



A Level Psychology Course Outline

Overview

If you have an enquiring mind, a good sense of humour and enjoy reading and debating then this is the subject for you. The study of psychology will enable you to gain fascinating insights into human and animal behaviour. Students will study behaviour from a variety of different theoretical perspectives. Psychologists use scientific methods, but their subject matter is human beings, so psychology is a subject that links the humanities and sciences. Students will design, conduct and report on their own experimental research investigations. A wide range of teaching and learning activities are utilised to study interesting topics such as attraction, conformity, child development, aggression and the media.

One of the goals of the A Level psychology course is to provide students with an opportunity to acquire a better understanding of how the human mind works and how this affects behaviour, by studying individuals, groups and societies. Students will be looking at classic and modern research conducted in the field of psychology. The study of psychology should engender an awareness of the variety and complexity of the human mind, human behaviour and human relationships.

Course Structure and Content

Year One:

Paper 1 – Introductory Topics to Psychology

The study of memory focuses on the use of memory in everyday life. The use of eye witness testimony in court cases is also examined. The study of attachments is concerned with the impact of early childhood relationships on later development. The impact of day care on the development of children's social skills is also debated using research evidence to support conclusions. Social influence looks at why we conform and obey and how obedience can lead people to commit acts that go against their conscience.

Paper 2 – Psychology in Context

Students will study a range of psychological explanations and consider their usefulness in explaining behaviours, including biopsychology. The causes of and treatments for abnormality are considered in individual differences. Depression and phobias are used as case studies of mental illness in the topic of abnormal behaviour. Students learn the methods used by psychologists and get to carry out their own experiments and investigations.

Year 2:

Paper 3 Issues and options in Psychology: Issues and Debates, Relationships, Schizophrenia and Aggression

This paper introduces students to a variety of interesting topics. The biological and psychological causes of aggression are considered and evaluated in the topic of aggression. In the topic of relationships students develop an understanding of the evolutionary basis of mate selection and reproductive behaviour. The causes of attraction are also explored. The study of the causes of schizophrenia and an evaluation of treatments for the various categories of this mental illness.

Assessment:

Assessment Objectives (AQA):

Having followed the course students should be able to:

- Develop knowledge and understanding of science and how science works;
- Recall and organise scientific knowledge;
- Analyse and evaluate scientific knowledge;
- Apply knowledge to everyday and unfamiliar situations;
- Use and evaluate scientific methodology.

All papers are externally assessed with the assessment set and marked by the examination board. Assessment in both year 1 and year 2 require students to take an integrated approach. In all papers, students will be expected to demonstrate a good understanding of research methods, showing that they can put into practice techniques of research. Students should also demonstrate awareness of gender, cultural and ethical issues involved in the research process.

Entry Qualifications

Students would be expected to have a good level of achievement in a range of GCSE courses including English, science, mathematics and humanities.

Career Prospects

Psychology is a suitable course for a wide range of careers that involve working with people as well as for progression on to higher education. It is a well-regarded academic course. Psychology prepares students for careers in a wide range of areas including mental health, education, sport, the media, law, marketing and finance, the police and criminology.