

PSYCHOLOGY

Course Code: Py

AQA Specification A level 7182, (AS level 7181)

Subject Leader: Mr C Black

Course entry requirements: Grade 7 at GCSE in one of the following: English, Biology, Chemistry, Physics or 77 in double award science, as well as grade 6 in Maths.

Psychology is defined as the scientific study of the mind and behaviour. Psychologists study how human beings feel, act and think. They try to find out how we learn, understand, remember and forget things. They are interested in how we make decisions, why we like some people and not others, what makes us succeed and fail. They study these problems by both observation and experiment, involving both people and animals.

This A level qualification offers an engaging and effective introduction to Psychology. Students will learn the fundamentals of the subject and develop skills valued by Higher Education (HE) and employers, including critical analysis, independent thinking and research. 10% of the overall assessment of Psychology will contain mathematical skills equivalent to Level 2 or above. 25–30% of the overall assessment will assess skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research methods. These skills will be developed through study of the course content and through ethical practical research activities, involving: designing and conducting research and analysing and interpreting data.

A level Psychology fits well with a wide variety of subject combinations, including Biology, Chemistry, English, Geography, History, Politics, P.E., Mathematics, Languages, Business and Economics.

The course is taught by subject specialists and lessons develop students' ability to discuss issues, debate, and carry out independent research into the more complex aspects of the subject. We have a student-led Psychology Society (PsychSoc) which meets to discuss current topics in Psychology and listen to guest lectures. An optional day trip to a London based conference is held in the Autumn term.

Career Opportunities

Many of our A level Psychology students go on to study the subject at degree level. Psychology has a wide variety of applications including clinical psychology, educational psychology, counselling, human resources, medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, teaching, sports studies, occupational psychology, criminology, careers in the police force and armed services.

Course Content

The new A level course will comprise three papers taken at the end of the two-year course. All assessment is by written exam and there is no coursework requirement. Each of the three (two hour) A level exams is worth a third of the total A level marks. Each exam comprises multiple choice, short answer and extended essay writing questions.

Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology

1. **Social psychology:** why we conform or obey and what causes independent behaviour.
2. **Memory:** How and why we remember, how and why we forget, factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony and the use of the cognitive interview to improve it.
3. **Attachment:** How and why we form our earliest relationships, animal studies of attachment, what happens when attachments are disrupted, the influence of early attachments on our later relationships.
4. **Psychopathology:** definitions of abnormality, understanding phobias, depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder; biological, cognitive and behavioural treatments for these disorders.

Paper 2: Psychology in Context

1. **Approaches In Psychology:** the basic assumptions of the behaviourist, cognitive, biological psychodynamic and humanistic approaches to understanding human behaviour and personality.
2. **Biopsychology:** understanding the divisions of the nervous system, the function of the endocrine system, the flight or fight response, the localisation of function in the brain, ways of studying the brain including scanning techniques, biological rhythms and sleep.
3. **Research methods:** features of science including objectivity and empirical methods and techniques, experimental design, validity and reliability, analysis of quantitative and qualitative data including observations and questionnaires, ethical issues in conducting psychological research, and the use of statistical methods including inferential tests.

Paper 3: Issues and Options in Psychology

1. **Issues and Debates:** Gender and culture in Psychology—universality and bias; free will and determinism—the scientific emphasis on causal explanations; the nature-nurture debate; holism and reductionism; idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation; ethical implications of psychological research including social sensitivity.

(option topics)

2. **Relationships:** What attracts us to someone, why some relationships work and others fail. Evolutionary explanations of partner preference. Theories of romantic relationships. Virtual relationships in social media; para-social relationships and attraction to celebrities.

3. **Schizophrenia:** classification and diagnosis of schizophrenia, clinical symptoms, biological and psychological explanations, and treatments for the disorder.

4. **Aggression:** biological, evolutionary, social and institutional explanations of aggression; Media influences on aggression, including the effects of computer games.

Equipment and Expenses: A level textbook—approximately £25. Psychology Review Journal-(optional) subscription-12.50 per year. Possible (optional) day trip to conference £ 35.

(Nov 2017)