

What are the aims and intentions of this curriculum?

The first year of the two-year A-level course is the AS course, introducing students to work at a new level as they make the transition from GCSE studies. For many students, the two-year A-level course will lead to higher education, and the AS course is the first stage of that progression.

In psychology the aim is to introduce students to a range of explanations for individual behaviour. They will develop their ability to think critically through discussion of the body of research done by psychologists, understanding that there are seldom 'simple answers'. This is a research-based subject, so students will discuss ways in which different research methods lead to different conclusions, for example, the different approaches adopted by cognitive and biological schools.

The intention is that students will complete the course with a good understanding of key issues in the following areas of psychology: social, cognitive, developmental, biological and individual differences. They will understand that research evolves by comparing classical and contemporary studies. Having critically studied experimental and non-experimental research methods throughout the course, and conducted their own research practicals, they will be able to discuss the key question: is psychology a science? By the end of the year they will understand how ideas and arguments in psychology can be applied to a range of issues to do with social influence and anti-social behaviour, for example, or the individual's innate capacity for learning.

For **OCR Psychology** the AS course includes two units: **Research Methods** (Unit 1) and **Psychological Themes Through Core studies** (Unit 2).

Unit 1 includes different kinds of experiment (laboratory, field, natural) as well as non-experimental methods (observation, self-report). Students will understand the difference between causation and correlation. They will study different stages of the research process: planning and conducting research, and then analysis of results.

Unit 2 is built round ten core studies, two in each of five areas of psychology: social, cognitive, developmental, biological, individual differences. This unit considers the relationship between the individual study and the theoretical assumptions it has been based on; as well as questions of science and the differences between 'hard' and 'soft' science – nothing to do with 'difficult' and 'easy'!

Term	Topics	Knowledge and key terms	Skills developed	Assessment
Autumn 1	<p>Introduction to topics in psychology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nature vs nurture Different areas of psychology (and core studies) The overlap with perspectives <p>Introduction to research in psychology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experimental and non-experimental methods Planning research: decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the first half-term students will be introduced to a range of topics chosen to provide a broad overview of the course as a whole: this will include themes and studies. In turn, studies will introduce studies to research issues Nature/nurture debate: the wolf children and Genie Wolf children: development and the 'human animal' Genie: cognitive development and 'innate' vs 'learned' abilities Areas: social, cognitive, developmental, biological, individual differences Perspectives: behaviourist (with 	<p>Contested knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the outset students must understand there are no right/wrong answers if research has been conducted properly All research findings are provisional Discussion of different ideas and arguments: from the outset students should start to understand how to select evidence when forming an argument <p>Revision and retrieval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of revision constantly: not to be confused with examination preparation (below) Lessons begin by recapping work done previously Students must learn to make connections between different topics/studies: they can only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first half-term is devoted to knowledge and understanding of key terms: students will be assessed on their ability to develop their writing in response to simple questions such as: 'Outline one strength and one weakness of a laboratory experiment' (response must include context, ie the study in question)

		<p>conditioning/reinforcement) and psychodynamic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies might belong to different areas, eg Bandura (developmental and social) • Overlap between areas and perspectives, eg Bandura (here, developmental area but also behaviourism) • Research terminology, eg hypothesis, reliability, validity, experimental design 	<p>do this work if they continue to improve familiarity with topics/studies as they go through the year</p> <p>Writing for assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students consider the way in which shorter questions on both examination papers might be structured • Students will start work on analysing the research process in relation to core studies <p>Research studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the relationship between theory (the area) and practice (the study that belongs to an area) <p>Research methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making when research is planned and carried out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These simple two- and four-mark questions will feature in the suitability test at the end of September: students will demonstrate progress made thus far
<p>Autumn 2</p>	<p>Core studies continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social • Cognitive • Developmental <p>Research methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and conducting research <p>November Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A formal examination based on strengths and weaknesses identified thus far 	<p>Core studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social influence • Milgram: obedience • Bocchiaro: disobedience • Memory • Loftus & Palmer: eye-witness testimony • Grant: student revision • Bandura: modelled aggression • Chaney: positive reinforcement <p>Research methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedure • Data-analysis 	<p>Contested knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evolution of research: assumptions • Why different researchers reach different conclusions <p>Revision and retrieval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of key themes can be reinforced • Basic research terminology can now be applied <p>Writing for assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to respond to stimulus material shows understanding of both concepts and research methods 	<p>November Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One paper: one hour 30 minutes • A hybrid paper with questions from across both units

<p>Spring 1</p>	<p>Core studies continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological • Individual differences • Research methods <p>February Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation for a second formal examination based on strengths and weaknesses identified thus far 	<p>Core studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sperry: brain-detachment • Casey: High- and low-delayers (longitudinal study) • Freud: Observation (longitudinal study) • Baron-Cohen: autism in adults <p>Research methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report-writing 	<p>Contested knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of biological studies underline debates round psychology as a science <p>Revision and retrieval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All studies involve different methods, reinforcing knowledge of research methodology <p>Writing for assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can now complete detailed comparisons of all studies in all areas in preparation for likely examination questions • In particular: they should now grasp principles underpinning comparisons between classical and contemporary studies in each area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular completion of examination questions for all parts of the course • Students are given questions adapted from the old course, so there is no shortage
<p>Spring 2</p>	<p>Examination preparation 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For students sitting public examinations in May <p>Final revision before exam prep</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For students sitting internal examinations in June/July <p>Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section C on H180/02 	<p>Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to revise topics and test understanding through application to scenarios provided • Usefulness: problem-solving and evaluation <p>Exam prep and targeted revision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA • Course design hereafter will depend on student progression 	<p>Contested knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With an overview of the entire course students can now complete more challenging 12-mark questions requiring a holistic approach • All questions, however worded, should address the status of psychology as a (soft) science <p>Revision and retrieval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on longer responses requires the ability to select material from across the course: therefore class exercises will ask them to select from, eg, a list provided to respond to a particular question (with justifications provided for selection/rejection) <p>Writing for Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should now be a shift in written work towards completing sections and then full papers in timed conditions • By now revision throughout the year should have provided a foundation for this new phase of written work • Improvement of written work: perhaps now students will be better able to grasp assessment requirements and the need for consistency across both final examination papers 	<p>February Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either side of half-term • There will be one paper for AS students: one hour 30 minutes

Summer 1	Examination preparation 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final exam prep for students approaching public examinations beginning in mid-May • Beginning of exam prep for students sitting internal end-of-year exams in June/July 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA • Course design hereafter will depend on student progression 	Writing for Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should now be a clear understanding of the relationship between a given topic and how assessment works for different parts of the course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular completion of questions
Summer 2	Preparation for end-of-year examinations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8PLO/01 • 8PLO/02 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA 	Final examination preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two full examination papers • Each paper: one hour 30 minutes