# PSYCHOLOGY

## A-LEVEL

## STUDENT HANDBOOK

## 2020-2021

## Using this booklet

This booklet has been designed to help guide students through the course and to ensure that you are aware of the course specification, the modules, resources available and disciplinary procedures.

Make sure that you read this booklet at the beginning of the course and keep referring back to it throughout your studies to remind yourself of what you are studying, what is expected and sources of information.

## Introduction

During these two years you will develop a range of skills - analysis, interpretation and evaluation and you will learn how to formulate balanced arguments. You will be exposed to language that is specific to psychology. As psychology is the science of human behaviour which intends to explain the mind and behaviour through reason, you will learn scientific methods involving observation, measurement, hypothesis testing and experimentation. Furthermore you will learn how psychology can be used to help people and hopefully bring about changes for the better. In order to excel in this subject you will need to evaluate research and draw conclusions.

## Who will teach me?

You will be taught by Miss Wharf, Curriculum Leader of Psychology. Your timetable will indicate the teaching rooms, however, on occasions there may be room changes, in which case a note will be left on the classroom door or you will be told in advance.

## Expectations and Procedures

### Attendance and Absence

Your attendance in lessons is compulsory at all times and essential for your learning. You must inform the school immediately if you are not going to be in school. If you are aware that you will be missing a lesson in advance, it is your responsibility to speak to the teacher and inform them of the situation and request missed work. All missed work needs to be caught up in the students own time and you need to arrange to collect notes etc ahead of your next lesson so that you are prepared.

If attendance becomes an issue, phone calls or letters will be sent to your parents/guardians. Following that, phone calls will be made and your parents/guardians may be asked to come to the school for a meeting with staff in the Psychology Department and possibly the Head of the Sixth Form if the problem persists.

**Absence of a teacher** – A-level lessons are not always covered by a cover supervisor. If your teacher is aware that she will miss a class in advance, work will be set and resources handed out beforehand so that the work can still be completed. If the absence in unexpected, you are expected to do the following…

- Go to class as normal, it is likely that a cover teacher will be there to take the class.
- Check if any work has been left in the classroom for your lesson.
- Check your school emails as, where possible, the teacher will email the work to students.
- Go to the Sixth Form block to see if any instruction has been left with Miss Luscher-Chamberlain or Mr Timm.

**Punctuality**

As with attendance, punctuality is also essential. If you are late, you are responsible for disrupting the learning of all those in your class. If lateness is a persistent problem, the same procedures as attendance will occur (letters, phone calls, withdrawal from the course).

Unauthorised absences and lateness will not be tolerated.

**Homework**

You will be set various homework tasks throughout the week. The homework is set to build on class work or prepare you for future lessons. You will be asked to undertake formal assessments as homework, which are usually in the form of past exam papers or questions. Unless otherwise directed you are able to use notes and books for these assignments. These formal assessments allow the teacher to assess your knowledge and understanding of the topics that have been covered. These grades will be recorded in order to predict exam grades. If you are set homework, it is compulsory that it is completed. Failure to complete it at this level will mean that you fall rapidly behind and will find lessons difficult, if not impossible to understand.

Persistent failure to complete work set will also follow the above procedures (letters; phone calls; withdrawal from the course).

**Studying**

It is essential that students read class notes after every lesson so that the information is rehearsed and learnt and so that any information that is not understood can be addressed in the following lesson. Students should be prepared to do 5 hours a week of home learning for psychology. This may include reading class notes, additional reading, writing essays/assignments, answering possible questions, creating revision aids and so on.

## What should I be prepared for when starting Psychology A-Level?

Starting a new course, especially in a subject that is unfamiliar to you, can be a daunting experience. You have to become accustomed to new ways of learning, new kinds of language, new forms of assessment and new ideas. Many students begin psychology courses with little or no experience of the subject. If you are in this position, what should you be prepared for?

**Technical Language**

Every subject has its own technical language and psychology is no exception. Psychologists use specific terminology in order to help us understand human behaviour within a rigorous framework. You will be learning new terminology which you are expected to use in lessons and in exam answers. Students are guided through this new experience with the help of glossary sheets for each unit which are completed throughout the course.

**Evidence**

As a psychology student you will be expected to become familiar with some of the key research findings produced by psychologists. You will need to be able to refer to existing research in order to support, illustrate or challenge a particular view. You will need to debate why one research finding is more plausible than another. You will certainly need a good memory for specific details of studies.

## What makes a successful student?

- Interest in people and their behaviour.
- Willingness to participate.
- Ability to write effectively.
- Good memory for research details.
- Strong analytical skills.
- Effort and motivation to succeed.
- Excellent attendance and punctuality.
- Organised.

## Psychology books and folders

Be prepared for plenty of writing and lots of details to learn. It is essential that the notes taken in class and homework assignments are kept in a logical sequence in order to help the revision process towards the end of the year. All classwork will be written in exercise books. Books and folders will be checked regularly and time will be spent after school re-organising folders or catching up on missed work if necessary.

Exercise books will be provided for you but students need to provide their own folders if they wish to store information sheets, long term plans etc. Any handouts that link to the lessons will be attached to the exercise book with treasury tags. Students also need to bring their own writing equipment to lesson. Folders and books need to be brought to EVERY lesson.

| Book colour | Paper |
|---|---|
| Green | 1 |
| Yellow | 2 |
| Purple | 3 |

## Developing appropriate skills

In order to be a successful student of psychology you need to demonstrate a variety of skills. These can be summarised as:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Interpretation and application
- Evaluation

These terms become clearer if we consider the example of a doctor. Doctors need to know and understand a vast amount about illness, disease, treatments and therapies. However, this knowledge is not enough in itself to be able to help a sick patient. A doctor must also be able to interpret the patient's condition (explain what is their problem and why it has occurred) and apply, or use, what they know to help them identify possible treatments. Then the doctor will need to weigh up the relative merits of, or evaluate, each possible treatment in order to decide which is the most appropriate.

Once you have a rough idea of what these "skills" mean in practice, you can go on to see how they can be applied to your work in psychology. In the table below each of the skills is explained. The table also shows why the skills are important and gives examples of how questions assessing particular skills are typically worded.

| Skills | Importance | Examiners Instruction |
|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge and understanding** | | "List...." |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Awareness of relevant psychological perspectives, issues, debates and research findings | Your writing must contain accurate accounts of psychological material. Without this it can degenerate into personal anecdote | "Outline..."<br><br>"Describe.." |
| **Interpretation and application**<br><br>The ability to select and use relevant psychological material in order to explain psychological issues and answer particular questions. Also the ability to identify the psychological significance of data presented in different forms, such a statistics | You will need to work out the psychological "background" to essay and data response question and in the latter, use the data given to help answer some questions. These skills will also help you answer questions explicitly, and avoid the error of writing "everything I know" about a question | "How ..."<br><br>"Identify.."<br><br>"Why..." |
| **Evaluation**<br><br>The ability to assess evidence and arguments in order to reach a reasoned conclusion. In a court a jury has to evaluate the evidence presented by weighing up arguments and then reaching a verdict. | If you cannot evaluate material effectively then your writing will tend to be unbalanced or one sided. It may also be uncritical: failing to see the strengths and weaknesses of different views. You are also likely to have problems reaching final conclusions based on assessment of the evidence. This is the skill many students find most demanding. | "Assess.."<br><br>"Evaluate.."<br><br>"To what extent.." |

Although it is helpful to separate out the skills as above, you must bear in mind that all essays and most data response questions worth a considerable number of marks, require you to show all of these skills within the same answer. If you are asked to "Examine" a particular issue then you will have to know and understand the background, be able to identify its psychological importance and weigh up its importance.

**Useful course information**

**Title of course:** Psychology

**Exam Board:** AQA

**Contact:** Miss C Wharf, Curriculum Leader of psychology
c.wharf@ormistonvictoryacademy.co.uk

**Units to be studied:**

Paper 1 – Social Influence, Memory, Attachments and Psychopathology.

Paper 2 – Research Methods, Approaches and Biospychology.

Paper 3 – Issues and debates, Schizophrenia, Cognition and development and Forensic psychology.

**Grade Boundaries:** Please refer to the ground boundaries below when considering your class and homework assessments.

90% A*
80% A
70% B
60% C
50% D
40% E
Below 40% Fail.

**Reading list:**

**Class textbook:** AQA Psychology for Year 1/AS, Cara Flanagan, Dave Berry, Matt Jarvis, Rob Liddle. ISBN 978-1-908682-40-6

AQA Psychology for Year 2/A Level, Cara Flanagan, Dave Berry, Matt Jarvis, Rob Liddle. ISBN 978-1-908682-41-3

**AQA** www.aqa.org.uk

**Unit breakdown/specifications:**

**Paper 1**

**Social influence** • Types of conformity: internalisation, identification and compliance. Explanations for conformity: informational social influence and normative social influence, and variables affecting conformity including group size, unanimity and task difficulty as investigated by Asch. • Conformity to social roles as investigated by Zimbardo. • Explanations for obedience: agentic state and legitimacy of authority, and situational variables affecting obedience including proximity and location, as investigated by Milgram, and uniform. Dispositional explanation for obedience: the Authoritarian Personality. • Explanations of resistance to social influence, including social support and locus of control. • Minority influence including reference to consistency, commitment and flexibility. • The role of social influence processes in social change.

**Memory** • The multi-store model of memory: sensory register, short-term memory and long-term memory. Features of each store: coding, capacity and duration. • Types of long-term memory: episodic, semantic, procedural. • The working memory model: central executive, phonological loop, visuo-spatial sketchpad and episodic buffer. Features of the model: coding and capacity. • Explanations for forgetting: proactive and retroactive interference and retrieval failure due to absence of cues. • Factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony: misleading information, including leading questions and post-event discussion; anxiety. • Improving the accuracy of eyewitness testimony, including the use of the cognitive interview.

**Attachment** • Caregiver-infant interactions in humans: reciprocity and interactional synchrony. Stages of attachment identified by Schaffer. Multiple attachments and the role of the father. • Animal studies of attachment: Lorenz and Harlow. • Explanations of attachment: learning theory and Bowlby's monotropic theory. The concepts of a critical period and an internal working model. • Ainsworth's 'Strange Situation'. Types of attachment: secure, insecure-avoidant and insecure-resistant. Cultural variations in attachment, including van Ijzendoorn. • Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation. Romanian orphan studies: effects of institutionalisation. • The influence of early attachment on childhood and adult relationships, including the role of an internal working model.

**Psychopathology** • Definitions of abnormality, including deviation from social norms, failure to function adequately, statistical infrequency and deviation from ideal mental health. • The behavioural, emotional and cognitive characteristics of phobias, depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). • The behavioural approach to explaining and treating phobias: the two-process model, including classical and operant conditioning; systematic desensitisation, including relaxation and use of hierarchy; flooding. • The cognitive approach to explaining and treating depression: Beck's negative triad and Ellis's ABC model; cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), including challenging irrational thoughts. • The biological approach to explaining and treating OCD: genetic and neural explanations; drug therapy.

## Paper 2

**Approaches in Psychology** Origins of Psychology: Wundt, introspection and the emergence of Psychology as a science. The basic assumptions of the following approaches: • Learning approaches: i) the behaviourist approach, including classical conditioning and Pavlov's research, operant conditioning, types of reinforcement and Skinner's research; ii) social learning theory including imitation, identification, modelling, vicarious reinforcement, the role of mediational processes and Bandura's research. • The cognitive approach: the study of internal mental processes, the role of schema, the use of theoretical and computer models to explain and make inferences about mental processes. The emergence of cognitive neuroscience. • The biological approach: the influence of genes, biological structures and neurochemistry on behaviour. Genotype and phenotype, genetic basis of behaviour, evolution and behaviour. • The psychodynamic approach: the role of the unconscious, the structure of personality, that is Id, Ego and Superego, defence mechanisms including repression, denial and displacement, psychosexual stages. • Humanistic Psychology: free will, self-actualisation and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, focus on the self, congruence, the role of conditions of worth. The influence on counselling Psychology. • Comparison of approaches.

**Biopsychology** • The divisions of the nervous system: central and peripheral (somatic and autonomic). • The structure and function of sensory, relay and motor neurons. The process of synaptic transmission, including reference to neurotransmitters, excitation and inhibition. • The function of the endocrine system: glands and hormones. • The fight or flight response including the role of adrenaline. • Localisation of function in the brain and hemispheric lateralisation: motor, somatosensory, visual, auditory and language centres; Broca's and Wernicke's areas, split brain research. Plasticity and functional recovery of the brain after trauma. • Ways of studying the brain: scanning techniques, including functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI); electroencephalogram (EEGs) and event-related potentials (ERPs); postmortem examinations. • Biological rhythms: circadian, infradian and ultradian and the difference between these rhythms. The effect of endogenous pacemakers and exogenous zeitgebers on the sleep/ wake cycle

**Research Methods** Scientific processes • Aims: stating aims, the difference between aims and hypotheses. • Hypotheses: directional and non-directional. • Sampling: the difference between population and sample; sampling techniques including: random, systematic, stratified, opportunity and volunteer; implications of sampling techniques, including bias and generalisation. • Pilot studies and the aims of piloting. • Experimental designs: repeated measures, independent groups, matched pairs. • Observational design: behavioural categories; event sampling; time sampling. • Questionnaire construction, including use of open and closed questions; design of interviews. • Variables: manipulation and control of variables, including independent, dependent, extraneous, confounding; operationalisation of variables. • Control: random allocation and counterbalancing, randomisation and standardisation. • Demand characteristics and investigator effects. • Ethics, including the role of the British Psychological Society's code of ethics; ethical issues in the design and conduct of psychological studies; dealing with ethical issues in research. • The role of peer review in the scientific process. • The implications of psychological research for the economy. • Reliability across all methods of investigation. Ways of assessing reliability: test-retest and inter-observer; improving reliability. • Types of validity across all methods of investigation: face validity, concurrent validity, ecological validity and temporal validity. Assessment of validity. Improving validity. • Features of science: objectivity and the empirical method; replicability and falsifiability; theory

construction and hypothesis testing; paradigms and paradigm shifts. • Reporting psychological investigations. Sections of a scientific report: abstract, introduction, method, results, discussion and referencing. Data handling and analysis • Quantitative and qualitative data; the distinction between qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. • Primary and secondary data, including meta-analysis. • Descriptive statistics: measures of central tendency – mean, median, mode; calculation of mean, median and mode; measures of dispersion; range and standard deviation; calculation of range; calculation of percentages; positive, negative and zero correlations. Presentation and display of quantitative data: graphs, tables, scattergrams, bar charts, histograms. • Distributions: normal and skewed distributions; characteristics of normal and skewed distributions. • Analysis and interpretation of correlation, including correlation coefficients. • Levels of measurement: nominal, ordinal and interval. • Content analysis and coding. Thematic analysis. Inferential testing Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of inferential testing and be familiar with the use of inferential tests. • Introduction to statistical testing; the sign test. When to use the sign test; calculation of the sign test. • Probability and significance: use of statistical tables and critical values in interpretation of significance; Type I and Type II errors. • Factors affecting the choice of statistical test, including level of measurement and experimental design. When to use the following tests: Spearman's rho, Pearson's r, Wilcoxon, Mann-Whitney, related t-test, unrelated t-test and Chi-Squared test.

## Paper 3

**Issues and debates in Psychology** • Gender and culture in Psychology – universality and bias. Gender bias including androcentrism and alpha and beta bias; cultural bias, including ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. • Free will and determinism: hard determinism and soft determinism; biological, environmental and psychic determinism. The scientific emphasis on causal explanations. • The nature-nurture debate: the relative importance of heredity and environment in determining behaviour; the interactionist approach. • Holism and reductionism: levels of explanation in Psychology. Biological reductionism and environmental (stimulus-response) reductionism. • Idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation. • Ethical implications of research studies and theory, including reference to social sensitivity

**Cognition and development** • Piaget's theory of cognitive development: schemas, assimilation, accommodation, equilibration, stages of intellectual development. Characteristics of these stages, including object permanence, conservation, egocentrism and class inclusion. • Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development, including the zone of proximal development and scaffolding. • Baillargeon's explanation of early infant abilities, including knowledge of the physical world; violation of expectation research. • The development of social cognition: Selman's levels of perspective-taking; theory of mind, including theory of mind as an explanation for autism; the Sally-Anne study. The role of the mirror neuron system in social cognition.

**Schizophrenia** Classification of schizophrenia. Positive symptoms of schizophrenia, including hallucinations and delusions. Negative symptoms of schizophrenia, including speech poverty and avolition. Reliability and validity in diagnosis and classification of schizophrenia, including reference to co-morbidity, culture and gender bias and symptom overlap. • Biological explanations for schizophrenia: genetics and neural correlates, including the dopamine hypothesis. • Psychological explanations for schizophrenia: family dysfunction and cognitive explanations, including dysfunctional thought processing. • Drug therapy: typical and atypical antipsychotics. • Cognitive behaviour therapy and family therapy as used in the treatment of schizophrenia. Token economies as used in the management of schizophrenia. • The importance of an interactionist approach in explaining and treating schizophrenia; the diathesis-stress model.

**Forensic Psychology** • Offender profiling: the top-down approach, including organised and disorganised types of offender; the bottom-up approach, including investigative Psychology; geographical profiling. • Biological explanations of offending behaviour: an historical approach (atavistic form); genetics and neural explanations. • Psychological explanations of offending behaviour: Eysenck's theory of the criminal personality; cognitive explanations; level of moral reasoning and cognitive distortions, including hostile attribution bias and minimalisation; differential association theory; psychodynamic explanations. • Dealing with offending behaviour: the aims of custodial sentencing and the psychological effects of custodial sentencing. Recidivism. Behaviour modification in custody. Anger management and restorative justice programmes.

**Weekly plan**

| Week beginning | Lesson content |
|---|---|
| 7th September | **Issues and debates** - gender |
| 14th September | Issues and debates – culture, free will, nature-nurture |
| 21st September | Issues and debates – holism, idiographic and ethics. |
| 28th September | Issues and debates – revision and mock exam. |
| 5th October | **Schizophrenia** - symptoms, reliability and validity of diagnosis |
| 12th October | Biological explanations, psychological explanations |
| 19th October | Biological treatments, psychological treatments |
| Half term | |
| 2nd November | Interactionist approach, revision, mock exam |
| 9th November | **Cognition and development**, Piaget |
| 16th November | Vygotsky |
| 23rd November | Baillargeon, Selman |
| 30th November | Theory of mind, mirror neurons |
| 7th December | Project, revision, mock exam |
| 14th December | Forensic case studies |
| **Christmas holiday** | |
| 4th January | **Forensics**, offender profiling, biological explanations |
| 11th January | Case studies, psychological explanations |
| 18th January | Psychodynamic explanations, essays |
| 25th January | Dealing with offender behaviour |
| 1st February | Revision and mock exam. |
| 8th February | |
| **Half term** | |
| 22nd February | Revision |
| 1st March | Revision – Paper 3 mock exam |
| 8th March | Revision |
| 15th March | Revision |
| 22nd March | Revision |
| **Easter holiday** | |
| 12th April | Revision |
| 19th April | Revision |
| 26th April | Revision |
| 3rd May | Revision |
| 10th May | **Revision** |
| 17th May | **Revision** |
| 24th May | **Revision** |
| **Half term** | |
| 7th June | **Revision** |
| 14th June | **Revision** |
| 21st June | Revision |
| 28th June | Revision |
| 5th July | Revision |
| 12th July | Revision |
| **Summer holiday** | |

**Assessment criteria for 16 mark essays**

**Outline**

| |
|---|
| **<u>6 marks</u> Accurate and reasonably detailed**<br>*Accurate and reasonably detailed description that demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding.*<br>*There is appropriate selection of material to address the question.*<br>*Presentation of information is clear and coherent.* |
| **<u>5-4 marks</u> Less detailed but generally accurate**<br>*Less detailed but generally accurate description that demonstrates relevant knowledge and understanding.*<br>*There is some evidence of selection of material to address the question.*<br>*Information is presented in an appropriate form.* |
| **<u>3-2 marks</u> Basic**<br>*Basic description that demonstrates some relevant knowledge and understanding but lacks detail and may be muddled.*<br>*There is little evidence of selection of material to address the question.*<br>*Information is not presented in an appropriate form.* |
| **<u>1 mark</u> Brief/Flawed**<br>*Brief or flawed description that demonstrates very little knowledge or understanding of research.*<br>*Selection and presentation of information is largely or wholly inappropriate*. |

**Evaluation**

| |
|---|
| **<u>10-9 marks</u> Effective**<br>*Application demonstrates sound analysis and understanding. The answer is well focused and effective. A number of appropriate pieces of advice are presented and justified with reference to relevant theory or research. Ideas are well structured and expressed clearly and fluently.* |
| **<u>8-6 marks</u> Reasonable**<br>*Application demonstrates reasonable analysis and understanding. Application of knowledge is generally focused. Some appropriate advice is presented, this is partially justified with reference to relevant research. Most ideas are appropriately structured and expressed clearly.* |
| **<u>5-3 marks</u> Basic**<br>*Application demonstrates basic analysis and superficial understanding. Application is sometimes focused. Either appropriate suggestions are made but not justified OR relevant research is presented but not applied to the task OR both are very weak. Expression of ideas lacks clarity.* |
| **2-1 mark Rudimentary**<br>*Application is rudimentary demonstrating very limited understanding. Suggestions for advice/ justification are weak, muddled and may be mainly largely irrelevant. Deficiency in expression of ideas* results in confusion and ambiguity. |
| **0 marks** *No creditworthy material is presented.* |