



A Level Psychology – U6

Curriculum Intent

Psychology is the fascinating science of the human mind and behaviour drawing upon a number of disciplines and approaches to explore why people think and behave the way they do. Based on the same scientific principles as the physical sciences, this subject offers many opportunities to understand and apply principles of good research design. Building on GCSE mathematics and science, the research methodology and mathematical skills element accounts for approximately 30% of the total marks at A-Level in particular – these skills are also required for the IB students’ Internal Assessments (coursework).

The curriculum is designed to provide students with a sound understanding of the psychological approaches and research methods that underpin Psychology in a way that covers the content for the examination but also relates to real-life applications and encourages critical thinking. The aim is to provide a rigorous, challenging, relevant and enjoyable course which will develop knowledge, skills and critical thinking as well as providing an effective skills bridge to Higher Education and signposting career next steps for the students.

Within the courses, options are chosen to provide the widest range of synoptic links both within each separate course, but also to provide some opportunities to crossover between them – for example, relationships and abnormality are chosen options for both A-Level and IB which allows teachers to cross-pollinate ideas, resources and studies from the two courses.

“It is not primarily our physical selves that limit us, but rather our mindset about our physical limits” – Ellen J. Langer

Students will learn:

The course uses a flipped learning approach to lesson preparation, with ‘structure strips’ issued to A-Level students to help guide the process. We recommend the use of Cornell notes which students can then consolidated in class and connect the concepts to the bigger picture. This allows faster progress through the core material and allows time for higher-level skills development in class. Lessons are then used mainly to develop application and evaluation/critical thinking skills and to make a start on examination questions.

Psychology is the science of mind and behaviour and the course is based on the same underpinning principles as the physical sciences. Approximately 30% of the course is research methods, mathematical skills and inferential statistical testing. Students study six main psychological approaches -biological, cognitive, behaviourist, social learning, psychodynamic and humanistic along with compulsory and choice modules, all examined at the end of the two-year linear course with three two-hour examinations.

In the Upper Sixth the components that make up Paper 2 and 3 will be studied alongside all relevant theories and integrated research methods.

Paper 2

Approaches (covered in Year 1)
Biopsychology

Paper 3

Relationships option
Addiction option
Schizophrenia option
Issues & Debates in Psychology

Key Concepts:

Biopsychology

A deeper investigation into the role of biology on our behaviour.

Relationships

Investigating the formation of relationships, theories of relationships and newer topics such as virtual and parasocial relationships.

Addiction

Exploring risk factors in addiction, theories of addiction, and treatments for addiction.

Schizophrenia

Exploring the diagnosis of schizophrenia, theories of schizophrenia and treatments for schizophrenia

Issues & Debates

- Nature-nurture
- Reductionism-Holism
- Determinism-Free will
- Ideographic-Nomothetic approaches
- Gender Bias
- Culture Bias
- Ethical implications of research and socially sensitive research

Research Methods

This is taught throughout the course as an integral part of each module (with the exception of the issues & debates section).

How will we assess impact?

Our teaching will encourage the development and refinement of key evaluative and analytical skills; acquiring knowledge, developing an argument, extended writing and evaluating sources

Students will be assessed predominately through timed essay based assessments, linear knowledge tests, classroom discussion and end of year PPEs.



How can learning be enriched at home?

AQA Support workbooks – each topic is covered in this series.

General reference Gross, R. (2020) Psychology: The science of mind and behaviour (8th edn.). London: Hodder Education.

Porter, A. (2018) A degree in a book: Psychology - Everything you need to know to master the subject -in one book.

There are many free online MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) relating to psychology. So many to choose from including: Future Learn-free access to most courses for a limited time Coursera EdXOpen Learn from the Open University

What does excellence look like?

Confidently acquire knowledge

Have the ability to frame big questions about theories, understanding key terms, researching studies and theories, understanding psychological approaches to explaining behaviour, summarising topic content.

Confidently explain theory and reality: being able to explain how theories and studies apply to real life behaviour; accepting that there may be multiple explanations for a given behaviour by applying the different psychological approaches.

Identifying and developing a line of argument: being able to recognise and explain differing perspectives in psychology, comparing and contrasting the value of different theories and studies. Some may have the confidence to challenge perspectives.

Evaluating evidence: being able to consider reliability, validity and credibility of sources as a matter of course. To evaluate strengths and limitations of research studies and theories, understanding how bias may be present, and how psychologists work within the scientific paradigm.

Refining essay writing skills: being able to respond to an issue raised within a question, plan and produce a well-supported and well-argued response to exam style questions with an appropriate balance of description, application and evaluation.

International Opportunities

Internationalism

- Community lectures on international themes
- International Day across the school
- Primary research using student cultural diversity

Diversity within the curriculum

- Ethnocentric theoretical analysis
- Afrocentrism v Eurocentrism
- International research methods

Student impact

Students studying psychology will be equipped to answer all examination questions to the best of their ability at the end of a two-year course which will provide them with a good understanding of the key issues and concepts as well as valuable learning skills such as note-taking, time management, and higher-order application and critical thinking.

They will enjoy studying a challenging and interesting subject with relevance to their own lives and some may feel this is the right next step for them at University or that the course provides useful support for a pathway into a career or further training



“Joy, rather than happiness, is the goal of life, for joy is the emotion which accompanies our fulfilling our natures as human beings. It is based on the experience of one's identity as a being of worth and dignity.”

Rollo May