

Psychology



Introduction

How do attachments develop in children? What is the relationship between stress and illness? In what circumstances do people obey or defy authority? How do we define normal and abnormal behaviour? How can our memories be enhanced? How reliable is eye-witness testimony? Described as “the science of mind and behaviour”, Psychology aims to generate theories based on observation and experimental research to answer some of these questions.

From September 2008, Psychology will be recognised as a science subject at A Level by the QCA, the regulatory body for public examinations. This means that Psychology will now be considered equivalent in its scientific content to other traditional science subjects e.g. Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

This challenging A Level course covers major psychological theories and the supporting evidence. Students are expected to develop basic understanding of theories, concepts and research. Over the course they will learn to argue effectively both for and against the major theoretical perspectives, critically evaluating research evidence to support their arguments. The course aims to contribute to an understanding of individual, social and cultural diversity.

The subject content in AS is divided into five core areas of Cognitive, Developmental, Physiological, Individual Differences and Social Psychology plus Research Methods intended to give students a broadly based understanding of Psychology. In A2 there is the opportunity for candidates to extend their knowledge further and develop an understanding of core areas.

Students taking this A Level will be expected to develop critical and evaluative skills and learn to develop cogent, informed and logical arguments. They will be able to identify ethical issues, apply Psychology to cultural, social and contemporary issues, and use a wide range of research methods.

Knowledge & understanding

Basic information is clearly presented using a thorough knowledge of the syllabus. As with any subject some information must simply be learned. This is helped by the department's clear presentation of material, regular summaries and weekly tests. A top grade can be achieved only if knowledge is complemented by understanding. Revision techniques include 'mind mapping', which helps students form conceptual links between topics. To help students learn how to evaluate information, careful feedback is given to each student highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of his or her work. This provides a platform for future improvement. Making examples of good practice available to students provides further encouragement. Careful attention to feedback allows students to learn from their mistakes and build on their strengths! The Psychology department prides itself on its well-structured teaching and supportive approach to students. At the same time strict standards are applied in relation to the completion of homework and weekly tests.

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