

A-Level Psychology



A-Level Psychology Course Overview

Paper 1 – Introductory Topics in Psychology

Memory	Explanations of memory and forgetting
Social Influence	Conformity, obedience and minority influence
Attachments	Explanations and effect of childhood attachments
Psychopathology	Explanations and treatments of mental disorders

Paper 2 – Psychology in Context

Approaches	Behaviourist, Learning, Cognitive, Biological, Psychodynamic and Humanistic Approaches
Biopsychology	The nervous system, biochemistry, endocrine system, fight or flight, the brain and biological rhythms
Research Methods	Experiments, observations, self-report, correlations, content analysis and case studies.

Paper 3 – Issues & Options

Issues & Debates	Bias, nature-nurture, reductionism, free will and determinism
Options	
Schizophrenia	Mental health
Aggression	Understanding aggressive behaviour
Cognition & Development	Child development

Each exam last 2 hours and is worth 96 marks.

Top 6 'core' areas in Psychology

Psychology is the 'scientific study of the mind and behaviour', and the A Level offers an introduction to six 'core' areas of the discipline:

- **Social Psychology** focuses on the social interactions people have with each other. We function fully as people in the company of, and with the help of, others. Amongst other issues, this course explains why we conform and why we are likely to obey authority figures.
- **Cognitive Psychology** looks at how we perceive and interpret the world around us. Cognitive psychologists are interested in 'thinking' and are therefore concerned with internal mental processes. One of the most important topics is memory. We look at how memories are stored, why some memories are more vivid than others and why some last no more than a few seconds. Forgetting, including problems with memory retrieval and accessibility and memory disorders are also studied. Finally, we look at the practical application of such research and the way in which the police apply this knowledge and understanding in eye-witness recall.
- **Developmental Psychology** considers how people develop and change from before they are born and throughout their lives. At A Level, the focus is on the development of an infant's attachment to a primary care giver, and the problems that occur when this does not happen.
- Psychologists interested in **Psychopathology** study the causes of mental disorders, such as OCD, Phobias and Schizophrenia. If we can understand what causes these disorders, then we can hopefully develop ways of treating them, so psychopathologists are also interested in therapies.
- **Psychological Approaches** considers the different schools of thought and main ideas within Psychology some that we have mentioned above as well as the role of evolutionary forces and genetics in behaviour. It investigates how the nervous system and hormones work, how the brain functions, and how changes in these can affect behaviour.
- Finally, in order to investigate and test their ideas, hypotheses and theories, Psychologists use a variety of **Research Methods**. We consider how research are designed and analysed in a scientific and rigorous manner using experiments, observations, interviews and case studies.