

Health Psychology Syllabus

Many health issues are the result of lifestyle, either imposed on individuals or chosen by individuals, and often despite well-publicized risks. An understanding of health psychology is important in the development of prevention strategies and fosters a more positive perception of healthy choices.

Each of these topics should use the learning from the biological, cognitive and sociocultural approaches to behaviour where appropriate. In addition, students should have the opportunity to explore the different approaches taken in the research and should be made aware of the ethical considerations and the sensitivity required in a discussion of this subject.

It is important for health psychologists to take into account differences in attitudes towards health-related behaviour as well as variations in the incidence of health problems when trying to help individuals or consider ways to promote health. In addition, factors such as lifestyle and social context may influence health and illness, making one of the goals of health psychology to promote an understanding of behaviour that leads to a healthier lifestyle.

In discussing the issues students may look at several health-related phenomena or focus on a single health issue. Both are acceptable approaches to the content and have the same potential to score well in assessment. The topics being studied in this option should come from one or more of the following:

- stress
- addiction
- obesity
- chronic pain
- sexual health.

Determinants of health

- Biopsychosocial model of health and well-being
- Dispositional factors and health beliefs
- Risk and protective factors

Health problems

- Explanations of health problem(s)
- Prevalence rates of health problem(s)

Promoting health

- Health promotion
- Effectiveness of health promotion programmes