

Psychology

AQA A-level Psychology (7182)

Head of Department: Mrs Emily Britton

Introduction

Psychology is the scientific study of the human mind and behaviour. It is a dynamic and fascinating discipline which students enjoy because it provides them with an opportunity to engage with stimulating and personally relevant topics and issues. Psychologists conduct scientific research to find out what motivates, challenges or changes us. They use this understanding to predict behaviour, tackle personal and social problems in society and improve quality of life.

Psychology is an interesting and fun subject to study as it can help students understand themselves and those around them. Lessons are filled with fun activities and experiments as well as discussions about a wide range of topics. We explore vital questions such as: why are some people more likely to commit violent crime?; why do we forget?; why do some people suffer with mental disorders e.g. depression, schizophrenia, phobias?; and why do some people conform to group pressure even when they don't want to? We also explore some big issues and debates such as nature vs nurture, free will vs determinism, and the ethical implications of scientific research. Pupils are encouraged to question research, rather than accepting theories at face value, so they quickly develop analytical and critical thinking skills which provide valuable cross-curricular benefits.

Subject Requirements

Psychology is an engaging subject, but as a content-heavy and rigorously assessed A-level, it requires consistent effort, revision, and commitment. Additionally, psychology students need to write coherently, structure an evidence-based argument, and have a strong grasp of scientific and mathematical concepts. Therefore, students will need at least a Grade 7 in Science, Maths, and English to study Psychology. Those who do not meet these minimum requirements in all 3 subjects may still be considered on an individual basis, following a meeting with the Head of Psychology, Mrs Britton.

Course Outline

AQA A-level Psychology is assessed based on three papers, sat at the end of the Upper Sixth. There are a variety of types of question, including multiple choice, short-answer, application, and mini essays. There is no coursework element, although there is opportunity to conduct simple research studies and trial data collection techniques throughout the course. As Psychology is a science, research methods comprises 25 – 30% of the total mark, with 10% of marks being awarded for maths-based questions.

Paper 1 topics:

- *Social influence* – conformity, obedience to authority, resistance to social influence and minority influence.
- *Memory* – models of memory, explanations for forgetting, factors affecting the accuracy of eye-witness testimony and how to improve eyewitness testimony in real world criminal proceedings.
- *Attachment* – animal studies of attachment, explanations of why we attach, the types of attachment between caregiver and infant and the importance of our early attachments on later relationships, including issues surrounding Romanian orphanages.
- *Clinical psychology and mental health* – definitions in the field of mental health and the symptoms, causes and treatments of phobias, depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Paper 2 topics:

- *Approaches in psychology* – the different theoretical perspectives of explaining behaviour including the learning approach, the cognitive approach, the biological approach including cognitive neuroscience, the psychodynamic approach and the humanistic approach.
- *Biopsychology* – the workings of our central and peripheral nervous systems, our endocrine system and our brain and how these physiological processes and structures affect behaviour.
- *Research methods* – knowledge and understanding of a range of research methods, the scientific process, as well as data handling and analysis. There is an applied maths element to this topic.

Paper 3 topics:

- *Issues and debates in psychology* – free will vs. determinism; holism vs. reductionism; and nature vs. nurture. Students also consider ethical and cultural issues in research and theories, including reference to social sensitivity, gender and cultural bias.
- *Relationships* – factors affecting attraction and theories of romantic relationships and relationship breakdown. Students will also explore virtual relationships and parasocial relationships.
- *Schizophrenia* – symptoms of schizophrenia as well as biological and psychological explanations and treatments of the disorder. Students will also explore the interactionist approach and methods of managing schizophrenia.
- *Aggression* – biological and social causes of aggression as well as the role of computer games and the media in aggression. Students will also explore aggression in a prison setting.

Higher Education and Careers

Psychology students learn to understand people and what motivates them, which is relevant to all aspects of society. As a result, the A-level opens the doors for students to pursue a wide range of undergraduate degrees and careers. It is highly regarded by universities and is considered a science/maths discipline.

Psychology A-level candidates move on to all sorts of different areas. Some choose to study Psychology at undergraduate level and then continue within their chosen specialism at master's level to qualify as a chartered psychologist. Alternatively, the subject acts as a great springboard for pupils who wish to pursue careers in Economics, Medicine, Neuroscience, Marketing, Human Resources, Law, Sports and Exercise Science and Business, to name just a few.

What should I study alongside Psychology?

Due to its multidisciplinary approach, Psychology combines well with all A-level subjects. Content specifically overlaps with Maths, Biology, Geography, PE and RS, but those who enjoy science-based subjects and those who enjoy the arts and humanities are equally well suited to the subject as it combines a unique blend of scientific theories and processes, alongside a qualitative understanding of how culture and social interactions impact our behaviour.