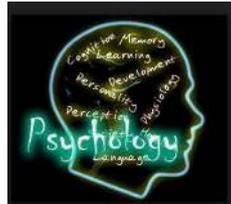


A Level Psychology FAQs



What is psychology?

Psychology is the scientific study of human mind and behaviour: how we think, feel, act and interact individually and in groups. It is both a thriving academic discipline and a vital professional practice, looking at what makes people tick and how this understanding can help solve major problems in society.

Psychology is a science and psychologists study human behaviour by observing, measuring and testing, then arriving at conclusions that are rooted in sound scientific methodology.

What topics do you study?

A range of topics are taught in A level psychology which makes it such a fascinating subject.

Year 1

Topic area	Areas explored
Memory	Differences between short-term and long-term memory, models of memory, forgetting, eyewitness testimony
Attachment	Theories of attachment, role of the father, attachment types, Romanian orphans
Social influence	Conformity, obedience to authority, minority influence and social change
Approaches	Biological approach, learning theories, cognitive approach, psychodynamic approach & humanistic approach
Psychopathology	Definitions of abnormality, phobias, depression & OCD
Biopsychology (Year1)	Nervous system, endocrine system, neurons and synaptic transmission and the fight & flight response
Research methods	How psychologists conduct psychological research including experiments, observations, correlations, interviews and questionnaires

Year 2

Topic area	Areas explored
Relationships	Evolutionary explanation of partner preference, formation of attraction, maintenance & breakdown of relationships, celebrity worship and virtual relationships
Schizophrenia	Clinical characteristics of schizophrenia. Explaining and treating schizophrenia
Addiction	Risk factors for addiction, explanations of nicotine addiction, explanations for gambling addiction & reducing addiction.
Issues and debates	Free will versus determinism, nature vs nurture debate, issues of gender and cultural bias in psychology.
Biopsychology (year 2)	The brain including localisation of function, brain plasticity, recovery after injury, ways of studying the brain and biological rhythms
Research methods	Statistical testing, data handling and analysis, design and reporting of psychological investigations

What is the exam board?

The exam board is AQA

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/psychology/as-and-a-level/psychology-7181-7182>

How many exams are there?

There are three exams at the end of year 13. All exams are 2 hours long and out of a total of 96 marks and each exam is worth 33.3% of the overall grade.

What type of questions are in the exam?

There is a mixture of short answer questions and extended essay questions. There are a range of mark questions included in the exam, the largest number of marks for any one question is 16 marks for an essay question. In each paper there is a maximum of three essay questions.

Is there any coursework?

No, there is no coursework element in A level psychology

How is psychology different to sociology?

Psychology is very much the study of the individual and their behaviour, that is, their brain structure, their genes, their biochemistry, their early childhood experiences, their upbringing and their environment. Sociology explores the institutions that make up society, that is, the education system, family, crime and deviance and the media. Psychology is classified as science and follows the scientific method whereas sociology is more of a social science.

What do those who study psychology go on to do?

Psychology can be useful in any career where you are required to work with others as it develops your understanding of other people's thought processes and reasoning behind their thoughts.

Many of our students go on to study psychology at degree level. Others have progressed onto degrees as varied as teaching, adult nursing, occupational therapy, criminology, mental health nursing, human resources & business studies.

We explore the topics of schizophrenia, depression, phobias, addiction and attachment and those who are considering careers in social work, the education system, mental health services, police and probation services would all benefit.

Is psychology easy?

No, psychology is not an easy course. Psychology is a challenging course as it is a new subject with a new set of vocabulary to learn. It requires considerable time, effort and dedication outside of lessons.

Do I need to be good at maths?

There is a maths element to psychology which equates to 10% of the overall grade. Students will need to be familiar with basic maths such as mean, median, mode, range and standard deviation. They will be required to calculate percentages and percentage increases and decreases. Students, in year 13 will be taught how to use inferential statistics to analyse data. Students will need to consider types of data, including nominal, ordinal and interval level data as well as probability levels. Students are given very clear guidance for this element of the course. Students may find taking the Core Maths additional course useful to help them if they feel they need further support with their Maths.

Do I need to have studied psychology before?

No, you do not need any prior knowledge, just enthusiasm. Psychology is not offered as a GCSE at Plymstock School and no one has studied it before so you will not be at a disadvantage if you have not studied it previously.

Are there other subjects that would be suitable to study alongside psychology?

We do not have a 'typical' A Level psychology student. Our students study a range of other subjects. There are some overlaps with sociology in the research methods element of the course, criminology in the approaches section of the course and biology in the biopsychology section that some students may find helpful.

Can I get in touch if I have any other questions?

Of course, my email address is rrichardson@plymstockschool.org.uk

What else can I do if I am interested in psychology?



Watch the following clip to see if you think psychology is right for you