

Borlase Psychology Course Introduction

The A Level Examination

Borlase's follows the AQA specification, full details on the course can be found on their [website](#)

Students sit 3 psychology exams at the end of Year 13. These are externally assessed and there is no coursework component.

Content from Papers 1 and 2 will be covered in year 12 and the remaining content from Paper 3 will be covered in Year 13

Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology (2 hours)			Year 12
Section A	Social Influence	24 marks	
Section B	Memory	24 marks	
Section C	Attachment	24 marks	
Section D	Psychopathology	24 marks	
Paper 2: Psychology in context (2 hours)			
Section A	Approaches in psychology	24 marks	
Section B	Biopsychology	24 marks	
Section C	Research Methods	48 marks	
Paper 3: Issues and Options in psychology (2 hours)			Year 13
Section A	Issues and debates in psychology	24 marks	
Section B	Gender (option)	24 marks	
Section C	Schizophrenia (option)	24 marks	
Section D	Aggression (option)	24 marks	

Each section will contain a combination of multiple choice, short answer and extended writing questions. The extended writing questions can be 8 or 16 mark essays. There are usually six 16 mark essays across all three papers, with the other sections containing at least one 8 mark extended writing question.

Note: Research Methods is worth 25-30% of your exam and can appear in **any section of any paper.**

As research methods are integrated in the exam most of the content is not taught as a separate topic but is integrated into the other topics throughout the year. The detailed course overview shows where the research methods topics will be covered

What are the assessment objectives?

AO1 - Knowledge	AO2 - Application	AO3 - Evaluation
Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures.	Apply knowledge and understanding	Analyse, interpret and evaluate scientific information, ideas and evidence
	• in a theoretical context • in a practical context • when handling data	• make judgements and reach conclusions • develop and refine practical design and procedures.

Command Terms

All exam questions contain one or more command terms — words and phrases that tell you how you should answer an exam question. Each command term is associated with one or more assessment objectives. This is not a comprehensive list, a [full list of AQA command words](#) is available on drive.

AO1 - Knowledge	
Describe	Give an account of.
Identify	Name or otherwise characterise.
Name	Identify using a recognised technical term.
Outline	Set out main characteristics.
AO2 - Application	
Design	Set out how something will be done.
Explain	Set out purposes or reasons.
Justify	Provide reasons, reasoned argument to support, possibly provide evidence.
Write	Provide information in verbatim form.
AO3 - Evaluation	
Compare	Identify similarities and/or differences.
Discuss	Present key points about different ideas or strengths and weaknesses of an idea.
Distinguish	Explain ways in which two things differ. Provide detail of characteristic that enable a person to know the difference between ...
Evaluate	Judge from available evidence.

Essay Questions

There is usually a 16 mark or 8 mark essay in each topic in the exam, which includes six 16 mark essay spread across all three papers. This means approximately 50% of your marks can come from extended writing questions. Discussing complex theories or research in a limited amount of time is difficult and takes preparation and practice.

How are the marks be split?

	AO1	AO2	AO3
'Describe and evaluate'	6	-	10
Application to stem	6	4	6

How much do I need to write?

Number of marks	Time (mins)	Number of words
1	1 ¼	25 - 30
8	10	200 - 250
16	20	400 - 500

What do examiners look for?

Often students know lots of information but fail to present it in an effective way and lose marks. The marking grid below clearly shows the top level answers must be 'clear, coherent and focused'. Here are some key points from examiners to help you do this effectively.

- **Use paragraphs**, organise longer answers into clear paragraphs that explain or develop a single discussion point. Use the PEEL or burger structure to do this.
- **Signpost** your answers and paragraphs, this indicates when you are describing, evaluating or applying. For example:
 - One explanation is ... (AO1)
 - A key feature of ... (AO1)
 - An example of this is ... (AO2)
 - This is shown ... (AO2)
 - A strength/limitation of the theory is ... (AO3)
 - The findings support/challenge this theory because ... (AO3)
- **Fully explain yourself**, do not make the examiners fill in the gaps in your arguments and avoid generic evaluation. If you can drop your point into another essay it is generic
- **Plan** what you are going to write, this ensure your answers are focused, concise and well structured.
- **Be selective**, only include some relevant points but elaborate on them
- **Keep it simple**, avoid unnecessary introductions, padding and background if it is not clearly relevant to the question.

*"To do well, answers needed to demonstrate understanding of the material. Particularly with discussion and evaluation, **fewer points in greater depth is often more effective** than lists of brief evaluative points"* Examiners report June 2018

Look at model answers and plans to see these techniques in action.

Essay Planning

- Identify the key terminology or evaluation points. These are important in communicating to your examiner as well as organisation and structure of your essay
- This can also be used as a brief plan in the exam and as a quick test of your knowledge by covering the left column
- **Yellow Blocks for AO1 (Knowledge) Orange Blocks for AO3 (Evaluation)**
- Each block would be developed into a paragraph in the full essay
- In cases where you may need to describe more than one explanation/study it may be more appropriate to describe and evaluate the first explanation/study then describe and evaluate the next explanation/study eg **(AO1-AO3 -AO3 -AO1-AO3 -AO3)**
- An [essay planning template](#) is available online

Key Terms/ Cues	• Explanation • Elaboration / Counterpoint / Issues and Debates

How are essay questions marked?

Extended writing questions are marked holistically, this means that the overall quality of your response is marked rather than simply ticking if the correct information has been included.

Examiners use a leveled marking scheme that is broken into 4 levels and 4 or 5 characteristics shown in the grid below.

Level	AS Level	A Level	Knowledge	Accuracy	Evaluation	Focus	Specialist terminology
4	10-12	13-16	Well-detailed	Accurate	Thorough and effective	Clear, coherent and focussed	Used effectively
3	7-9	9-12	Evident (reasonably detailed)	Occasional inaccuracies	Mostly effective	Mostly clear and organised	Mostly used effectively
2	4-6	5-8	Present (lacks detail)	Numerous inaccuracies	Partly effective	Lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation	Used inappropriately on occasions
1	1-3	1-4	Limited (limited/absent knowledge)	Highly inaccurate	Limited, not effective or absent	Lacks clarity, many inaccuracies and poorly organised	Either absent or inappropriately used
0	0	0	None	None	None	None	None

Application questions

Part of how your understanding of psychology is assessed is through application skills (AO2). These questions begin with a stem (or scenario) and you are required to use your knowledge to explain what is happening. Overall application accounts for about 30% of your marks much of which comes from research methods questions but can also be integrated into essay questions and short answer questions.

Students often find application questions difficult to answer and do not receive full marks. When attempting to answer these types of questions, you should remember that the examiner is actually looking for two elements:

- Selection of appropriate KNOWLEDGE
- That the knowledge has been APPLIED appropriately

One way to ensure that you include both elements, is to write your answer using the '**two-sentence**' technique.

- This means writing one or two KNOWLEDGE sentences that are relevant to the question...
- And then, writing one APPLIED sentence where you explain how that knowledge is relevant to the question.
- You can do this several times until you think you have fully answered the question

Example application question (from Social Influence topic):

Simon did not enjoy smoking cigarettes but often felt pressured to smoke when his group of friends teased him for not being as 'cool' as them. Then, one of the friends in the group, Paul, decided not to smoke again even if that meant he would get teased. Now, when Simon and Paul are with the group, Simon is able to resist the pressure and the teasing and refuses to smoke.

'Explain the change in Simon's behaviour using your knowledge of resistance to social influence.' (4 marks)

Example application answer:

KNOWLEDGE	<i>It is easier to resist conformity when there is at least one other ally and/or 'dissenter' in the group.</i>
APPLIED	<i>In this situation, Simon is at first on his own trying to resist the pressure to smoke, but he then finds an ally in Paul who also wants to resist the group of friends.</i>
KNOWLEDGE	<i>It is easier to resist conformity when we have an ally because they offer us social support – that is, when we believe we have the assistance of other people.</i>
APPLIED	<i>In this situation, Simon has social support in Paul and believes that if he tries to resist smoking, Paul will be able to help him and defend him from the teasing.</i>

Answering the question

Probably the most common weakness across students and scripts was a failure to read the question carefully.” (Examiners report Paper 1 2018). Many students prepare answers for standard ‘describe and evaluate’ questions, however questions in your exam will often ask for specific information.

For example a question most often misread by students was ‘Outline how Lorenz and Harlow studied attachment using animals.’ The key term in this question is ‘how’ indicating that answers should focus on the procedures used. However in the exam the vast majority of answers included findings and implications of findings, and some even included evaluation of the studies. None of this material was relevant to the question.

These types of questions require you to shape your knowledge/discussion to the question rather than simply remembering a pre-prepared answer. These appear regularly in the exam as they often differentiate higher achieving students. Students should practice answering these questions in full and under timed conditions to ensure they are effectively prepared for the exam. Examples of some of these questions are available in [exampro](#).



Exam technique articles

Below are articles from Psychology Review which give advice on the best techniques for achieving the highest marks possible.

- Thompson S.K. (2019) [How to communicate with your examiner](#). Psychology Review 24(3) p32-33
- Liddle, R. (2018) [The worst things you can do in your exam answers](#). Psychology Review 23(4) p22-23
- Flanagan, C (2013) [Turning your grade C answer into a grade A](#). Psychology Review 18(1) p8-9

What resources are available?

[Borlase Psychology Website](#)

- <https://sites.google.com/swbgs.com/psychology/home>

The psychology department website is the best place to find resources and links to help with your psychology course.

- The [extension and consolidation section](#) you will find a page for each topic area which contains links to wider reading, videos, model answers and activities to help you understand the topics in more detail. These topic areas also have links to course materials used in class including course notes and presentations.

Below is an example of a section from the biopsychology section

9. Ways of studying the Brain
Key Words: functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI); electroencephalogram (EEGs) and event-related potentials (ERPs); post-mortem examinations. Spatial and temporal resolution
Practice Questions: • Ways of studying the brain
Consolidation ❑ Tutor2u Student video: Ways of Studying the Brain: Biopsychology Webinar Video ❑ fMRI Video How does fMRI brain scanning work? ❑ EEG Video: Intro to EEG ❑ Psych Review Article: Electroencephalography Oct 17 ❑ Postmortem: The UK Brain banks ❑ Video: What is Brain Bank? ❑ Model Answer: Outline and evaluate one or more ways of studying the brain [8 marks]
Extension ❑ PET Scan video: How does a PET scan work? ❑ CAT Scan video: What Is a CAT Scan ?

- The [revision section](#) aims to provide you with the best advice to passing your exams and has sections on essay writing, exam and revision strategies as well as a large section practice questions, quizzes and key term flashcards on quizlet

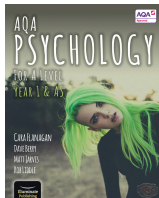
Psychology Websites

There are several websites that specifically address the AQA psychology specification

- Simply Psychology - <https://www.simplypsychology.org/a-level-psychology.html>
- Tutor2u - <https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/collections>

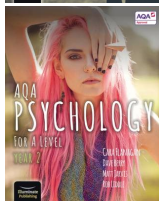
Textbooks

Students are recommended to purchase the Complete Companion Books for their own use. This is the textbook used in class. We also have access to an online version of the Illuminate textbooks which students can access through their laptops



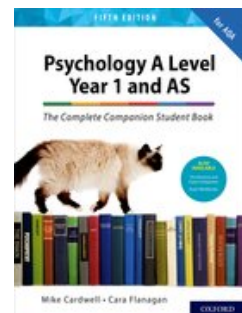
<https://illuminate.digital/aqapsych2edy1/>

UN: SSIRWBORLASE7
PW: GREEN7



<https://illuminate.digital/aqapsych2edy2/>

UN: SSIRWILLIAMBORLASE8
PW: PINK8



Google Classroom



Each class has it's only 'google classroom' this generally were teachers post homework and resources from the lesson. At the beginning of term you will be sent an email inviting you to join your class, make sure you click to accept the invitation promptly.

Throughout the year you will be emailed notifications about upcoming assignments please check this regularly. If you miss a lesson this is the best place to find out what you missed and what you need to catch up on.

exampro

Exampro links

Exampro is an exam preparation tool for teachers which has thousands of past A-level questions, their related mark schemes and examiner comments, all mapped to the current specifications. We have included this in the extension and consolidation section of the website as well as all the links on a google document.

[Exampro Links](#)

Psychology Review



Psychology Review is a magazine that has a combination of articles that are directly relevant to their A- level specification and that will expand your interest in the subject, in a short and accessible format. For example in the 2018/19 volume renowned psychologist Philip Zimbardo reflecting on his long career and discussing how an understanding of 'evil' can inspire everyday heroism. Students can subscribe to the magazine and will receive 4 issues of the magazine in September, November, February and April that are delivered straight to the school.