

Psychology A Level

Course Description:

You might think of psychology as listening to people on a couch and to an extent you would be right. However there is much more to the subject...

Psychology is a science and is the study of brain and behaviour. Psychology uses scientific methods to describe and explain behaviour which, in turn, allows us to predict and modify behaviour. Psychology can be theoretical, looking at how the brain works and what drives our behaviour, including issues such as early childhood experiences and genetics.

Qualifications Required:

Minimum entry requirements apply, but you do not need any knowledge of psychology to undertake this course. However, the challenging nature of the course means that having a Grade 6 or above at GCSE Maths, English Language and Science is strongly advisable. The course involves large amounts of essay writing, analysis of data using statistics and interpretation of evidence. You will be assessed by examinations (100%); there is no coursework. An average GCSE points score of 42 or higher is also preferred.

Aims of the Course:

- To develop a strong, balanced knowledge-base on the subject of psychology
- To increase awareness of the skills, knowledge and understanding of scientific research methods
- To boost competence in a variety of practical, mathematical and problem-solving skills
- To appreciate how psychological research can contribute to the success of society
- To foster an interest in and enthusiasm for the subject, including further study and careers

Future Prospects:

Psychology will help you understand yourself and others in many ways. It may be the first step in a career in Psychology, such as clinical, counselling, educational, occupational, forensic, health or sports psychology, as well as teaching or research. Careers and further studies followed by past students include: nursing, child psychology, sports and exercise science, business studies, criminology, journalism, media studies, law, health and medical professions, including social work.

Student Feedback:

'It's an interesting course and you learn something new every lesson.'

'Psychology is challenging, but enjoyable.'

'Class discussions are interactive.'

'You have to remember a lot of facts about studies.'

'Be ready to apply your knowledge to different situations.'

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Features of the Course:

We follow the Edexcel specification at A level. By choosing Psychology, you will learn how to investigate and conduct your own research, how to use evidence to support your arguments, independent learning skills, how to put over your point of view fluently and how to work as part of a team. You will also learn how to use statistical tests.

A Level Units

The Foundations of Psychology – Paper 1

- **Social psychology** is about how people behave in groups and interact with one another. You will learn about obedience to those in authority, and why someone might not obey. You will also learn about prejudice, looking at factors that lead us to become prejudiced and to discriminate.
- **Cognitive psychology** is about how we process information, such as using language, using memory and problem solving. In your course the focus is on memory, including, for example, how we use short-term memory and how we form long-term memories. Understanding memory has many useful applications including how best to revise for an exam!
- **Biological psychology** is about the brain as well as genes, evolution and hormones. Your course will focus on aggression, looking at what parts of the brain relate to aggression and how hormones link to aggression.
- **Learning theories** involves looking at what leads to specific behaviours, including how we develop phobias, and how we respond to praise and react to punishment. Learning theories can help to generate ideas for treating phobias and you will look at those too.

Applications of Psychology – Paper 2

- **Clinical psychology** covers mental health issues and in your course you will look at schizophrenia (features, causes and treatments), and another disorder (depression, anorexia nervosa or OCD).
- **Criminological psychology** focuses on different aspects of crime including offender behaviour, jury decision-making, eye witness testimony and issues around interviewing suspects. Causes of crime are also considered as well as treatments of offenders.

Psychological Skills – Paper 3

- **Methodology** is the study of how psychological research is carried out. You will cover 6 methods including, experiments and case studies.
- **Review of studies** refers to reviewing all the 'classic' and 'contemporary' pieces of research you covered over the 2 years of your course.
- **Issues and debates** refers to core themes which are relevant across are found in psychology. For example, you will look at how the nature/nurture debate can be applied to each psychological approach.

Methods of Assessment:

Psychology is a linear course which means that you will take three, two-hour external examinations at the end of Year 13. Throughout the course you will complete regular internal assessments in class, to measure your progress towards your target grade.