

TCOLC Sixth Form

Yr11 – 12 Transition Activities

Subject: A Level Psychology



THE CITY OF LEICESTER COLLEGE



What is Psychology?

Having a good grasp of what psychology is all about is essential for anybody wanting to study the topic in greater depth. Now this may sound like an obvious thing to state but psychology is a term that is often misunderstood and used without any real consideration as to its actual meaning. A classic case in point being the usual response you get from people when you tell them that you study psychology; namely, "I better be careful what I say", or "so do you know what I'm thinking then?"

To help understand the ambiguity surrounding psychology, let's start by looking at a couple of definitions:

Psychology is the scientific study of people, the mind and behaviour. It is both a thriving academic discipline and a vital professional practice (The British Psychological Society).

The scientific study of the behaviour of individuals and their mental processes (American Psychological Association).

The constant theme across these definitions is that psychology is fundamentally concerned with understanding behaviour.

The mind is something intangible that exists within our brain. An unseen process of enzymes, chemicals, and electric current moving within the structure of our neural networks, dictating why we feel, think and behave the way we do.

Psychology looks at questions such as these and looks to provide answers. It is a science with cutting edge research that has real world applications to everyday life, the sort of issues you as a student deal with all the time.

Psychologists observe and measure behaviour, and devise therapies and theories based on scientific studies.

In short, psychology is the answer to everything that happens around you!

The Psychology A-level Specification

<u>Paper 1:</u> Introductory Topics in Psychology	<u>Paper 2:</u> Psychology in Context	<u>Paper 3: Issues in Psychology</u>
Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Social Influence ✓ Memory ✓ Attachment ✓ Psychopathology 	Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Approaches in Psychology ✓ Biopsychology ✓ Research methods 	Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Issues and debates in Psychology ✓ Cognition and Development ✓ Schizophrenia ✓ Aggression
Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 2 hour written exam ✓ 96 marks ✓ 33.3% of A-level 	Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 2 hour written exam ✓ 96 marks ✓ 33.3% of A-level 	Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 2 hour written exam ✓ 96 marks ✓ 33.3% of A-level
Mathematical Skills: Overall, at least 10% of the marks in assessments for psychology will require the use of mathematical skills. These skills will be applied in the context of A-level Psychology and will be at least the standard of higher GCSE mathematics.		

Want to know more about what you will learn in each unit? Go to the AQA website and look at the course specification:

aqa.org.uk/psychology

You will follow the A-level (two-year course).

Transition Tasks

Task 1

You will study 'approaches in psychology' as part of the A-level course. The idea of an 'approach' is that psychologists tend to have a general view on what causes behaviour. Some of them think that the way we behave is largely inherited; others believe it is largely learned through your life experience. You will learn 5 key approaches in Psychology:

- ✓ Biological approach
- ✓ Behaviourist approach
- ✓ Psychodynamic approach
- ✓ Humanistic approach
- ✓ Cognitive approach

There are key differences across the approaches.

Your task is to select one of the five approaches and research its **contribution to Psychology**. Aim to write a long paragraph, identifying any key assumptions and their main contributions.

Task 2

Outline or Evaluate? In Psychology you are awarded marks for outlining information (A01) and Evaluating Information (A03). If you can master these skills you will be well on the way to good grades.

Write yourself a brief reminder of what each term means:

Outline:

Evaluate:

Underneath each of the 20 statements, write whether it is outlining something or evaluating it.

1. Zimbardo conducted research in a prison.

2. Bowlby's theory of attachment focuses on the monotropic bond between an infant and its mother.

3. Reicher and Haslam's research can be considered more ethical than Zimbardo's which helps to raise the reputation of psychological research.
4. Milgram used a volunteer sample of 40 working men from New Haven in his study.
5. Biological explanations for schizophrenia are often criticised for being reductionist: they reduce a complex disorder to a single component such as a neurotransmitter.
6. Piliavin's investigation on the subway has huge real world application as it gives us a valuable insight into helping behaviour.
7. Cognitive explanations of depression focus on irrational thinking patterns.
8. The dispositional explanation of obedience fails to consider the influence of situational factors like the power of uniform.
9. Bandura's findings are limited in the extent to which results apply to aggression in adults.
10. Loftus and Palmer's independent variable was the verb in a critical sentence, for example some participants were given the sentence 'how fast were the cars going when they smashed into each other' and other participants had the verb 'collided' instead of 'smashed'.
11. Rosenhan's research is useful as it shows the issues surrounding diagnosis of psychological disorders.
12. Tulving's theory of long term memory has been supported by evidence from brain scans.
13. The Behaviourist approach uses classical and operant conditioning to explain behaviour.
14. Baddeley's research into memory has often been criticised for being too artificial meaning the results may not measure real life memory events.
15. Social Learning theory explains how we learn vicariously through observing the behaviour of our role models.

16. Raine used brain scanning techniques to investigate the pre frontal cortex of murderers.
17. The working memory model has more explanatory power than other models of memory as it can account for differences in visual and verbal short term memory recall.
18. Freud's psychodynamic approach lacks scientific credibility.
19. Watson and Rayner's research made a small child associate a rat with fear by pairing it with a loud noise.
20. Humanistic approaches to behaviour focus on free will.

Task 3

A level Psychology involves learning numerous research studies. You need to know how studies are conducted, the results they produce and be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the research.

The following website <https://digest.bps.org.uk/> is an excellent resource for Psychology students. This brilliant blog is updated regularly. You can sign up for a weekly email newsletter or follow them on social media for updates. Your task is to:

- 1) Go to the website and find an interesting piece of research – this can be on anything (as it is all psychology). You should read at least 3 different pieces.
- 2) On one A4 sheet of paper (this could be on the computer or handwritten) summarise the research that interested you the most. Include
 - The research area
 - How the research was conducted
 - What was found
 - Why this interested you
 - An evaluative comment about the research

You can present your work however you like (e.g. poster, mind map, notes).

Please do not just 'cut and paste': you need to present your research on 1 piece of A4 paper (this can be typed or by hand) you need to engage with your chosen piece of research.

Task 3

Is Psychology a science? A question that has been debated for years! Your task is to address the question in an essay style response. You should aim to cover 2 arguments that support it is a science and 2 arguments suggesting that psychology is not a science. You should then write an overall conclusion based on your research findings. In order to complete this task you will need to research the question (e.g. internet research). You should aim to write at least 400 words for this assignment.

Again, you need to engage with this debate, please do not simply 'cut and paste'.