

Psychology

Course Type: A Level

Exam Board: AQA

Course Entry Requirements: Standard: Five GCSE subjects at a minimum grade 4 or the equivalent including Maths and English, including a minimum Grade 5 in Science.

Why Study Psychology?

Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and behaviour. It is a very good choice for those who are interested in people and their motivation behind different behaviours. Students with an inquisitive mind enjoy the challenge of this new and unfamiliar subject.

Once you begin to study psychology, your outlook on almost everything changes. Psychology students will start to see Psychology in action everywhere they look. They will learn about theories which will, ultimately, give them a valuable insight into their own lives. Psychology A Level provides a good grounding in the subject and gives an overview into what it might be like to be a professional Psychologist in a number of different fields.

AQA A Level Course Content

Paper 1 Introductory Topics in Psychology

Section A) Social Influence: Conformity - Why do we have a tendency to do what 'the group' does? Does everyone conform? How does personality type affect conformity? Obedience – Why do we obey others? Some people obey orders that will harm others (e.g. Nazis during WWII), is that because they are evil? Social Change - How does a minority view become a majority view? Why did society change its views on women voting, gay marriage etc.?

Section B) Memory: The nature of memory - What is memory? How do we remember things? Why do we forget things? What is life like for people living with amnesia? How can we improve our memory? Eye Witness Testimony - There are many innocent people in prison, around the world, who have been found guilty in court due to false eye witness testimony. As a result, a huge body of psychological research into false memory has led to the police using improved interviewing techniques. Police forces in the UK and USA are often trained in how to use the 'Cognitive Interview'.

Section C) Attachment (bonding): Why is there a need for us to attach to people? How do we make these attachments? Is there a crucial time at which we must bond during infancy? How similar is animal attachment to human attachment? What are the consequences of being deprived of good quality attachment in infancy?

Section D) Psychopathology: How can we tell whether behaviours are abnormal or not? What are the psychological explanations of phobia, depression and OCD? What is it like to live your life with either of these mental disorders? How do psychologists treat the above mental disorders and how successful are such treatments?

Paper 2 Psychology in Context

Section A) Approaches in Psychology: Psychologists study from different perspectives. We study the work of psychologists working under the following approaches: Behaviourism, Social Learning, Cognitive Psychology, Biological, Freudian and Humanistic.

Section B Biopsychology: What are the main biological causes behind things like fight and flight? What role does the central nervous system play in controlling particular behaviours? Do different parts of our brains have certain functions? If someone suffers brain damage does their brain recover in any way? How do our biological rhythms affect us?

Section C) Research Methods: How do psychologists conduct their research? What are the scientific processes involved? How do psychologists collect and analyse data? Students conduct as much of their own psychological research as possible.

Paper 3 Issues and Options in Psychology

Section A) Issues and Debates in Psychology - How much of our behaviour is due to nature and how much is down to nurture? What is free will? How much of our behaviour is already determined?

Section B) Gender- What effect does sex-role stereotyping have on gender identity? What is androgyny? What role do chromosomes and hormones play? How do people live with gender identity disorder and how does it occur?

Section C) Schizophrenia - What are the symptoms? How is it defined, diagnosed and treated? Are there different types of schizophrenia? What is it like to be schizophrenic? What happens if someone is misdiagnosed?

Section D) Forensic Psychology - How are offenders profiled? Is there a genetic component to criminality? What are the psychological reasons for people committing crimes? How does society deal with criminal behaviour? Is It possible to rehabilitate offenders?

Assessment is by Examination.