

A Level Psychology

What the course covers

An interest in 'behaviour' is essential to the study of Psychology. The subject allows students to gain an understanding of both the physiological and the psychological aspects of our make-up and investigates both the brain functions and the social stimuli involved in behaviour. Lessons are both experiential and discursive but have a sound theoretical base. Students are expected to be proficient in essay construction and willing to contribute to class discussion. Focus is placed upon analysis, evaluation, interpretation, ethical issues and critical appreciation of psychological methodologies.

A 'Level Psychology requires the ability to be able to recall significant amounts of detailed information as well as writing long essays. As such it is a very challenging A' Level. You will take 3 x 2hr exams at the end of your two years of study. Please note psychology is classified by as a 'science' by Universities and the course has significant amounts of biological content. Furthermore the course includes mathematical skills which are assessed in all three papers.

Year 1: The course has two units:

Paper 1: Social Influence, Memory, Attachment, Psychopathology

1. Social Influence: conformity and obedience – explanations of these; social influence in everyday life – resisting pressures to conform or obey; implications of social influence research
2. Memory: models of memory; memory in everyday life including eye witness testimony; misleading information and the cognitive interview
3. Attachment: attachment in infancy, cultural variations, disruption of attachments: e.g. through separation, influence of early childhood experiences on adult relationships
4. Psychopathology: diagnosing mental health issues; symptoms, explanations and treatments for depression, OCD, and phobias

Paper 2: Approaches, Biopsychology and Research Methods

1. Approaches: origins of psychology Wundt, assumption of learning theory, biological and cognitive
2. Biopsychology: brain anatomy, the nervous system, neurons, synaptic transmission, brain scanning techniques, biological rhythms
3. Research Methods: methods & techniques of study in psychology, experimental and non-experimental; investigation design; data analysis and presentation, statistical analysis

Year 2: ALL of above year 1 topics plus the following

Paper 3: Issues and Debates, Stress, Gender, Addiction

1. Issues and debates: gender and culture in psychology, free will and determinism, the nature-nurture debate: holism and reductionism: levels of explanation in psychology, ethics and social sensitivity, nomothetic and idiographic approaches
2. Stress: the physiology of stress, sources of stress, measuring stress, individual differences in stress, managing and coping, drug therapy
3. Gender: sex, gender and androgyny, role of chromosomes and hormones, atypical sex chromosome patterns, cognitive, social learning and psychodynamic explanations of gender, influence of culture and media on gender roles, gender identity disorder
4. Addiction: describing addiction: dependence, tolerance and withdrawal, risk factors: genes, stress, personality, family influences and peers, explanations for nicotine and gambling addiction: brain neurochemistry, learning and cognitive theory, reducing addiction: drug therapy; behavioural interventions and cognitive behaviour therapy, behavioural change: the theory of planned behaviour and Prochaska's six-stage model of behaviour change

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What students can do with this course

Psychology provides opportunities for those looking to progress to degree level in a number of fields, and can be studied as Experimental Psychology at Oxford or as part of the Social and Political Sciences at Cambridge. Psychology has uses across many fields and is widely used in the workplace. It allows a development of core skills, building arguments, reading and understanding the work of others. All these skills are applicable in employment and at University across courses. Psychology is a particularly useful subject for those wishing to go into clinical work like health and social care services, medicine, research, teaching and human resources. It is essential for clinical psychology, educational psychology and counseling-related fields. Other specialist fields include sports and criminal psychology.

How this course is assessed

Three separate exams each lasting 2 hours out of a total of 96 marks (carrying 33.3% marks each)

- There is no coursework on this qualification
- The course is extremely content heavy and therefore requires candidates to have an excellent memory alongside a dedicated attitude towards active revision

Entry requirements

All our course entry requirements are detailed in the Entry Requirements document located in the admissions section of our website.