

PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is about people; about how their minds work, their behaviour and their experience. This course provides a general introduction to psychological theory and research across a wide area and it provides an awareness of the application and limitations of psychological knowledge.

The main areas of study are indicated below. Potential topics for study include; the ethics of research, memory, visual perception, attachment, cognitive development, schizophrenia, abnormal behaviour, social influence, sleep, dreams, intelligence, and many others.

Exam Board: AQA (A)

September 2008: New AS specifications (Assessment reduced from 3x1 hour examinations to 2 x 1.5 hour examinations.)

September 2009: New A2 specifications (Coursework removed, new assessment 1x1.5 hour examination and 1x2 hour examination)

Course Content and Assessment

Introducing AQA's new specification for Psychology A for AS and A Level. This new specification has been designed to:

- *The AS specification has 2 units:* encourage students to engage with the subject, by introducing new, contemporary topics
- generate practical classroom activities
- make conceptually demanding areas more accessible by setting them in context

AS outline

At AS, candidates will develop a broad knowledge and understanding of the core areas of psychology (social, cognitive, developmental, biological and individual differences) through a range of topics, chosen for their accessibility and popularity.

Unit 1: Cognitive Psychology, Developmental Psychology and Research Methods

Topic list

- Cognitive psychology, including memory and eyewitness testimony
- Developmental psychology, including early social development, attachment and the effects of day care
- Research methods, in the context of the topic areas.

Assessment

**Written Paper:
Weighting:**

**1 hour 30 minutes
50% of total AS
25% of total A Level marks**

Structured compulsory questions based on Cognitive Psychology, Developmental Psychology and Research Methods.

Questions include short answer, stimulus material and one 12 mark question requiring extended writing in which QWC will be assessed.

NB: QWC = Quality of Written Communication.

Unit 2: Biological Psychology, Social Psychology and Individual Differences

Topic list

- Biological psychology, including stress, factors affecting stress, coping with stress and managing stress
- Social psychology, including conformity, obedience and independent behaviour
- Individual differences, including definitions of abnormality, approaches and therapies.

Assessment

**Written Paper:
Weighting:**

**1 hour 30 minutes
50% of total AS
25% of total A Level marks**

Three compulsory structured questions; one based on Biological Psychology content, one based on Social Psychology content and one based on the Individual Differences content.

Questions include short answer, stimulus material and one 12 or more mark question requiring extended writing in which QWC will be assessed.

Unit 3: Topics in Psychology

Topic list

- Biological rhythms and sleep
- Perception
- Relationships

- Aggression
- Eating behaviour
- Gender
- Intelligence and learning
- Cognition and development.

Assessment

Written Paper:
Weighting:

1 hour 30 minutes
25% of total A Level marks

Three essay-style questions chosen from the eight topics.

QWC will be assessed in each essay.

Unit 4: Psychopathology, Psychology in Action and Research Methods

Topic list

- Biological approach, behaviourism, social learning theory, cognitive, psychodynamic and humanistic approaches
- Comparison of approaches
- Debates in psychology
- Methods in psychology, inferential statistics, issues in research

Assessment

Written Paper:
Weighting:

2 hours
25% of total A Level marks

Three sections:

Psychopathology:	One essay-style question chosen from three. QWC will be assessed in this essay.
Psychology in Action:	One question chosen from three.
Research Methods:	One compulsory structured question.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Because the syllabus requires a wide range of material to be covered in two and a half terms both to fulfil the AS exam requirement and to lay the foundations for the in-depth study that follows at A2, all students can expect the pace to be fast and furious. However, although this subject and its presentation is demanding, it is endlessly fascinating and potentially deeply rewarding whatever future direction you take.

Entry Requirements

Since Psychology requires both literacy and numeracy and is an experimental science-based subject, candidates ideally should have English and at least one Science subject GCSE at grade B and Mathematics at grade C.

Links with other subjects

Since Psychology covers a wide field of involvement, students enter with a wide range of interests. An ability to generate ideas, combined with a willingness to be open-minded and flexible in evaluating them is essential. Some students have greater strength in logical analysis and some on the philosophical side. For this reason, it has been found that Psychology makes a good combination with both Arts and Science subjects and the mixture of people from both disciplines creates an interesting class.

Prospects and Applications

Whilst Psychology is self-evidently of interest to people thinking of a career in the "caring" professions, e.g., Clinical Psychology, it is increasingly recognised as being important to anyone who works with other people. The choice of Psychology careers covers aspects in the working world such as Forensic Psychology, Educational Psychology, Occupational Psychology, Sports Psychology, Counselling, and various forms of psychotherapy. It often forms part of management courses and many degree courses in vocational subjects such as Marketing, Advertising, Business Studies and Sports Studies include psychological elements. Although it has been traditionally the case that A-level Psychology is not an entry requirement for a degree in the subject, (not least because it has not always been available!), the rapid growth in the number of candidates in recent years *may* cause the Universities to think again.

It is also the case that Psychology is now available in a variety of combined degree courses.

This course aims to show how Psychology can contribute to a wide range of issues confronting society as well as illuminating the student's own experience.

Head of Department: Mr A McCarthy