BEECHEN CLIFF

A Level Psychology

Curriculum Booklet

2026 - 2027

Head of Faculty: Miss K Mather

Head of Subject: Ms N Blaskiewicz

Subject Curriculum Intent:

"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid"

Albert Einstein.

Our intent is to ensure that our students develop an active interest in what is often a new field of study and to not only gain the knowledge and skills required, should they decide to carry on their studies in Psychology, but to be able to apply what they know to their whatever careers they choose.

We aim to ensure that they can access and understand scientific research whilst weighing up and evaluating different explanations for a psychological phenomenon allowing them to make judgements regarding validity and generalizability of studies and theories. Finally, we aim to develop their critical thinking skills so that they are able to successfully understand and analyse information they are presented with in both academia and everyday life, as well as utilise this knowledge to have a positive impact on those around them.

As our students are typically higher prior attainers, in order to ensure that they are challenged we have chosen the AQA psychology specification. This is a robust academic qualification that covers all key concepts that form the foundation of this academic field.

By highlighting racial, gender bias and androcentrism within historic psychological research, we remain alert to potential similar challenges within the classroom. Moreover, research gives us insight into the importance of individual differences when studying psychological phenomena, which not only informs the subject content, but also the delivery of it i.e. psychology has numerous new and abstract concepts and theories, and the schemes of learning intend to provide a variety of learning activities to enable all students to access the curriculum.

The options chosen intend to allow students to work to both their strengths and weaknesses, as well as afford more able students the opportunity to be stretched and challenged even further. The course also delivers parallel content and skills to the first year of a Psychology degree, meaning students will have a much stronger level of understanding to support their undergraduate studies should they continue with education at a university level.

Subject Curriculum Implementation:

Psychology A Level is covered over a 2 year course, but teaching is not divided into AS and A2 content as this would require two fundamental units (research methods and approaches) to be split.

Whilst this content can be initially challenging, the nature of the subject means these two topics are continuously referred to throughout the rest of the course and this interweaving ultimately results in a stronger understanding and better grasp of the concepts by the end of the course (through harnessing the benefits of elaborative learning).

The key building blocks for a thorough understanding of psychology are covered early in terms 1 and 2 of the lower sixth. These include "approaches in psychology" and "research methods". These are key as the knowledge and skills developed are then utilised in later units.

After this, the various specialist areas are covered as distinct units over the remainder of the two years of study. These include memory, clinical psychology and mental health, social influence, attachment and biopsychology in Lower Sixth and then, issues and debates, cognition and development, schizophrenia and forensic psychology in Upper Sixth - These A2 modules are in line with staff specialist areas. Teaching is usually complete by the end of term 4 of the Upper Sixth, leaving a term for guided revision in school at the end of the academic year.

In order to check that students are retaining the knowledge required, lesson by lesson, content is recapped at the start from the previous week to maximise consolidation. We also carry out regular formal assignments and knowledge tests as well as assessments. These are used to identify gaps in knowledge and to inform teachers so that we can ensure these are addressed across the course. To support students, we will do this by contacting home, holding intervention sessions, working with the head of faculty and liaising with the sixth form team. Formal A Level examinations are sat at the end of the upper sixth.

Allocated Curriculum Time:

	Lower Sixth	**Upper Sixth**
Fortnightly lesson allocation	8	8

Course Information

Exam Board: AQA
Specification: A Level Psychology 7182

Lower Sixth

Term	Curriculum Foci Areas	Assessment
1 & 2	**4.2.1 Approaches in Psychology** ● The nature of psychology (origins) ● Key features of science (emergence of psychology as a science) ● Approaches in psychology (behaviourist, cognitive, social learning theory, biological psychodynamic, humanistic) ● Emergence of cognitive neuroscience **4.2.3 Research Methods** ● Variety of research methods used within the study of psychology ● reporting of psychological investigations including the role and value of peer review ● assessing and improving reliability and validity of research within psychology ● the strengths and limitations of different research methods/techniques/sampling methods. ● Probability, significance, type I and type II errors ● Introduction of statistical analysis ● More in depth study building on the Term 1 content and consolidating understanding **4.1.4 Clinical Psychology and Mental Health** ● Explain definitions in the field of mental health ● Characteristics of disorders ● Causes and treatments for phobias, depression and OCD **Key Skills / Coursework / PSAs / Deadlines** ● To be able to describe, apply and evaluate the different approaches and research methods within the study of psychology as well as to Psychopathology content ● To have a core understanding of the mathematical principles within the study of psychology ● To be able to plan to work to timed conditions in order to meet the requirements of the exam	**Exam Style Questions including regular 16 mark essays and knowledge tests**

	• Application of knowledge to sort/categorise/descriptions of studies and include subject specific language / psychological terminology • Discussion of ethical, methodological and real world implications of research. • identify inferential statistical tests and when these should be used	
3 & 4	**4.1.2 Memory** • Outline and evaluate the multi-store model of memory and the working memory model • Outline and evaluate types of long-term memory • Outline and evaluate explanations for forgetting • Outline and evaluate factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony as well as methods used to improve the accuracy of eyewitness testimony **Key Skills / Coursework / PSAs / Deadlines** • Revisit normal and skewed distributions in relation to statistical infrequency definition • Critical thinking; developing lines of argument and drawing conclusions in relation to implications of the definitions and effectiveness of the explanations/treatments **4.1.3 Attachment** • Develop understanding of explanations for attachment in humans and animals and evaluate these • Describe and evaluate research into infant-caregiver interactions • Outline attachment types, and explain and evaluate the strange situation as a method of measuring attachment type • Outline and evaluate Bowlby's maternal deprivation hypothesis and Identify the effects of institutionalisation **Key Skills / Coursework / PSAs / Deadlines** • Applying knowledge of attachment concepts to presented scenarios	**Exam Style Questions including regular 16 mark essays and knowledge tests**
5 & 6	**4.1.1 Social Influence** • Conformity and Obedience • Resisting social influence and minority influence • Social Change **4.2.2 Biopsychology**	**Exam Style Questions including regular 16 mark essays and knowledge tests**

	• Outline/identify the structure and function of neurons and the process of synaptic transmission • Identify the divisions of the nervous system and function of the endocrine system • Identify and discuss key areas of localisation of function in the brain and research into localisation of function and hemispheric lateralisation • Outline and evaluate methods used to study the brain **Key Skills / Coursework / PSAs / Deadlines** • Return to the terms, concepts and practical issues surrounding observational research as highlighted during RM along with the role of meta-analysis and longitudinal research. • Application of social influence concepts to explain everyday situations e.g. peer pressure, social change • Using different types of research evidence to evaluate theory/models (critical thinking and evaluation skills) • Apply knowledge and understanding of models of memory to explain everyday situations – including application to A level revision!	

Upper Sixth

Term	Curriculum Foci Areas	Assessment
First 2 Weeks **Term 1 & 2**	**Revision and consolidation of Paper 1 topics from L6** **4.3.1 Issues and Debates in Psychology** Students should be able to identify and discuss: ● Gender and culture in psychology ● Free will and determinism ● The nature-nurture debate ● Holism and reductionism ● Idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation as well as ethical implications of research studies and theory **4.3.3 Cognition and Development** ● Piaget's theories of cognitive and intellectual development ● Vygotsky's theories of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development ● Baillargeon's explanations of early infant abilities including violation of expectation studies ● Social cognition and Selman's perspective taking; theory of mind and the Sally-Anne test ● Mirror neurons **4.3.5 Schizophrenia** ● Outline and evaluate classification of schizophrenia and research into biological and psychological explanations ● Discuss the issues surrounding diagnosis of schizophrenia ● Outline and evaluate drug and cognitive behavioural therapies for schizophrenia ● Explain the importance of an interactionist approach in explaining and treating schizophrenia; the diathesis-stress model. **Key Skills / Coursework / PSAs / Deadlines** ● Using different types of research evidence to evaluate theory/models (critical thinking and evaluation skills) ● Consider the wider implications of research into gender and gender roles	**Exam Style Questions including regular 16 mark essays and knowledge tests**

	• Distinguishing between key structures, rhythms and biological processes in the brain	
3	**4.3.9 Forensic Psychology** • Outline the process of offender profiling • Discuss biological and psychological explanations of offending behaviour: • Discuss the effectiveness of different ways of dealing with offending behaviour **Key Skills / Coursework / PSAs / Deadlines** • Using different types of research evidence to evaluate theory/models (critical thinking and evaluation skills) • Apply knowledge and understanding • Use of diagnosis statistics • Understanding of concordance rates	**Exam Style Questions including regular 16 mark essays and knowledge tests**
Term 4 & 5	**Revision (practice exam papers) and Mock Exams**	
6	**Exams**	

Reading List

- An extensive reading list is provided for students to further their studies further, this includes resources such as BPS research digest etc.
- In addition to this, the department subscribes to two e-books - year one 'GHG' and year two 'PHG' that students are periodically given flipped learning/homework from, and can login of their own accord.

Studying/Revision Information

Ongoing Studying

Psychology is a rigorous A-level that requires reading beyond the materials provided in the classroom in order to aspire for the higher grades. Students will need to be committed, independent and proactive when it comes to revising e.g. finding further past paper questions of their own accord. All students are given a handout 'How to fly in psychology'.

Revision
How to prepare for assessments:
Brief explanation required!

Useful resources:
Recommended revision guide, websites, textbooks etc. (give as bullet points)

- PHG and GHG E-books

- Seneca
- Tutor2u
- AQA website
- Use of confidence grids/crib sheets and checklists given in class

Final Assessment Structure:

Component	Weighting (%)	Content *	Proposed Examination Date
Paper 1	33.3%	• Social Influence • Attachment • Memory • Clinical Psychology and Mental Health	May of Upper Sixth
Paper 2	33.3%	• Approaches in Psychology • BioPsychology • Research Methods	May of Upper Sixth
Paper 3	33.3%	• Issues and Debates in Psychology • Cognition and Development • Schizophrenia • Forensic Psychology	June of Upper Sixth

*Please note Research Methods content will be present in **all** papers
Please see Exam Board websites for up to date information: (click here)

Careers in Psychology

The Psychology A Level curriculum has many links to careers, throughout the two years. There are numerous examples where the content has a direct link to real-world applications, and so to potential careers. Some of these examples are listed below. Rather than having stand-alone careers activities, these links are interwoven into our teaching of the course.

Year	Careers links in Psychology
12	• Research Methods - Academic Teaching and Research, Assistant Psychologist • Clinical Psychology and Mental Health - Counselling Psychologist, Clinical Associate in Applied Psychology, Education Mental Health Practitioner • Attachment - links with child and behavioural psychology practice. Careers in SEND and education support. Child Wellbeing Practitioner • Social Influence - HR and Occupational Psychologist • Biopsychology - medicine and diagnosis in psychology. Neuropsychologist
13	• Cognition and Development - Child development and psychology. Links with care work and Educational Psychologist • Schizophrenia - diagnosis and roles destigmatising mental health. Importance of mental health charities. Education Mental Health Practitioner • Forensics Psychology - criminal psychologist and criminology. Links with the legal system. Forensic Psychologist

Careers links

- https://www.bps.org.uk/career-options-in-psychology - This webpage has links to a wide range of careers that an A Level in Psychology can lead you to.
- Studying Psychology also helps to develop many transferable skills. See this webpage for a summary of some of these skills: https://www.bps.org.uk/blog/transferable-skills-your-psychology-degree