

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO THE AS/A LEVEL IN PSYCHOLOGY



What do I need to know or be able to do before taking this course?

In order to study this subject, it is usual to have achieved at least a grade 5 in English literature or language and mathematics at GCSE. It is also preferred that you have at least one grade 6 science GCSE.

The course focuses on the scientific study of the human mind and behaviour. It covers such areas as cognitive psychology, biological psychology, social psychology and research methods.

What will I learn on this A level course?

The course will enable you to:

- develop your interest in human behaviour
- develop as an independent thinker
- develop a clear philosophy of scientific principles
- develop your skills in analytical thinking, communication and research
- understand the importance of psychology in the everyday world and the motivation behind some human behaviours.
- understand the context of differing behaviours when considering culture, gender and ethics.



What kind of student is this course suitable for?

This course will appeal to students who:

- have an interest in human behaviour and the mind
- enjoy scientific study and research
- want to keep their options open for further study relevant to any profession. Psychology is particularly relevant to careers in health, welfare, medicine, law, teaching, marketing, human resources, general management, the police and the media.

What examinations will I have to take to get my qualification?

AS is short for Advanced Subsidiary. This is a standalone qualification studied for one year. All Hartismere students will sit AS exams so that they can have as much choice as possible about the subjects they continue with in year 13. All work in year 12 is preparation for the full A level qualification which is taken at the end of year 13.



AS Psychology

Psychology at Hartismere follows the AQA specification.

The AS qualification is comprised of 2 components:

Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology

Topics

- **Memory**, including memory models, explanations for forgetting and eyewitness testimony
- **Attachment**, including early social development, caregiver-infant interactions and explanations of attachment
- **Social Influence**, including majority influence, types of conformity and obedience

Assessment: 1hr 30 minute written paper covering all 3 of the above topics and containing multiple-choice, short answer and extended writing questions. This exam accounts for 50% of the total AS marks.

Paper 2: Psychology in Context

Topics

- **Approaches in Psychology**, including the emergence of Psychology as a science, learning, cognitive and biological approaches.
- **Research Methods**, including how to design, conduct and analyse research
- **Psychopathology**, including definitions of abnormality, causes and treatments for phobias, depression and OCD.

Assessment: 1hr 30 minute written paper covering all 3 of the above topics and containing multiple-choice, short answer and extended writing questions. This exam accounts for 50% of the total AS marks.

A level Psychology

The A Level comprises 3 units:

Unit 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology

Topics

- **Memory**, including memory models, explanations for forgetting and eyewitness testimony
- **Attachment**, including early social development, caregiver-infant interactions and explanations of attachment
- **Social Influence**, including majority influence, types of conformity and obedience
- **Psychopathology**, including definitions of abnormality, causes and treatments for phobias, depression and OCD.

Assessment: 2hr written paper covering all 4 of the above topics and containing multiple-choice, short answer and extended writing questions. This exam accounts for 33.3% of the total A level marks.

Unit 2: Psychology in Context

Topics

- **Biopsychology**, including divisions of the nervous system, the function of the endocrine system, brain localisation and biological rhythms.
- **Approaches in Psychology**, including the emergence of Psychology as a science, learning, cognitive and biological approaches.
- **Research Methods**, including how to design, conduct and analyse research

Assessment: 2hr written paper covering all 3 of the above topics and containing multiple-choice, short answer and extended writing questions. This exam accounts for 33.3% of the total A level marks.

Unit 3: Issues and Options in Psychology

Topics

- **Issues and Debates in Psychology**, including reductionism, the nature-nurture debate and ethical implications of research.
- **3 options from 12**, which could include schizophrenia, addiction and cognition & development. Options will be chosen by your teacher.

Assessment: 2hr written paper covering all 4 of the above topics and containing multiple-choice, short answer and extended writing questions. This exam accounts for 33.3% of the total A level marks.



What could I go on to do at the end of my course?

Students with AS or A Level psychology have a very broad range of possible career and higher education opportunities. You will learn and use a wide variety of transferable skills during the course. These include developing writing skills, numeracy skills, communication skills, analytical and problem solving skills, as well as developing the ability to form and express informed and independent opinions. You will also develop your scientific research skills, and at the end of the course you will be capable of designing and conducting your own research. You will have also developed the key skill of evaluation during your study of psychology.

All of these skills are in demand from employers, universities and colleges and are also valuable in their own right.



Psychology can be studied as a single subject in higher education or can be combined with a wide variety of other subjects, depending on the area of psychology you wish to pursue. Psychology generally forms a good basis for study in combination with a number of other science subjects such as human biology, physical education or chemistry. Nevertheless, there are many combined courses that offer psychology with arts subjects such as human resources and music too.

Many students will also use their qualification to go straight into employment rather than higher education. A wide range of occupations such as accountancy training or healthcare work are open to students with AS or A Level psychology due to the skills that a psychology student develops during their A level course.

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