

## AQA A Level Psychology

### Why study Psychology at The Sixth Form at Ridgewood?

- Psychology offers an insight into the human brain, mind and behaviour, helping you to develop yourself and your relationships with others
- The course covers a variety of disciplines within the subject, making it interesting and unique and applicable to many different university courses
- Previous students have gone on to study a variety of subjects at university including psychology, educational studies, teaching, business studies, sport, English, politics, social work and nursing
- At Ridgewood the psychology department are specialists in teaching Psychology at post-16, with many years of experience and exam expertise
- Current students enjoy the course because of the variety of different areas of psychology, and because they feel valued and respected by their teachers
- If you are looking to have a career of any kind working with other people then Psychology is a perfect choice

### What topics will I study in this subject?

Topic	What this means
Approaches in psychology	An approach is a perspective or view that involves certain assumptions about human behaviour: the way they function, which aspects of them are worthy of study and what research methods are appropriate for undertaking this study. You will study learning theory (behaviourism); cognitive approach; biological approach; psychodynamic approach and the humanistic approach.
Research methods	A wide range of research methods are used in psychology. These methods vary by the sources from which information is obtained, how that information is sampled, and the types of instruments that are used in data collection. Methods also vary by whether they collect qualitative data, quantitative data or both.
Scientific processes	Psychologists use the scientific method to conduct their research. The scientific method is a standardised way of making observations, gathering data, forming theories, testing predictions, and interpreting results. You will become familiar with a full range of methods and techniques, and be able to justify design choices.
Data handling and analysis	After psychologists develop a theory, form a hypothesis, make observations, and collect data, they end up with a lot of information, usually in the form of numerical data. The term 'statistics' refers to the analysis and interpretation of this numerical data. You will know when and how to use a range of statistical tests and be able to state whether results are significant and why.
Attachment	Attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space. The attachment experience affects personality development, particularly a sense of security, and research shows that it influences the ability to form stable relationships throughout life. You will study different types of parent/infant attachments; theories of attachment; animal studies; cases where attachment has been interrupted or has not formed at all and how early attachments impact relationships in later life.
Psychopathology	Psychopathology is a term which refers to either the study of mental illness or mental distress or the manifestation of behaviours and experiences which may be indicative of mental illness or psychological impairment. You will study different definitions of, and analyse the issues with defining, abnormality. You will apply the approaches to explain phobias, depression and OCD and evaluate the effectiveness in treating people with these disorders.

Social influence	Social influence is the change in behaviour that one person causes in another, intentionally or unintentionally, as a result of the way the changed person perceives themselves in relationship to the influencer, other people and society in general. In particular you will study majority and minority influence; reasons for conformity; reasons why people obey authority and why people conform to social roles.
Memory	“Memory is the means by which we draw on our past experiences in order to use this information in the present” (Sternberg, 1999). Memory is the term given to the structures and processes involved in the storage and subsequent retrieval of information. You will learn two models of memory and their associated issues; identify and explain why we forget things; look into cases of eye witness testimony and the police cognitive interview technique.
Biopsychology	This field of psychology is often referred to by a variety of names including biopsychology, physiological psychology, behavioural neuroscience, and psychobiology. Bio-psychologists often look at how biological processes interact with emotions, cognitions, and other mental processes. You will study the divisions of the nervous system; the structure and function of neurons; the process of synaptic transmission; the endocrine system; localisation of function in the brain; Broca’s and Wernicke’s areas; split brain research; plasticity and functional recovery; ways of studying the brain; and biological rhythms.
Issues and debates	The key issues and debates include gender and culture in psychology; free will and determinism; the nature-nurture debates; idiographic and nomothetic approaches and ethical issues and social sensitivity.
Relationships	Relationships is a topic in psychology which examines evolutionary explanations for partner preference, the factors that affect the initiation, maintenance and breakdown of romantic relationships, virtual relationships and para-social relationships.
Schizophrenia	Schizophrenia is a serious mental illness characterised by incoherent or illogical thoughts, bizarre behaviour and speech, and delusions or hallucinations, such as hearing voices. Schizophrenia typically begins in early adulthood. You will study the symptoms of schizophrenia; the issues with diagnosing schizophrenia, biological and psychological explanations and treatments for the disorder.

### What skills will I need in this subject?

Skill	What this skill involves in this subject
Knowledge and memory recall	In Psychology you must learn many different theories and pieces of research and be able to recall these in an exam.
Application of knowledge	Some of the exam questions in Psychology require you to apply your knowledge of psychology to new scenarios.
Evaluation	You are required to consider the advantages and disadvantages of research methods as well as consider practical applications, ethical issues and debates in research and psychological theory.
Mathematics	Research methods are a key theme in the psychology course and you will be required to show competency in mathematics and statistics.

### What will my lessons involve?

- Accessing and reading psychological material independently.
- Use of subject specific psychological terminology.
- Critical thinking and developing lines of argument and drawing conclusions.
- Problem solving /analytic /application skills
- Creative transformation skills (application of knowledge to novel scenarios).

## What will my independent study involve?

- Flipped learning (reading materials in preparation for your lesson)
- Essay plans and revision resources
- Quizlet (creating your own testing materials for self-assessment)
- Exam questions (self-marked using mark-schemes to familiarise yourself with examiner requirements)

## How will I be assessed?

Percentage exam assessment: 100%

Percentage coursework assessment: 0%

Assessment	Details of assessment
Paper 1: Introductory topics in Psychology	2 hours, 96 marks, a variety of short and long answers ranging from 1 to 16 marks.  Topics covered are Social influence, Memory, Attachment and Psychopathology.
Paper 2: Psychology in context	2 hours, 96 marks, a variety of short and long answers ranging from 1 to 16 marks.  Topics covered are Approaches, Biopsychology and Research methods.
Paper 3: Issues and options in Psychology	2 hours, 96 marks, a variety of short and long answers ranging from 2 to 16 marks.  Topics covered are Issues and debates, Forensic psychology, Relationships and Schizophrenia.

## How do I know this is the right course for me?

- You will be required to spend a minimum of six hours per week studying outside of lessons to be successful in completing the Psychology course
- This course will suit students who are well organised, enjoy reading and are proficient in essay writing skills. Due to the density of new information, it is expected that you will be committed, resilient, and relish the prospect of overcoming the challenges involved in this course.
- If you are looking for a career working with, caring for, or collaborating with other people, this is the right course for you.

