

Course title: Psychology A Level AQA

Academic year:	2026
Course Venue:	Sir Graham Balfour High School
Course Type:	A level
Duration:	2 years

Course Description:

Students will study the AQA Psychology specification. There are three units which incorporate both psychological understanding and the skills required to write critically and use scientific research whilst giving a flavour of the breadth of the subject. In Year 12 students study the core compulsory areas of cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, social psychology, and psychopathology as well as research methods and approaches. In Year 13 there are further compulsory areas of biopsychology and issues and debates. There are also three optional topics studied.

Students are encouraged to use an enquiring, critical and scientific approach to the study of psychology, and need to be able to critique research studies and theories to apply and evaluate the contribution to our knowledge of people.

Course Content:

Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology	Paper 2: Psychology in Context
Social Influence	Approaches in psychology
Memory	Biopsychology
Attachment	Research methods (worth double the marks of other topics)
Psychopathology	

Paper 3: Issues and Options in Psychology
Issues and Debates in Psychology
Relationships, Gender or Cognition and Development
Schizophrenia, Eating Behaviour or Stress
Aggression, Forensic Psychology or Addiction

Entry requirements:

The standard entry criteria to study in the sixth form is a 9-4 in at least seven different subjects, including English and mathematics, which would usually be at grade 4 or above. You do not necessarily have to have studied Psychology at GCSE to study it at A-level, but a good grasp of English and Biology is desirable. You are required to achieve a Grade 6 or above in GCSE Biology

Assessment:

Students will then be assessed at the end of Year 13 through the following three examinations. Please note that there is NO coursework or Controlled Assessment.

Paper 1 – Introductory Topics in Psychology (2 Hours – 96 marks) Questions are multiple choice, short answer questions and essay questions It is worth 33.3% of the overall grade.

Paper 2 – Psychology in Context (2 Hours – 96 marks) Questions are multiple choice, short answer questions and essay questions It is worth 33.3% of the overall grade.

Paper 3 – Issues and Options in Psychology (2 hours – 96 marks) Questions are multiple choice, short answer questions and essay questions It is worth 33.3% of the overall grade.

Which key skills will I develop?

- Communicate effectively, both face-to-face or in writing.
- Understand, analyse and use complex data.
- Retrieve and organise information from different sources.
- Handle primary source material critically.
- Engage in effective teamwork.
- Solve problems and reason scientifically to consider alternative approaches and solutions.
- Make critical judgements and evaluations to gain different perspectives on a question.
- Be sensitive to contextual and interpersonal factors, including behaviour and social interaction.
- Use personal planning and project management skills to become more independent and pragmatic.

Future Opportunities:

Apart from developing many of the crucial transferable life skills listed above studying psychology opens doors to a huge number of areas. As well as a deeper understanding of why people do what they do which is a skill necessary in many potential careers, there are opportunities to go onto a career within psychology. These are as wide-ranging as educational psychology, clinical psychology,





occupational psychology, forensics, sports and health, research, and counselling as well as many other areas.

Students with psychology degrees also go into business, marketing, human resources, teaching, health professional, social work and public sector working.

Further information:

As this is a subject not offered at GCSE, it is necessary to have a commitment to developing the A-level skills required rapidly. Wider reading is helpful and there are numerous entry-level psychology books available such as 'Brain Rules' by John Medina and 'Psychology: A Concise Introduction' by Richard A. Griggs. There are also a number of online resources such as those on the BPS website (www.bps.org) and The Guardian which applies psychology to relevant news items (www.theguardian.com/science/psychology).

