

Introduction

Psychology is an alternative and challenging science, which looks at behaviour, mental processes and experiences which shape who we are. We cover a wide variety of topics that will make you think very differently about everyday things such as stress, childhood and mental illness.

Year 1

The AS specification has 2 units: the first module is examined in January and is worth 50% of your total AS grade and 25% of your total A level. This module covers three key areas of psychology. **Cognitive psychology** which focuses on the structure of memory, reasons why we forget, and the reliability of eye witness testimonies in court room settings. **Research methods** cover all the different techniques used to study and analyse human behaviour. You will learn how to design and carry out your own experiment. **Developmental psychology** studies the importance of early childhood experiences and how they affect our later development, ways in which babies bond with their parents, and the effects of losing a parent and of being in day care.

The second and final module in the AS year will be examined in June and will cover another three areas of psychology. **Biological psychology** will look at sources of stress and how the body responds to stress, including techniques used to reduce stress. **Social psychology** looks at how other people influence our behaviour. We investigate reasons for conformity and obedience (could you be influenced to inflict pain on a complete stranger?) There are many studies of dubious ethical value in this section, so we need to study psychology's ethical guidelines, which tell us what we should and shouldn't do when conducting research. **Individual differences** looks at how we define psychological abnormality, including different theories about the causes of mental disorders and therapies used to treat them.

Year 2

The A2 year will consist of a further 2 exams. The first exam will be sat in January and will be one and half hours long. It will consist of the following three topics:

Psychology AS/A level

Relationships – this is the study of how relationships begin: who do we find attractive and how do we choose a potential partner? We also study explanations of gender differences in romantic relationships (what do men and women *really* want?) and why some relationships break down.

Biological Psychology – this focuses on sleep: why we need it and what happens when we don't get enough sleep. We look at how the body clock works, the different stages of sleep and how it changes throughout our lives, as well as the function of sleep, and research into insomnia, sleepwalking and narcolepsy.

Eating Behaviour – here we are looking at society's obsession with food and image: the impact of magazines and other outside influences on eating behaviour, including eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia.

The final exam will be sat at the beginning of June. It will be two hours long and will consist of the following three subjects.

Psychopathology – this focuses on the study of depression. This disorder will be looked at in terms of classification, diagnosis and symptoms. You will then study the biological and psychological causes of depression and therapies available to treat it.

Anomalistic psychology – better known as the paranormal, this is the scientific study of psychic ability. We investigate whether ESP really exists, research into people's experiences of ghosts and try to explain why people like to believe in ghosts and other anomalistic experiences.

Psychological research and scientific method – this involves applying scientific methods to psychology, designing psychological investigations, and reporting on investigations.

Assessment

There is no coursework on AS/A level psychology; all modules are assessed by external examination.

Specific Entry Criteria

Grade C in English Language and grade D in Maths.