

WGSB6 A Level Options Psychology FAQ Information Sheet



Which exam board and courses are studied at A level?

AQA A level Psychology (linear)

What skills will studying Psychology equip me with?

Psychology A level involves students developing a broad set of skills, building upon those from several GCSE subject areas. The successful psychology student will finish their A level with mathematical skills, including inferential statistical analysis utilising 7 different coefficient calculations and an ability to extrapolate from complex scientific data. They will also develop skills in extended writing, formulating discussion-based essays that investigate scientific research to support psychological theories. Students will increase their appreciation of the complexity of scientific methods used in biological, medical and current neuroscientific research as well as the more indirect, inferred hypotheses of cognitive processing. Students will become experts at evaluation, discussing the merits and limitations of each research piece as well as offering alternative theories and studies in order to refute and extend discussion of subjective and qualitative findings, whilst also offering empiricism in their arguments.

Do I need a specific grade at GCSE to access A level?

A grade 6 in Mathematics and Biology is preferred, as is a grade 5 in English.

How is the course structured and how will it be taught?

The course is linear, with 3 two-hour examinations at the end of two years. The Course is delivered as 10 discrete topics, as well as 40% of the marks being attained from scientific 'research methods'. The final paper also includes a 25% section devoted to a 'synoptic' question.

Is there a coursework component?

No – coursework has been replaced by the 40% 'research methods' components that are embedded within the 3 written papers.

Who teaches the course?

The course is taught by 2 teachers and is split currently across a 2:1 allocation between Ms J Heymans and Mr T Rushton-McElroy. In Y12 classes are taught for ten hours per fortnight and in Y13, nine hours per fortnight.

How is the course resourced?

The course is supported with full access to two digital textbooks – one for each year of the course.

How well do students achieve in Psychology?

Student success is individually driven, with support and intervention from staff where necessary. Students who attain their target grade are conscientious from the start, showing initiative, reading around the subject and meeting staff expectations in all assessment pieces. Many students go on to study Psychology at University.



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Will I need to do a lot of independent study?

Independent study is an expectation of all A levels and as such, pupils are given a guide to independent learning that can be utilised whenever students have independent study sessions. Pupils will need to read outside the classroom and ahead of certain topics in order to facilitate the speed of lesson delivery.

What are typical A level subject choices alongside Psychology?

Psychology is quite unique in that there is neither an obvious companion nor an unsuitable combination. Pupils arrive with very diverse choices every year.

Do I need to take another subject to support my study of Psychology?

Essay-based A levels such as English, History, Law or Business Studies can be just as useful as the science and logic-based subjects like Biology, Chemistry, Physics & Maths. All combinations have something to offer in Psychology.

What subject related extracurricular opportunities are offered at A level?

In Year 12, pupils are visited by an external Neuroscientist for a day of lectures based on the most up-to-date cognitive neuroscience breakthroughs. There is also a day dealing with the 'Phobias' topic where the students have a chance to meet with tarantulas and scorpions and various other fear-inducing creatures.

In Year 13, pupils attend A level lectures at Chester Zoo to learn about the application of psychological theory to the training and well-being of the animals. They are also taught about the theories of the evolution of intelligence through other monkeys and primates whilst spending time with the chimpanzees and orangutans with the Zoo's education officers.

How might Psychology help me in my next steps / university / career planning?

...."Psychology has the potential to create wonder in anyone who studies it. It is the personal science that explores how we make sense of the world, ourselves and others. It is about gaps between sensation and perception. It is about the wonder of being alive"..... British Psychological Society Education Board 2015.

Psychology has been re-classified as a Science A level and so links in very well with not only the sciences but other subjects due to its wide-ranging application and relevance to the challenges faced by individuals within society today.

Other helpful information about studying Psychology?

Your development of a sound foundation of knowledge of Psychology includes learning about Social Influence, Memory, Attachment, Psychopathology, Approaches in Psychology, Biopsychology, Research Methods, Descriptive and Inferential Statistics, Issues & Debates, Gender, Schizophrenia and Forensics. Each topic will be applied to real and current world situations facing society today.

