NORGES IDRETTSHØGSKOLE

ASSESSOR'S GUIDE – MA531 Psychology of Exercise and Physical Activity

General information

Course information	This course examines psychological antecedents, experiences and outcomes of exercise and physical activity.
Course code	MA531
Course name	Psychology of Exercise and Physical Activity
Academic year and semester	Autumn 2026
Credits	10 ECTS
Course responsible	Elin Kolle
Type of examination	Individual one week written home examination. Students choose one of two case assignments. Graded A–F.

Documents available to assessors:

- the examination questions reproduced in Appendix A
- the course description at https://www.nih.no/english/studies/courses/2026/autumn/ma531.html
- the student guidelines reproduced in Appendix B
- The current reading list and teaching plan are available in the course Canvas room.

Learning outcomes

The examination assesses all four course learning outcomes:

1. Critically reflect on potential antecedents, barriers and outcomes of exercise and physical activity.
2. Explain and apply models of behaviour change in relation to exercise and physical activity behaviour.
3. Design and evaluate programmes to facilitate exercise and physical activity behaviour in specific subgroups.
4. Communicate scientific knowledge on exercise and physical activity.

Both case assignments require case specific analysis, comparison of theory, design and evaluation of an intervention and critical use of evidence.

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Syllabus/subject matter

The relevant course literature depends partly on the selected case and theories. Students must use at least six sources from the course reading list and at least three additional, self-selected peer reviewed articles, of which at least two are empirical original studies. The reading list in the course room is the authoritative list for identifying course sources. Other suitable research may be used in addition.

Teaching

The course is taught as an intensive course over two teaching weeks, with lectures and independent work, followed by a one week individual home examination. The lecture plan and teaching materials are available in the course Canvas room. Both assignments require application of material taught in the course to a specific case; they do not require a single predetermined theoretical model or intervention.

Summary/suggested solutions/assessment criteria

Criterion	Suggested weight	Excellent performance	Adequate performance	Insufficient performance
Case analysis	20%	Prioritises relevant barriers, resources and context; distinguishes case facts from assumptions; reflects critically.	Identifies relevant factors and links most to the case.	Generic description or major gaps in interpreting the case.
Theory	25%	Accurately applies and compares at least two models; explains case specific strengths and limitations and justifies choices.	Applies two relevant models with some comparison and justification.	Mostly describes or misapplies theories; comparison absent or seriously weak.
Intervention and evaluation	25%	Coherent, feasible and ethically considered design; components linked to mechanisms and evidence; choices and evaluation justified.	Relevant proposal and plausible evaluation; some elements underdeveloped.	Generic or unsupported proposal; little attention to feasibility or evaluation.
Evidence and appraisal	20%	Integrates relevant sources, appraises quality and uncertainty and draws case specific implications for transferability.	Uses relevant sources and discusses some limitations.	Lists evidence without analysis; key assertions unsupported or unreliable.
Communication and academic practice	10%	Clear, focused argument; accurate citations and transparent AI statement.	Understandable and sufficiently documented, with minor weaknesses.	Hard to follow or recurrent citation/source errors; academic concerns need appropriate handling.

Assess both assignments using the same five criteria: case analysis (suggested weight 20%), application and comparison of theory (25%), intervention and evaluation (25%), evidence and critical appraisal (20%), and scientific communication and academic practice (10%). These weights guide the

discussion between assessors; the final grade is based on holistic academic judgement and current grade descriptions.

A strong answer makes a coherent, explicit chain from the facts and uncertainties of the case through theoretical mechanisms and empirical evidence to feasible intervention components and a credible evaluation. It justifies central choices and exclusions and discusses limitations and transferability. A merely descriptive account of theories or a series of literature summaries does not fully answer the assignment.

Case analysis: Identify and prioritise relevant psychological, social and practical factors. Separate information stated in the case from assumptions and indicate what further information is needed. Theory: Apply and compare at least two relevant theories or models from the course; explain their strengths and limitations for this particular case. More theories do not automatically improve the answer.

Intervention and evaluation: Explain the proposed components, their intended mechanisms, who would deliver or support them, feasibility, ethics and relevant process and outcome measures. Evidence: Integrate literature in the argument, appraise quality and uncertainty, and assess whether findings transfer to the person or group and setting. Communication: Assess clarity, structure, accurate terminology, traceable references and the AI use statement.

For Assignment 1, relevant issues may include Kari's previous interests, balance concerns, confidence, cognitive changes, autonomy, social preferences and the spouse's role. The student should tailor the proposed support to mild dementia without assuming incapacity. Evaluation may consider participation, experience and implementation using suitable measures. Do not demand one specific clinical prescription.

For Assignment 2, relevant issues may include initiation versus maintenance, competence, motivation, belonging, health and appearance goals, and barriers in a fitness club. The student should distinguish internal club observations from causal research evidence, propose a realistic first year strategy, and evaluate participation, retention and possible mechanisms. Reflection on who the club reaches is relevant.

Use of AI-tools

Students must include an AI Declaration as a separate appendix after the reference list, starting on a new page. The declaration must state which AI tools they used and for what purposes, and briefly describe their experience of using them. Students who did not use AI tools should state this. The declaration does not count towards the indicative word count.

Assessors should evaluate the submitted work against the academic assessment criteria. The use or non-use of AI tools should not in itself affect the grade. Students remain responsible for the accuracy of their claims, interpretations and references.

Length and presentation

Approximately 3,500 words for the main text is guidance. The front page, abstract, contents page if used, reference list and AI use statement are excluded from this indicative count. Use Times New Roman 12 pt, double line spacing and margins of approximately 2.5 cm. You may write in English or Norwegian.

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Appendix A

MA531 Psychology of Exercise and Physical Activity

Information

- Start of exam: Monday October 12. 2026
- Final deadline: Monday October 19. 2026
- The submission must be in pdf format

- Exam results will be available within three weeks from the exam date

Declaration of AI Use

In your exam submission, you must state which AI tools you have used and for what purposes. According to APA-7 (guidelines on AI-generated text), you should briefly describe if and how you have used such tools. The AI Declaration should provide a short description of your use of AI tools and your experiences with them. Place it as an appendix after the reference list, starting on a new page. Students who did not use AI tools should state this. It does not count towards the total length of the assignment.

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Individual home examination 2026

Choose and answer one of the two assignments below. Address all four parts of your chosen assignment. Use the case information as a starting point and make any additional assumptions explicit. Support your analysis, proposed intervention and critical discussion with relevant research. The common literature and AI requirements at the end apply to both assignments.

Assignment 1 Physical activity for a person with mild dementia

Case

Kari is 78 years old and has recently been diagnosed with mild dementia. She lives at home with her spouse. Previously active, she has become substantially less active over the past year. She says that she knows exercise is important but cannot get started. Her spouse often tries to encourage her, but she frequently declines. Kari remains independent in most daily activities, although she has become less confident in her balance and no longer walks alone. She used to enjoy walking and gardening, has never been particularly interested in organised exercise, and values social contact but dislikes large groups. You have been asked to propose an evidence-based intervention to increase her participation in physical activity. It may be individually tailored or part of a municipal service for people with cognitive impairment or mild dementia.

Part 1 Analysis of the case

Analyse the factors that may explain Kari's reduced physical activity and identify resources, preferences and practical circumstances that could support participation. Distinguish what is stated in the case from what would need further assessment.

Part 2 Application and comparison of theory

Select and apply at least two relevant psychological theories or models covered in the course. Compare how they help explain Kari's situation and guide intervention design. Discuss their strengths and limitations when applied to physical activity in a person with mild dementia and justify your chosen theoretical approach.

Part 3 Development of an intervention

Develop a research informed and feasible intervention. Describe its key components, who would deliver or support them, and how they are expected to influence physical activity. Justify important choices and exclusions. Explain how you would evaluate implementation and outcomes.

Part 4 Critical discussion

Assess the quality and limitations of the research supporting your analysis and intervention, including its transferability to Kari and the proposed setting. Discuss practical challenges and ethical issues, including autonomy and the spouse's role.

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Assignment 2 Sustained exercise participation among new fitness club members

Case

A large fitness club chain in Norway has observed that many new members stop exercising or substantially reduce their participation during their first membership year. Internal data show that most join to improve their health or fitness or to pursue weight related goals. Relatively few attend group classes or use personal training. The chain wants to increase regular exercise participation throughout the first year among new adult members aged 18–60 who were previously inactive or had low activity levels. As a health and exercise professional, you have been asked to analyse the problem and develop an intervention that the chain could implement.

Part 1 Analysis of the case

Analyse relevant factors that may contribute to poor long term exercise adherence in this target group. Consider motivation, social support, self efficacy and other factors relevant to the setting. Discuss why health and appearance related reasons for joining may not lead to sustained participation. Distinguish the case information from assumptions that require further assessment.

Part 2 Application and comparison of theory

Select and apply at least two relevant psychological theories or models covered in the course. Compare their explanations of exercise behaviour in this setting, discuss their strengths and limitations, and justify the theory or combination of theories used to guide your intervention.

Part 3 Development of an intervention

Develop a research informed and feasible intervention for new members during their first membership year. Describe its key components, how they are expected to influence exercise behaviour, and how the club could implement them. Justify important choices and exclusions. Explain how you would evaluate implementation and outcomes.

Part 4 Critical discussion

Assess the quality and limitations of the research supporting your analysis and intervention, including transferability to this target group and setting. Discuss practical challenges and ethical issues. Consider the potential and limitations of fitness clubs as settings for promoting physical activity in the population.

Common requirements for both assignments

Use at least six sources from the course reading list and at least three additional, self-selected, peer reviewed research articles relevant to your chosen case and question. At least two of the additional articles must be empirical original studies.

Use the literature actively to support your analysis, decisions and discussion. Briefly explain why your additional articles are relevant and critically assess the quality, limitations and transferability of the evidence. You are responsible for reading and checking every source and for ensuring that references exist, are accurately represented and support the claims for which they are cited.

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Appendix B

MA531 Guidelines for the one-week individual home examination

Autumn 2026

The examination questions will be available in WISEflow. Choose ONE of the two case assignments and answer all four parts of that assignment. Your response should analyse the case, apply and compare relevant psychological theory, propose and evaluate a research informed intervention, and critically discuss the evidence and practical implications. The four parts may be used as section headings; connect them in one coherent argument.

Suggested structure

- Front page identifying the number and title of your chosen assignment (Assignment 1 or Assignment 2).
- Abstract of no more than 100 words.
- Brief introduction stating the focus of your response and, where relevant, any necessary assumptions beyond the case information.
- Case analysis: relevant factors, barriers, resources and information that would need further assessment.
- Theory: application and comparison of at least two relevant psychological theories or models covered in the course.
- Intervention and evaluation: key components, theoretical mechanisms, evidence, feasibility, justified choices and exclusions, and appropriate process and outcome measures.
- Critical discussion: limitations of theories and research, transferability, practical and ethical issues, and implications for the chosen setting.
- Conclusion that answers the assignment without introducing new evidence.
- Full reference list in APA 7 style, followed by the AI Declaration as a separate appendix on a new page.

Length and presentation

Approximately 3,500 words for the main text is guidance. The front page, abstract, contents page if used, reference list and AI use statement are excluded from this indicative count. Use Times New Roman 12 pt, double line spacing and margins of approximately 2.5 cm. You may write in English or Norwegian.

Sources and use of evidence

Use at least six sources from the course reading list and at least three additional, self-selected, peer reviewed research articles that are relevant to your case and question. At least two of the additional articles must be empirical original studies. Course reading list sources may include relevant articles and book chapters; lecture slides may support orientation but do not replace the required sources.

Use sources to substantiate your analysis, theoretical choices, proposed intervention and critical discussion. Briefly explain why the additional articles are relevant and assess important limitations

and transferability to the target person or group and setting. Verify every reference and ensure that each cited source supports the claim made. A list of article summaries alone does not answer the assignment.

Use of AI tools

In your exam submission, you must state which AI tools you have used and for what purposes. According to APA-7 (guidelines on AI-generated text), you should briefly describe if and how you have used such tools. The AI Declaration should provide a short description of your use of AI tools and your experiences with them. Place it as an appendix after the reference list, starting on a new page. Students who did not use AI tools should state this. It does not count towards the total length of the assignment.

You remain responsible for the complete submission, including all interpretations, academic judgements, claims and references. Check the applicable NIH rules and the official exam information for any additional requirements.

What the assessors will consider

The same criteria apply to both assignments: case specific analysis; accurate application and comparison of theory; a justified, feasible intervention and evaluation; critical use of research; and clear scientific communication. The quality of your reasoning and the link between the case, theory, evidence and intervention matter more than the number of concepts mentioned.