

RMGS

PSYCHOLOGY

A Level

What are the aims of the course?

Psychology is the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes. The A Level course aims to develop your knowledge and understanding of psychological theories, concepts, methodology, research and applications. You will develop your understanding of the different areas of Psychology, and develop your skills of analysis, interpretation, research and evaluation.

What does it involve?

The subject matter of psychology is wide-ranging, and includes the study of psychological disorders, obedience, conformity, relationships, aggression, memory, learning, attachment, the brain, and genetic influences on behaviour. Theories are developed to explain behaviour, and studies are conducted to test theories. Scientific methods, such as experiments and observations, are used to investigate the causes of human behaviour. Statistical techniques are used to analyse the data gathered in psychological research. Psychology is a self-critical subject, and all theories and research studies are evaluated thoroughly. Through the study of Psychology you will not only gain an understanding of why we do what we do, but you will also gain a deep understanding of how science works.

How is it assessed?

Paper 1 – Introductory Topics in Psychology (2 hour written examination)

Social Psychology – Social Influence: This section is concerned with how our behaviour is influenced by other people. You will study processes involved in conformity and minority influence, and will investigate obedience to authority. You will also consider independent behaviour and explanations of how people resist pressures to conform or obey. You will consider the role of social influence in social change.

Cognitive Psychology – Memory: This approach focuses on the ways that people process information. You will study memory processes, models of memory and explanations of forgetting. You will apply your knowledge of memory to issues relating to the reliability of eyewitness testimony and ways to improve such testimony.

Developmental Psychology – Attachment: This approach is concerned with early childhood and the changes that occur over a person's lifetime. You will study the development attachment bonds between infants and their caregivers. You will also consider the effects of disruption of the attachment bond and what happens to children who do not have the opportunity to form attachments. You will investigate the effects of early attachments on our childhood and adult relationships.

Psychopathology: This section focuses on mental health issues, and looks at attempts to define psychological abnormality. You will look at the characteristics of phobias, depression and OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder), and investigate biological and psychological explanations and treatments for these mental disorders.

Paper 2 – Psychology in Context (2 hour written examination)

Approaches in Psychology: Psychology adopts a range of different approaches to explain human behaviour. In this section you will look at the origins of Psychology, and analyse the assumptions of five different psychological approaches (Learning, Biological, Cognitive, Psychodynamic and Humanistic).

Bio-psychology: In this section you will consider the role of biological factors in explaining human behaviour. You will investigate the nervous system, brain and endocrine system, and look at ways of studying the brain. You will consider the way different functions are located in the brain (localisation and lateralisation), investigate the way the brain adapts after damage (plasticity), and look at research conducted with split-brain patients. You will also investigate biological rhythms and the internal mechanisms and external cues that regulate them.

Research Methods: Psychology systematically tests theories by conducting research, using a wide variety of methods. You will learn about different experimental and non-experimental research methods. You will consider issues that arise when designing psychological studies, and look at ways of resolving problems that arise in research. You will learn how to use statistical techniques to describe and interpret data, and will learn about different ways of summarising data. You will also consider the nature of science.

Paper 3 – Issues and Options in Psychology (2 hour written examination)

Relationships: You will look evolutionary explanations of relationships, considering the effect of sexual selection on human behaviour and possible gender differences in human mating behaviour. You will study factors in attraction, and consider theories of relationships and explanations of relationship breakdown. You will also investigate virtual relationships in social media, and consider parasocial relationships (e.g. the one-sided relationships some people develop with celebrities).

Aggression: In this section you will study the nature and causes of aggression, including social-psychological explanations, biological explanations and ethological explanations. You will also consider the role of the media in aggressive behaviour, including the effects of video games.

Schizophrenia: You will study the characteristics and sub-types of schizophrenia. You will consider biological and psychological explanations of this serious mental disorder, and investigate biological and psychological treatments and therapies, evaluating their effectiveness.

Issues and Debates in Psychology: In this section you will explore issues and debates that run across all of Psychology. These include issues such as gender bias and cultural bias in research, ethical issues that arise in relation to psychological research, the nature-nurture debate, issues concerning the nature of psychological explanations (e.g. reductionism), and philosophical issues such as free will and determinism.

Linear A Level

Paper/Unit	Exam	Content
Paper 1 Introductory Topics in Psychology	2 hour written exam, 33.3% of A level Multiple choice, short-answer and extended writing	Social Influence Attachment Memory Psychopathology
Paper 2 Psychology in Context	2 hour written exam, 33.3% of A level Multiple choice, short-answer and extended writing	Approaches in Psychology Bio-psychology Research Methods
Paper 3 Issues and Options in Psychology	2 hour written exam, 33.3% of A level Multiple choice, short-answer and extended writing	Issues and debates Relationships Schizophrenia Aggression

Are there any specific entry requirements?

Psychology draws on a range of skills, including skills of statistical analysis, and linguistic/interpretive skills in the analysis of qualitative data. You need to have two A grades in double science, or three B grades for triple science. However, students with an average GCSE points score of 47 or above will also be considered.

Why is it a useful qualification?

Psychology develops skills of data analysis and provides a critical understanding of the nature of research and evidence. It will help you to develop a better understanding of why people behave as they do, and will give you insight into some important philosophical, social, cultural and ethical issues. Psychology provides skills and insights that could be useful in a range of careers, including social work, nursing, advertising, teaching, sales work, police work, management and personnel, and any job that involves a lot of contact with others. As a first qualification in Psychology it is the first step towards developing a career as a psychologist, either as a researcher, or as a clinical psychologist, health psychologist, forensic psychologist or one of the many other fields of applied psychology.