Psychology

Examination Board: AQA

Examination Code: 7182

Outline of the Course	The following topics are taught between two teachers: **Year 1:** • Social Influence • Memory • Attachment • Psychopathology • Approaches in Psychology • Research Methods **Year 2:** • Biopsychology • Research methods • Issues and debates in Psychology • Option 1: Relationships • Option 2: Schizophrenia • Option 3: Forensic Psychology (Optional topics are chosen by the teacher and may change)
What will you learn?	**Social influence** • Types of conformity: internalisation 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. • 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.

Memory

- The multi-store model of memory: sensory register, short-term memory and long-term memory. Features of each store: coding, capacity and duration.
- 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: leading questions and post-event discussion; anxiety; the use of the cognitive interview.

Attachment

- 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. Effects of institutionalisation, including the English and Romanian Adoptees project.
- The influence of early attachment on childhood and adult relationships, including the role of an internal working model.

Clinical Psychology and Mental Health

- Definitions in the field of mental health; deviation from ideal mental health, deviation from social/cultural norms, failure to function adequately and statistical infrequency.
- 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.

Approaches in Psychology

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, 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 models to explain and make inferences about mental processes.
- The biological approach: the genetic basis of behaviour: genotype, phenotype and evolution. Influence of biological structures and neurochemistry on behaviour. Cognitive neuroscience.

- 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, congruence, the role of conditions of worth.
- 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.
- Ways of studying the brain: scanning techniques, including functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI); electroencephalogram (EEGs) and event-related potentials (ERPs); post-mortem examinations.
- 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.

Research methods

Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following research methods, scientific processes and techniques of data handling and analysis, be familiar with their use and be aware of their strengths and limitations.

- Experimental method. Types of experiment, laboratory and field experiments; natural and quasi-experiments.
- Observational techniques. Types of observation: naturalistic and controlled observation; covert and overt observation; participant and non-participant observation.
- Self-report techniques. Questionnaires; interviews, structured and unstructured.
- Correlations. Analysis of the relationship between co-variables. The difference between correlations and experiments.
- Content analysis.
- Case studies.

➢ **Scientific processes**

- Aims: stating aims, the difference between aims and hypotheses.
- Hypotheses: directional and non-directional.
- Sampling: the difference between population and sample; sampling methods 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; operationalisation of variables.
- Control: random allocation and counterbalancing, randomisation and standardisation and control groups.
- 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 measuring 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. Measurement 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.
- Coding in content 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.

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.
- Social sensitivity in Psychological Research

Relationships

- Factors affecting attraction in romantic relationships: self-disclosure; physical attractiveness, including the matching hypothesis; filter theory, including social demography, similarity in attitudes and complementarity.
- Theories of romantic relationships: social exchange theory, equity theory and Rusbult's investment model of commitment, satisfaction, comparison with alternatives and investment. Duck's phase model of relationship breakdown: intra-psychic, dyadic, social and grave dressing phases.
- Online relationships: self-disclosure, use of deception, effects of absence of gating.
- Parasocial relationships: levels of parasocial relationships, the absorption addiction model and the attachment theory explanation.

Schizophrenia

- Positive symptoms of schizophrenia, including hallucinations and delusions. Negative symptoms of schizophrenia, including speech poverty and avolition. Issues in diagnosis: 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.
- The importance of an interactionist approach in explaining and treating schizophrenia; the diathesis-stress model.

Forensic Psychology

- Offender profiling: the typology approach, including organised and disorganised types of offender; the data-driven approach, including investigative Psychology; geographical profiling.
- Biological explanations of offending behaviour, 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.

- Dealing with offending behaviour: the aims of custodial sentencing and the psychological effects of custodial sentencing. Behaviour modification in custody. Anger management and restorative justice programmes.

Mark Breakdown and Assessment

- AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures.
- AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures:
- AO3: Analyse, interpret and evaluate scientific information, ideas and evidence, including in relation to issues, to:
    - make judgements and reach conclusions
    - develop and refine practical design and procedures.
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Weighting of assessment objectives for A-level Psychology

Assessment objectives (AOs)	Component weightings (approx %)			Overall weighting (approx %)
	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	
AO1	11–14	7–10	9–12	30–33
AO2	6–9	16–19	5–8	30–33
AO3	12–14	7–9	15–17	36–38
Overall weighting of components	33.3	33.3	33.3	100

At least 10% of the overall assessment of Psychology will contain mathematical skills equivalent to Level 2 or above.
At least 25–30% of the overall assessment will assess skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research methods

Website links

https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/psychology/a-level/psychology-7182/specification/specification-at-a-glance

Key Dates

Exam: May/June Year 13

Further Information	Mrs C. Abotorabi – Curriculum Leader for Psychology and Sociology c.abotorabi@stretfordgrammar.com Miss F. Shad – Subject Teacher for Psychology and Sociology
What can I do after I have completed the course?	After completing a Psychology A level, you'll have a solid foundation in understanding human behaviour, research methods, and mental processes. This qualification opens up a range of options, including pursuing psychology or related subjects at university, such as criminology, sociology, or education. It also supports career paths in healthcare, social work, counselling, marketing, human resources, and law enforcement. Additionally, it develops valuable skills like critical thinking, data analysis, and communication, which are useful in many professions and further study. It is also widely accepted as science for degree entry requirements.