

Psychology
'A' level

Introduction

Welcome to your 'A' level Psychology course. This Introduction should provide you with all the information you need to make a successful start to your studies.

The Specification (or Syllabus)

This course has been designed to give you a full and thorough preparation for the AS level or A level **Psychology B** specification, set by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA).

The **Subject Code** for entry to the AS only award is **1186**.

The **Subject Code** for entry to the A level award is **2186**.

No coursework is required for this specification.

Private Candidates

The AQA specification is open to private candidates. Private candidates should contact AQA for a copy of *Information for Private Candidates*.



Oxford Open Learning

Arrangement of Lessons

AS level

Module One: Biopsychology, Research and Gender

- 1 Key Approaches to Psychology
- 2 The Biological Approach
TMA A
- 3 Research Methods
- 4 Representing Data and Descriptive Statistics
- 5 Ethical Issues
TMA B
- 6 Gender
TMA C

Module Two: Social & Cognitive Psychology and Individual Differences

Module 2(a): Social Psychology

- 7 Social Influence
- 8 Social Cognition
- 9 Attitudes
TMA D

Module 2(b): Cognitive Psychology

- 10 Perceptual Processes
- 11 Remembering and Forgetting
TMA E

Module 2(c): Individual Differences

- 12 Anxiety
- 13 Autism
TMA F

Module Three: Practical Work

- 14 Planning and Implementation
TMA G
- 15 Results
- 16 Discussion: Putting it all Together
TMA H
- 17 Practice Examination Papers

A2 level

Module Four: Child Development and Applied Options

Module 4(a): Child Development

- 18 Social Development
- 19 Cognitive Development
- 20 Moral Development

TMA I

Module 4(b): Applied Psychology options

- 21 Cognition and Law
- 22 Mood Disorders
- 22 Schizophrenia
- 24 Treatments of Mood Disorders, etc

TMA J

Module Five: Perspectives, Methods and Debates

- 25 Approaches and Debates

TMA K

- 26 Inferential Statistics

TMA L

Module Six: More on Practical Work and Revision

- 27 A Second Project
- 28 Writing up the Investigation
- 29 Revision and Examination Technique
- 30 Practice Examination Papers

TMA N

Textbooks

There are many different types of psychology book available for use. This course is designed to complement textbooks that have been written to meet the needs of students following AQA's Psychology B specification. You may also wish to purchase a book of research methods and statistical tests.

The following textbooks are essential:

At AS Level:

Donald Pennington & Julie McLoughlin: *AQA (B) Psychology for AS*, Hodder Education, ISBN: 978-0-340-94702-9

At A2 Level:

AQA A2 Psychology B Student's book: by Mark Billingham, Kevin Brewer, Sarah Ladbrook, David Messer, Howard Padley, Sue

Standring & Regina Teahan. Nelson Thornes, ISBN-13: 978-0748798285

Supplementary Reading

The following textbooks are also recommended for A2:

Advanced Psychology: Child Development, Perspectives & Methods, Pennington et al, Hodder & Stoughton (2003). ISBN: 0 340 85934 2
Advanced Psychology: Atypical Behaviour, Lynda Turner, Hodder & Stoughton (2003). ISBN: 0 340 85933 4

Other that might be useful include:

Active Psychology, Edited by Irene Taylor. This is published by Longman and covers all the key requirements of the AS and A2 syllabuses (ISBN: 0-582-05195-9).

Introducing Psychological Research, by Philip Banyard & Andrew Grayson, published by Palgrave, 2000, ISBN 0-333-91251-9.

This is a book describing key studies in Psychology. The AQA syllabuses draw heavily from psychological research and you are expected to be able to give details of individual studies in the examination. This is therefore an extremely useful (and easily readable) book.

Other general textbooks you *may* wish to consult include:

Introductory Psychology, by Tony Malim & Ann Birch, published by Palgrave, (1998). This is a very clear, easily readable textbook, making good use of colour and graphics. ISBN 0-333-66852-9

Foundations of Psychology, by Nicky Hayes, published by Thomson Learning, 2000, ISBN 1-861-52589-3.

Using the Course Materials

Tutor-Marked Assignments

Tutor-marked Assignments (TMAs) are designed to help you and your tutor to assess your progress throughout the course and, at the same time, to give you practice in answering examination questions. TMAs do not count towards your final examination result. You should aim to complete a TMA soon after reaching the end of the section, so that the topics are still at the forefront of your mind. **You are not expected to do them from memory**, although if you wish to do them this way, this is fine.

The Mark Scheme for each TMA is roughly the equivalent of the examination Mark Scheme. Questions worth 8 marks or more are banded, or tiered. Students who provide an exceptional answer will be given a mark in the top band, students providing an average answer a mark in the middle band, and a weak answer a mark in the bottom band. More details will be provided of what is required in each answer when the TMA is returned to you. Your tutor will mark your work against the Mark Scheme and give you feedback on the quality of your work. If you have any questions or queries your tutor will be able to advise you.

How much to Write

You will see that most questions are split into three or four sections and they will be worth varying marks. This is deliberate as the examination paper follows this format. In the examination you will only have half an hour to write each answer, so you are not encouraged to write long essays. If a question is worth over 8 marks, it should have an essay structure, with a beginning, middle and end; it should also refer to theory and a study. Below this threshold you can provide a more general answer, but be careful that you do not give what is called a “common-sense” answer. These are answers which could be written from experience and do not have any theoretical background. It is very easy to fall into this trap in psychology.

When you are working on an Assignment, the best way to approach it is to prepare all the material and have your notes in front of you. Having worked out what you need to include in your answer, construct a simple essay / answer plan and then write for half an hour on each question.

Calculator

You will need a calculator for the statistical calculations. Don't worry if you find the prospect of using statistics a little daunting. This is not intended to be a maths course, just an introduction to

methods of psychological research. The main thing to remember is — don't panic!

The 'AS' Level and A-level System

The Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level

Advanced Subsidiary (AS) courses may be used in one of two ways:

- As a final qualification, allowing candidates to broaden their studies and to defer questions about specialism;
- As the first half (50%) of an Advanced Level qualification, which must be completed before an Advanced Level award can be made.

Advanced Subsidiary is designed to provide an appropriate assessment of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of candidates who have completed the first half of a full Advanced Level Qualification.

The Advanced Level (AS + A2)

The Advanced Level examination is in two parts:

Advanced Subsidiary (AS) - 50% of the total award;
A second examination, called A2 - 50% of the total award

Most Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced level courses are modular. The AS level normally comprises two teaching and learning modules and the A2 comprises a further two teaching and learning modules. These modules generally match the Units of Assessment (or Exam Papers).

Examination Flexibility

'A' levels allow for considerable flexibility in the taking of exams. The two most popular options are:

- AS is completed at the end of one year and A2 at the end of the second year;
- AS and A2 are completed at the end of the same year.

Both of these options are open to students following this course as it is divided into two halves and follows the same modular sequence as the specification.

Grading and Shelf-Life

The AS qualification will be **graded** on a five-point scale: A, B, C, D and E. The full A Level qualification will be graded on a six-point scale: A*, A, B, C, D and E. To be awarded an A* candidates will need to achieve a grade A on the full A Level qualification and an A* on the aggregate of the A2 units.

For AS and A Level, candidates who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade E will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate. Individual assessment unit results will be certificated.

Unit results remain available to count towards certification, whether or not they have already been used, as long as the specification is still valid. Candidates may re-sit a unit any number of times within the **shelf-life** of the specification.

The Examination Structure

This information is correct at the time of publication but may be subject to change. Prior to the examination, students should contact the exam board for the latest information.

AS Examination

Unit 1: Biopsychology, Research & Gender (Unit code: PSYB1)

50% of AS, 25% of A-level; 60 marks

Externally-assessed examination, 1 hour 30 minutes

Candidates answer three compulsory questions, i.e. one on each section (Approaches, Gender, Research Methods). The Approaches question should include something on the biological approach. Questions will comprise mainly short-answer part-questions.

1.1 Key Approaches in Psychology

1.2 Biopsychology

1.3 Gender Development

1.4 Methods of Research

1.5 Representing Data and Descriptive Statistics

1.6 Ethics

Unit 2: Social & Cognitive Psychology and Individual Differences (Unit code: PSYB2)

50% of AS, 25% of A-level; 60 marks

Externally-assessed examination, 1 hour 30 minutes

Candidates answer one question (from a choice of two) from each of three sections. Questions will comprise mainly short answer part-questions, with some extended writing.

2.1 Social Influence

2.2 Social Cognition

2.3 Remembering and forgetting

2.4 Perceptual Processes

2.5 Anxiety Disorders

2.6 Autism

A2 Examination

Unit 3: Child Development and Applied Psychology Options (Unit code: PSYB3)

50% of A2, 25% of A-level; 60 marks

Externally-assessed examination, 2 hours

Candidates answer one question (from a choice of three) in Section A and two questions (from a choice of five) in Section B.

3.1 Child Development: Social Development

3.2 Cognitive Development

3.3 Moral Development

The Applied Psychology options are:

3.4 Cognition and Law (covered in this course)

3.5 Schizophrenia and Mood Disorders (covered in this course)

3.6 Stress and Stress Management (covered in outline)

3.7 Substance Abuse (not covered)

3.8 Forensic Psychology (not covered)

Unit 4: Approaches, Methods, Debates (Unit code: PSYB4)

50% of A2, 25% of A-level; 60 marks (May/June only)

Externally-assessed examination, 2 hours

Candidates answer one question (from a choice of two) in Section A (Approaches) and one compulsory question in Section B (Debates) and Section C (Methods), i.e. three questions in all.

4.1 Biological, Behaviourist, Social Learning, Cognitive, Psychodynamic and Humanistic Approaches

4.2 Comparison of Approaches

4.3 Debates in Psychology

4.4 Inferential Statistics

4.5 Issues in Research

Further details on the content of each topic are to be found in the AQA specification.

No coursework is required.

Shelf-life of this specification

This 'A' level specification is examined for the last time in June 2016. Exams in later years (June 2017 onwards) will be based on a new specification. So we advise you to take *all* your exams, AS and A2, by June 2016. If you delay beyond that date, you may find that some of your work is wasted and that a new set of learning materials is required. If in doubt, keep an eye on the AQA website for news of the new specification.

Practical Work; Scientific Research

Although this specification is written examination-only (i.e. there is no coursework), it is still a requirement that candidates should develop their “scientific” skills in practice as well as in theory. The following skills are specified:

- A** Use theories, models and ideas to develop and modify scientific explanations.
- B** Use knowledge and understanding to pose scientific questions, define scientific problems, present scientific arguments and scientific ideas.
- C** Use appropriate methodology, including ICT, to answer scientific questions and solve scientific problems.
- D** Carry out experimental and investigative activities, including appropriate risk management in a range of contexts.
- E** Analyse and interpret data to provide evidence, recognising correlations and causal relationships.
- F** Evaluate methodology, evidence and data, and resolve conflicting evidence.
- G** Appreciate the tentative nature of scientific knowledge.
- H** Communicate information and ideas in appropriate ways using appropriate terminology.
- I** Consider applications and implications of science and appreciate their associated benefits and risks.
- J** Consider ethical issues in the treatment of humans, other organisms and the environment.
- K** Appreciate the role of the scientific community in validating new knowledge and ensuring integrity.
- L** Appreciate the ways in which society uses science to inform decision-making.

There is a great deal more detail in the specification, including suggestions on how to set up suitable activities and experiments. The “practical” section at the end of both the AS and A2 courses is designed to enable you to develop specific research projects. It is strongly recommended that you tackle at least one such project – indeed, more than one would be advisable.

The specification also identifies some basic mathematical requirements. It is assumed that you are already competent in these skills; otherwise, a refresher course in mathematics or statistics is recommended.

Studying the Syllabus

You should be sure to acquire your own copy of the syllabus, either via the AQA Publications Dept or from the website www.aqa.org.uk.

The syllabus can be purchased from

AQA Publications
Unit 2, Wheel Forge Way,
Trafford Park
Manchester
M17 1EH (tel: 0870-410-1036)

or downloaded from www.aqa.org.uk/qual/pdf/AQA6186WSP.pdf.

We advise that you obtain a copy of the syllabus so that you can assess which topics you have covered in the most detail and which ones you will feel happiest about in the exam. AQA can also provide advice booklets on your course, including ‘Supplementary Guidance for Private Candidates’. As you approach the examination, it will also be helpful to purchase and tackle past papers from AQA.

Using the Internet

All students would benefit from access to the Internet. You will find a wealth of information on all the topics in your course. As well as the AQA website (www.aqa.org.uk), you should get into the habit of checking the Oxford Open Learning site (www.ool.co.uk) where you may find news, additional resources and interactive features as time goes by. If you have not already done so, you may register for your free copy of *How to Study at Home*, our 200-page guide to home learning, or enrol on further courses. Put it on your Favourites list now!