

RMGS

PSYCHOLOGY

A Level

What are the aims of the course?

Psychology is the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes. The A Level course aims to develop your knowledge and understanding of psychological theories, concepts, methodology, research and applications. You will develop your understanding of the different areas of Psychology, and develop your skills of analysis, interpretation, research and evaluation.

What does it involve?

The subject matter of psychology is wide-ranging, and psychology has many applications. Theories are developed to explain behaviour. Scientific methods are used to investigate the causes of human behaviour and to test theories.

How is it assessed?

Paper 1 – Introductory Topics in Psychology (2 hour written examination)

- **Social Psychology – Social Influence:** This section is concerned with how our behaviour is influenced by other people. You will study processes involved in conformity and minority influence, and will investigate obedience to authority.
- **Cognitive Psychology – Memory:** This approach focuses on the ways that people process information. You will study memory processes and explanations of forgetting, and consider the reliability of eyewitness testimony.
- **Developmental Psychology – Attachment:** You will study the development attachment bonds between infants and caregivers, the effects of disruption of attachment, and the effects of early attachments on later relationships.
- **Psychopathology:** This section focuses on mental health issues, and looks at attempts to define psychological abnormality. You will look at the characteristics of phobias, depression and OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder), and investigate biological and psychological explanations and treatments for these mental disorders.

Paper 2 – Psychology in Context (2 hour written examination)

- **Approaches in Psychology:** Psychology adopts a range of different approaches to explain human behaviour. In this section you will look at the origins of Psychology, and analyse the assumptions of five different psychological approaches.
- **Bio-psychology:** You will consider the role of biological factors in explaining human behaviour. You will study the brain and nervous system, considering the way different functions are located in the brain and how the brain adapts after damage. You will investigate biological rhythms, such as sleep and seasonal affective disorder.
- **Research Methods:** Psychology systematically tests theories by conducting research, using a wide variety of methods. You will learn about different experimental and non-experimental research methods and how to design and conduct psychological research. You will learn to use statistics to analyse data, and you will also consider the nature of science.

Paper 3 – Issues and Options in Psychology (2 hour written examination)

- **Schizophrenia:** You will study the characteristics of schizophrenia, biological and psychological explanations of this serious mental disorder, and biological and psychological treatments and therapies, evaluating their effectiveness.
- **Aggression:** You will consider biological factors in aggression (neural mechanisms, hormones, genetics) and consider how aggression has evolved. You will consider how aggression can be learned or arise from frustration, and study media influences on aggression, such as video games.
- **Cognition and development:** You will study how children think and learn. You will study stages of intellectual development and the role of others in helping children develop their thinking skills. You will consider how children learn to understand the perspective of other people, and will study disorders such as Autism and Asperger's Syndrome.
- **Issues and Debates in Psychology:** In this section you will explore issues and debates that run across all of Psychology. These include issues such as gender bias and cultural bias in research, ethical issues that arise in relation to psychological research, the nature-nurture debate, and philosophical issues such as free will and determinism.

Are there any specific entry requirements?

Grade 6 in English Literature and Grade 7 in Biology, or 7,7 in Combined Science. If studied at GCSE, grade 7 in Psychology

Why is it a useful qualification?

Psychology develops skills of data analysis and provides a critical understanding of the nature of research and evidence. Psychology provides skills and insights that could be useful in a range of careers, including social work, nursing, advertising, teaching, sales work, police work, management and personnel. A Level Psychology is the first step towards developing a career as a psychologist, either as a researcher, or as a clinical psychologist, forensic psychologist or one of the many other fields of applied psychology.