

Psychology

Advanced Level

General Information

Psychology is the scientific study of human behaviour and mental processes and is an increasingly popular subject choice. It appeals to those interested in the workings of the human mind and the manner in which individuals relate to each other in everyday situations

Examination details

Unit	Duration	% of Marks
1	2 hours 15 mins	33% of the A Level - Written paper
2	2 hours 15 mins	33% of the A Level - Written paper
3	2 hours 15 mins	33% of the A Level - Written paper

How is Psychology taught?

Teaching methods are varied and include teacher led discussion, individual tasks, group work, activities and question practice.

Useful / common subject combinations

Psychology combines well with most other subjects. It is a science subject which combines well with Maths, Physics, Chemistry and Biology. It is accepted by some medical courses as a third science A Level.

However, it also combines well with Humanities subjects as it appeals to students who are interested in people and their behaviour. Popular combinations are with Sociology, History, English, Philosophy, Geography and Business Studies.



Entry requirements

You should have at least a grade 4 in GCSE English but grade 5 is very strongly recommended. At least a grade 4 in GCSE Science is required. The course contains an element of Maths in order to understand research findings and when analysing data. The course contains biological explanations of human behaviour. In addition students need good writing skills for the essay component of the exams.

In this subject, particular skills and aptitudes will be required, many of which will be demonstrated by students' GCSE profiles.

Entry requirements might be changed in light of curriculum reform.

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Course content

Unit 1 – Psychology: Past to present

Five major psychological approaches form the basis of this unit: the Biological, Psychodynamic, Behaviourist, Cognitive and the newly emerging Positive approach.

This unit will require you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of each approach on the following areas:

- how the approach explains human behaviour
- classic pieces of research associated with the approach
- how each approach has been applied to a therapy

You will also develop evaluation skills and an ability to use your knowledge of each approach in the context of a contemporary debate such as the ethics of neuroscience, how conditioning techniques are used to control the behaviour of children and the reliability of eyewitness testimony.

Unit 2 - Psychology: Investigating behaviour

The core theme for this unit is psychological research. The unit is made up of two parts:

1) Principles of research:

This will involve understanding the ways in which psychologists conduct their research and you will gain an appreciation of the role of analysing data. You will have the opportunity to conduct a piece of research yourself and through this will learn about the ways in which psychologists analyse their data and draw conclusions. You will also be encouraged to appreciate the complex issues involved in conducting scientific research within psychology.

2) Novel scenarios:

The second aspect of this unit will allow you to apply your knowledge and understanding of research methods to research scenarios that you have not seen before.

Unit 3 – Psychology: Implications in the real world

The unit is made up of two parts and will enable you to develop your knowledge and evaluative skills that you will have gained from Units 1 & 2 and study more in-depth topics within the discipline of Psychology:

1) Applications:

You will learn how psychological theories and research have been applied to different types of behaviours such as criminal behaviour, schizophrenia and addictive behaviour.

2) Controversies:

You will explore controversial issues within psychology that have had an impact on society. These include: culture and gender bias within psychological theory and research and the ethical costs of conducting research with humans and animals.

Careers / HE information

An A Level in Psychology is a well-respected qualification as you acquire both literacy and numeracy skills. These flexible skills are useful in a range of career choices.

A Psychology degree is the required foundation for further study leading to careers in Clinical Psychology, Educational Psychology and Occupational Psychology. However, Psychology graduates often pursue careers in personnel work, the Health Service, social work, advertising, counselling and the prison service. Combination degrees can also lead to a wide range of careers.

Other relevant information

Psychology is a challenging and stimulating course which is very rewarding if you are prepared to work hard.