justifiable circumstances).

Refer to the WACE Manual for further information about the use of a ranked list in the process of assigning grades.

Appendix 1 – Grade descriptions Year 11

A

Understanding and applying concepts

Discusses a range of theoretical approaches and domains in the fields of psychology related to the way humans think, feel and act at an individual, group and societal level. Relates a range of relevant psychological theories, principles and concepts to interpret human behaviour in the everyday world.

Critically evaluates psychological theories and constructs in detail supported by multiple cited references. Clearly links examples and theories or constructs back to the topic.

Uses a broad range of appropriate psychological terminology consistently to explain complex behaviour, adapting language to suit specific audiences and purposes. Explains abstract concepts fluently and in a clear and logical way. Uses appropriate writing conventions.

Research methods

Provides a detailed discussion of relevant research, citing two or more studies where the method and the findings are included. Clearly links the research to the current study. Provides context by discussing the constructs relevant to the investigation. Highlights the application of the study to real-life problems in society. Includes an aim which justifies the reasoning for the current investigation. Identifies variables and formulates an operational hypothesis.

Develops methods that include ethical considerations and provide specific, accurate information which can be replicated. Organises accurate, descriptive data into an appropriate, correctly labelled form. Correctly calculates a range of statistics and provides a complete description of the data.

Discusses using supporting evidence whether the results relate to the hypothesis. Provides a detailed analysis of results. Correctly discusses relevance of results to the population from which the sample was drawn, to psychological theory and to past research. Recognises inconsistencies in data and suggests improvements to reduce sources of error in the data and research design.

B

Understanding and applying concepts

Identifies and explains a range of theoretical approaches and domains in the fields of psychology related to the way humans think, feel and act both individually and in a group. Makes direct reference to relevant psychological theories, principles and concepts to describe and explain human behaviour in the everyday world.

Critically evaluates psychological theories and constructs supported by cited references. Makes links between examples and theories or constructs related to the topic. Links require further explanation.

Uses a range of appropriate psychological terminology consistently to explain behaviour, adapting language to suit specific audiences and purposes. Explains ideas in a clear, accurate and logical way. Usually uses appropriate writing conventions.

Research methods

Provides a discussion of relevant research, citing one to two studies where the method or the findings are included. Provides context by discussing some of the constructs relevant to the investigation. Includes an aim for the current investigation and formulates a directional hypothesis with clearly identified variables.

Develops methods that include some ethical considerations and provides information that can be replicated. Organises data into an appropriate form but labelling is missing or incorrect. Calculates statistics accurately but only provides a partial description of the data.

States whether results support the hypothesis and states some evidence from the investigation. Correctly discusses relevance of results to some of the following; the population, to psychological theory and to past research. Suggests specific changes that would improve the techniques used or the design of the investigation.

Understanding and applying concepts

Identifies and explains key theoretical approaches and domains in the fields of psychology related to the way humans think, feel and act individually and in a group. Makes direct reference to psychological theories, principles and concepts to describe and explain human behaviour in the everyday world.

Briefly evaluates psychological theories and constructs often without cited references or with cited references that do not always support the evaluation.

Uses simple psychological terminology consistently to accurately explain human behaviour. Explains ideas which sometimes lack logic and clarity. Inconsistently uses appropriate writing conventions.

C**Research methods**

Refers to relevant research and provides context by discussing some of the constructs relevant to the investigation. Includes an aim for the current investigation and formulates a hypothesis.

Describes a method without reference to ethical considerations and provides general information that cannot be replicated. Collects and organises data, but not in the most appropriate form. Inaccurately calculates statistics. Provides a partial description of the data, but confuses a statement of results with the discussion.

States whether results support the hypothesis. Correctly discusses relevance of results to psychological theory and/or population. Gives general suggestions for improving the investigation.

Understanding and applying concepts

Describes theoretical approaches and domains in the fields of psychology related to the way humans think, feel and act both individually and in a group. Uses generalisations that are consistent with psychological understandings, without supportive evidence.

Uses limited evidence in evaluating psychological theories and constructs.

Uses limited basic psychological terminology to describe and explain human behaviour. Plans, rehearses and considers communication skills. Requires some frameworks to organise ideas.

D**Research methods**

Makes general comments in relation to the topic. Attempts to write an aim for the current investigation and identifies one or more relevant variables without making links between them.

Describes a method without reference to ethical considerations and provides limited or incorrect information. Only displays raw data without visual representation. Omits use of statistics and makes general statements to describe data.

Incorrectly relates results to the hypothesis. Incorrectly discusses relevance of results to psychological theory and/or population. Identifies the main difficulties experienced in conducting the investigation.

E

Does not meet the requirements of a D grade and/or has completed insufficient assessment tasks to be assigned a higher grade.