



St Mary Redcliffe
and Temple School

Psychology



Psychology

Exam board: AQA

Specification: 7181 (AS) / 7182 (A Level)

This is a two year linear A level course - The AS content forms the first half of the A level content and can be assessed at the end of Year 12 to provide an AS Level qualification if the student is dropping the subject and believes they can get a strong grade. Otherwise the two years of content are assessed at the end of Year 13 to give the A level grade.

Course Delivery:

A Level Psychology is taught to a large extent through exercises, experiments and discussions in small groups and through guided reading of texts. Video and internet research as well as ICT activities are used to consolidate material. Active learning is the key approach to teaching and students are expected to read outside of class time in order to develop application of material and key skills during lesson time.

Course Content:

Human behaviour is viewed through the perspective of a number of different psychological approaches, and students learn how to apply these approaches to give explanations of why we do what we do. The emphasis is on applying knowledge rather than just acquiring knowledge, thereby developing students' transferable skills of analysis, evaluation and critical thinking. There is a video link at the end of the flyer which explains the whole course in an accessible way.

AS and A level Year 1 topics: The course begins with practical learning about psychology as a science and understanding research methods. We try out experiments and learn to look critically at experiment set-up and studies conducted by others.

We follow the AQA specification which covers the following topics:

Cognitive psychology – including the study of how memory works and how fragile the eyewitness memories of crimes are

Social psychology – studies of obedience and authority – why do some people unquestioningly obey orders even if it means hurting others?

Developmental psychology – looking at infant attachment behaviour and parenting – how does culture or being raised in an institution affect the development of a child?

Biological psychology – looking at structures and chemical activity within the brain as well as ways of learning about the brain such as surgery and brain scans

Abnormal psychology – understanding mental health and ways to treat psychological disorders. We also look at both medical treatments and the use of other therapies.

Research methods – Methods and techniques used in psychological research, designing investigations, ethical issues and the scientific process. Also includes mathematics – descriptive statistics, graphs, statistical testing and distribution curves. This forms 25% of the course.

A Level year 2:

Students will revisit some of the year 1 content but study it at a more advanced level. Students will also study the following topics:

Issue and debates in psychology such as the nature vs nurture debate, determinism, reductionism and gender bias

Approaches in psychology – biological, social, cognitive, behaviourist, humanistic and psychodynamic explanations of behaviour

Topics in psychology including gender, schizophrenia and aggression.

Students will also study research methods and mathematics to a more advanced level.

Mathematics and science:

Psychology is classified as a Science. This means it counts towards UCAS applications for courses that require Science A Levels (at most universities). Therefore, students become familiar with scientific methods of investigation and data analysis by carrying out and writing up small scale research projects, as well as learning about psychological theories and research. The new specifications are also much more focused on mathematical understanding – therefore 10% of the assessment for both AS and A2 courses will contain mathematical skills at GCSE equivalent and above. 30% of the assessment for both courses will assess skill, knowledge and understanding of research methods. It is essential that students have both the enthusiasm and competence to continue to study scientific and mathematical content at this level.

Entry requirements:

If the subject is taken at GCSE it should be passed at 5 or above and at least one English/Humanities/Social Science subject should be passed with a 6. In addition a grade 5 is required in Maths and in Science or Biology.

Skills & personal qualities required / developed by course:

The ability to look at material and ask questions about it is essential; how do we know this is true? Why do we do that? What is wrong with this? To not accept all you read and are told as gospel, but instead, to question and criticise, analyse and evaluate. These are essential skills. You must have a hunger for answers and a need to make sense of the world around you in order to do well. MOTIVATION is the key!

Visits / resources:

All students will be able to access to a digital textbook and handbook of all course information, teaching schedules, exam information, etc.

Plenty of interactive ICT material available including quizzes, games and activities to assess and increase knowledge and understanding.

Want to know more?

Here is a great video introduction to the A level psychology course – we recommend that everyone watches this before selecting this subject:

<https://youtu.be/p4f22sXf4UU>

Frequently asked questions

Below are some popular questions from previous open evenings:

What careers could the study of Psychology lead to?

Psychology is very versatile – any career involving understanding people or animals will use psychology. Some examples include healthcare and medicine, business management, HR, social work, teaching, police, sports coaching, counselling, research, civil service, advertising and marketing, law and forensics.

What subjects does it go well with?

It works well with most subjects – it is a great complimentary subject if you are taking other sciences, it offers a nice balance of skills if you are doing more artistic subjects, the writing skills will benefit those taking humanities and English subjects. There is also some content cross-over with biology, maths, health and social care and physical education.

Is there any coursework?

No – there are three 2 hour exams at the end of the two year course, covering everything that we will have studied. You will also be assessed internally throughout the course through practice exam questions. You will have an internal exam at the end of year 12.

Do we write essays?

Yes. But these are science essays so much more concise than other essay-writing subjects with a particular writing style that we train you in. In year 12, essays are about one page long, in year 13 this extends to between 1.5 and 2 pages long.

Do you need to be good at science and maths?

No – but you must at least like them! There is a lot of biology and some maths, particularly as we go into the second year. We take you through this step by step and break it down for those who are not confident in these areas.

What are the exams like?

You can view AQA Psychology exam papers online. They are a bit like a GCSE Science paper – a mixture of short questions, questions using graphs and tables and some questions requiring longer answers up to 2 pages long.

How is it different from Sociology?

Psychologists and Sociologists both study people. Psychologists look inside the individual – their brain, personality and experiences using studies that can be considered to be more scientific than sociology. Sociologists go beyond the individual and look at mass influences in society such as race, religion and social class.

What are the class sizes?

It is a very popular subject here at Redcliffe. In year 12, classes are around 24 students, we usually have five classes across year 12. Currently there are four teachers in the department. Most classes are shared between two teachers.

What are your results like?

Historically, very good. We get a very high percentage of A*-C grades (typically around 94%) with around 40% of students getting A* or A grades.

Do many people go on to study psychology at university?

Yes – either Psychology degrees or Joint Honours degrees with subjects like Criminology or Business. We are experienced in supporting those applying to Oxbridge and medicine degrees too.

What if I'm still not sure – what could I look at to find out more?

Firstly, watch the video clip linked on page 3. Next look at a psychology revision website such as 'Simply psychology' or the links below:

<https://www.bps.org.uk/public/what-is-psychology>

https://www.psychol.cam.ac.uk/study/psychology_a-z

A few slides from our usual Open Evening presentation:

What is psychology?

Psychology is the science of...

The brain

The mind

Behaviour

Psychology is a science!

- You will carry out and write up **experiments**
- You will use maths and statistics (10% of the course)
- You will learn a lot about research methods and analyse studies
- You will learn to write concisely and scientifically
- A new linear course (assessed at the end of two years)
- All exam assessment – no coursework

The skills you will use

- Learning how to design psychological experiments
- Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of psychological studies
- Applying psychology to real life scenarios
- Using maths to analyse data and draw graphs
- Weighing up the appropriateness and effectiveness of different treatments for mental disorders
- Looking at different ways of explaining behaviour
- Exploring issues and debates in research such as gender bias and determinism
- Considering the ethics of research

What behaviours will you learn about in year 1?

Normal behaviours

- Conformity
- Obedience
- How memory works
- Eyewitness testimony
- Attachment behaviour in infants
- Learning
- Biological influences on behaviour

Abnormal behaviours

- Phobias
- Depression
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Attachment disorders
- Memory problems

WHAT ARE THE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS?

For our Sixth Form:

- 6554444
- (with at least a 5 in English and a 4 in Maths)

For Psychology:

- At least a 6 in a humanities/English/Social Science subject
- At least a 5 in Maths (our course is 10% Maths)
- At least a 5 in Science or Biology (we do lots of biology)
- You need to quite like biology, maths and writing!

Recommended reading:

A great video outlining the A level course:

<https://youtu.be/p4f22sXf4UU>

Psychology: A very short introduction – Gillian Butler

The Rough Guide to the Brain – Barry Gibb



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