

# A Level Psychology: Course Overview

## What Will I Study?

Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and human behaviour. It's not about reading minds—but about understanding *why* people think, feel, and act the way they do. Throughout the course, you will explore key psychological theories, research, and real-world applications across a range of topics:

### Core Topics Covered:

- **Approaches in Psychology**

Explore the major perspectives in psychology, such as the cognitive, behavioural, psychodynamic, biological, and humanistic approaches. You'll learn how each explains behaviour differently and how they have developed over time.

- **Psychopathology**

Examine psychological disorders including phobias, depression, and OCD. Learn about different explanations and treatments from various psychological approaches.

- **Research Methods**

An in-depth unit on designing and conducting psychological research. This includes research techniques, ethical considerations, data analysis, and interpreting statistical results.

- **Memory**

Investigate how we encode, store, and retrieve information. Consider why we forget and what factors influence memory performance.

- **Attachment**

Understand early emotional bonds between infants and caregivers, their long-term importance, and how attachment styles vary across cultures. You'll also consider the impact of attachment disruption.

- **Social Influence**

Study classic and controversial research such as Milgram's obedience study. Learn about conformity, obedience and resistance to social influence.

- **Biopsychology**

In depth study of localisation and lateralisation of the brain, the nervous system including the structure of the neuron and the endocrine system as well as a focus on biological rhythms

- **Aggression**

Explore the causes of aggressive behaviour, examining both biological influences (like hormones and brain structures) and social/environmental factors, including media and institutional settings.

- **Eating Behaviour**

Investigate what drives hunger, eating habits, and food preferences. Examine the role of biology, evolution, and family influences, as well as psychological explanations of eating disorders like anorexia and obesity.

- **Gender**

Explore how gender identity is developed through both nature (biological influences) and nurture (socialisation). Topics include gender roles, stereotypes, and theories of gender development.

- **Issues and Debates in Psychology**

This synoptic unit tackles broad themes such as nature vs. nurture, free will vs. determinism, and reductionism. You'll also examine whether psychology should be considered a science and how culture and gender influence research.

We study AQA Psychology, and the specification can be found using the following link:

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/psychology/specifications/AQA-7181-7182-SP-2015.PDF>

## How will I study?

You need to be prepared to work outside of your lessons, reading around the topics covered, making extra notes and condensing the information and articles given to you. You will also be required to carry out activities within study groups, such as breaking down psychological research or creating a presentation on a new topic.

## Home Learning:

All home learning will be geared towards developing examination skills and knowledge. Much of your home learning will require you to apply knowledge to examination questions. Please be aware that psychology is predominantly a written subject and so you will be asked to write essays on a frequent basis.

## How is Psychology assessed?

There will be **three** examinations that you will sit in the summer of year 13. Each of these will last for two hours and each is worth one third of your overall A Level grade.

**Be aware: You will have to complete mathematical calculations in the exam; the subject does expect extended writing and there is significant biological content.**

## Psychology: Transition Home Learning Task

When you return in September we will be making a start on the Approaches unit. This will give you a detailed understanding of the main viewpoints within the subject of Psychology and throughout the A Level course we will refer to these on a frequent basis. Before we start our A Level work on the approaches you need to have a basic understanding of them.

Using this web address: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/perspective.html> you need to do the following:

- 1) Research the basic principles to each of the following approaches including definitions for key terms noted next to each:

- Behaviourism – operant and classical conditioning
- Psychodynamic – ID, Ego, Superego, Psychosexual stages, unconscious
- Cognitive - schemas, thought processes, computer models
- Humanism – self actualisation, person centred approach, free will
- Evolutionary – adaptive behaviours, natural selection
- Biological – genetics, neuroanatomy, biochemistry
- Social Learning Theory – imitation, role models, vicarious reinforcement

2) You should also ensure that you research two strengths and two weaknesses for each theory.

**It may be that you need to use alternative sources to the one above, however this should be used as a basis to your research**