



Curriculum Overview – Psychology

Psychology will be a new subject for the majority of individuals joining us in year 12. Over the course of the first few months we want students to have dispelled the myths associated with the subject and have a good understanding of the basics of the scientific discipline by the end of the year. We start by taking a journey into psychology's past to begin building the foundations that underpin current psychological theory. This leads on to the discovery of new topics such as memory, social influence and mental illness.

Those students choosing to study psychology at A level follow the AQA specification which is broken down into introductory topics, psychology in context and issues in psychology. At the outset of the course we ask difficult questions, for example “what is more important in determining behaviour: nature or nurture?” The topics that follow provide the opportunity to answer such questions in detail. The teaching is structured to ensure that previous topics are constantly revisited and applied to novel contexts in order to accelerate the progress of student learning and interest. Some of psychology's content overlaps with subjects such as biology and maths in the sense that we explore human behaviour on a biochemical, genetic and neural basis along with statistical analysis of data.

Studying psychology allows students to develop a real world understanding of human behaviour and will provide practical life skills such as critical thinking, respect of others and an ability to learn from their mistakes. The sequencing of lessons in Psychology helps students to remember the key content by actively teaching effective revision techniques, revisiting core skills such as evaluation and reapplying previously learnt content to new scenarios. We go beyond the exam syllabus in Psychology by using the most up to date, relevant research and current societal events to enhance understanding and develop skills valued by higher education including critical analysis, independent thinking and research. In doing so, students begin to recognise how broad the discipline is and how wide its application stretches.

Key Stage 5 – A Level

Exam board: AQA

Year 12	Year 13
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Social Influence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of conformity. • Explanations for conformity. • Factors affecting conformity as investigated by <u>Asch</u>. Conforming to social roles as investigated by <u>Zimbardo</u>. Explanations for obedience. • Factors affecting obedience as investigated by <u>Milgram</u>. Explanations of resistance to social influence. • Minority influence. • The role of social influence in social change 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Biopsychology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The divisions of the nervous system. • The structure and function of sensory, relay and motor neurons. • The process of synaptic transmission. • The function of the endocrine system. • The fight or flight response. • Localisation in the brain and hemispheric lateralisation. • Ways of studying the brain, • Biological rhythms. • Effects of endogenous pacemakers and exogenous zeitgebers on the sleep/wake cycle.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Attachment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver-infant interaction in humans including stages of attachment identified by <u>Schaffer</u>. • Animal studies of attachment. • Explanations of attachment including <u>Bowlby's</u> monotropic theory. • <u>Ainsworth's</u> 'Strange Situation'. • <u>Bowlby's</u> theory of maternal deprivation. • The influence of early attachment on childhood and adult relationships. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Aggression</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neural and hormonal mechanisms including the limbic system, serotonin and testosterone. • Genetic factors including the MAOA gene. • Ethological explanation including innate releasing mechanisms and fixed action patterns. • Evolutionary explanations including sexual jealousy. • Social psychological explanations including social learning theory, deindividuation and the frustration-aggression hypothesis. • Institutional aggression.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Memory</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The multi-store model of memory including coding, capacity and duration. • Types of long-term memory including episodic, semantic and procedural. • The working memory model. • Explanations for forgetting including proactive and retroactive interference. • Factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony including misleading information and anxiety. • Improving the accuracy of eyewitness testimony. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medial influences including the effects of computer games. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Gender</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex and gender: Sex-role stereotypes / Androgyny • The role of chromosomes and hormones in sex and gender: Testosterone, oestrogen & oxytocin • Atypical sex chromosome patterns: Klinefelter’s syndrome / Turner’s syndrome. • Cognitive explanations of gender development • Psychodynamic explanation of gender development • Social learning theory as applied to gender development • Atypical gender development: Gender Dysphoria
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Approaches</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Learning approach including classical and operant conditioning. • The cognitive approach including schemas. • The biological approach including genetics, biological structures and neurochemistry, • The psychodynamic approach including the unconscious mind, structure of personality and defence mechanisms. • Humanistic psychology including freewill and self –actualisation. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Schizophrenia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classification of schizophrenia including positive and negative symptoms along with reliability and validity of diagnosis. • Biological explanations including genetics, dopamine hypothesis and neural correlates. • Psychological explanations including family dysfunction and dysfunctional thought processing. • Biological treatments including drug therapy. • Psychological treatments including CBT, family therapy and token economies. • The importance of interactionist approaches including diathesis-stress model.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Psychopathology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of abnormality • Behavioural, emotional and cognitive characteristics of phobias, depression and OCD. • Behavioural approach to explaining and treating phobias. • The cognitive approach to explaining and treating depression. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Issues & Debates</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender and culture in psychology – universality and bias. • Free will and determinism including hard, soft, biological, environmental and psychic determinism. • The scientific emphasis on causal explanations. • The nature-nurture debate including the interactionist approach.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The biological approach to explaining and treating OCD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holism and reductionism including levels of explanation, biological and environmental reductionism. • Idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation. • Ethical implications of research studies and theories in relation to social sensitivity.
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Research Methods

This topic spans the two years.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of experiment • Types of observation • Self-report techniques • Correlations • Content analysis • Case studies • Aims, hypotheses, variables • Sampling Techniques • Pilot studies • Experimental designs • Observational designs • Questionnaire construction. • Variable control • Demand characteristics • Ethical considerations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of peer review in the scientific process. • The implications of psychological research on the economy. • Reliability across all methods of investigation. • Types of validity across all methods of investigation. • Features of science including objectivity and the empirical method. • Reporting psychological investigations. • Qualitative and quantitative data collection. • Primary and secondary data including meta-analysis. • Descriptive statistics • Presentation of quantitative data. • Correlation coefficients. • Levels of measurement • Statistical testing • Probability and significance. • Factors affecting the choice of statistical tests. |
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