

Psychology A-Level Curriculum Overview

Psychology at Coopers’ Coborn is taught by two teachers, who instruct all students, they are Mrs C. Harries (CHS) and Mr W. Ferreira (WFE) who is the Head of Department (email: wfe@cooperscoborn.co.uk). Each teacher teaches specific topics prescribed by the AQA A Level Specification. The students have workbooks which they can fill in during the lesson and these represent their notes for the year. There is an online textbook, from Illuminate Publishing, (AQA endorsed) which the students can use if they are connected to the internet.

AQA subject content weblink: <https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/psychology/as-and-a-level/psychology-7181-7182/subject-content-a-level>

There are three exams at the end of year 13. Each exam is 2 hours long and comprise of 96 marks in total.

- Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology, Social Influence, Memory, Attachment and Psychopathology
- Paper 2: Psychology in Context, Approaches in Psychology, Biopsychology and Research Methods (year 12 and year 13)
- Paper 3: Issues and Options in Psychology, Issues and Debates in Psychology, Relationships, Eating Behaviour and Addiction

Please Note: Overall, at least 10% of the marks in assessments for Psychology will require the use of mathematical skills. These skills will be applied in the context of A-level Psychology and will be at least the standard of higher tier GCSE mathematics.

Teacher (CHS)	Teacher (WFE)
Year 12: Autumn	
<p>Approaches (Paper 2) These are the different approaches psychologists take to understanding human behaviour such as whether they assume it is driven by biology, environment, or the unconscious for example. The origins of Psychology and comparison of approaches are left until later in the year.</p> <p>Research Methods (Paper 2, imbedded in paper 1 and 3) Research methods teaches us how to study human behaviour. This topic includes experimental design, sampling, and descriptive statistics.</p> <p>Psychopathology (Paper 1) Psychopathology looks at the cause of psychological disorder. We study phobias from a behavioural perspective, depression through a cognitive perspective and obsessive-compulsive disorder through a biological perspective.</p>	<p>Social Influence (Paper 1) Social influence is the process by which an individual’s attitudes, beliefs or behaviour are modified by the presence or action of others.</p> <p>The course focuses on conformity as a social influence and considers the work of Asch and Zimbardo. Students are introduced to the concept that people may behave in a particular way because of the situation they find themselves in (called situational variables).</p> <p>After we have finished conformity we look at the work of Milgram and obedience. This part of the course introduces the student to personality factors leading to obedience called authoritarian personality.</p> <p>Research Methods (Paper 2, imbedded in paper 1 and 3) Research methods does involve some core mathematics skills including understanding terms such as mean, median and mode.</p>

	Other calculations such as ratio, fractions and percentages are required to understand data.
<p>Assessment: Social Influence/Approaches Test (40 marks) - Summative (can be used as baseline)</p> <p>Social Influence Essay (16 marks) - Formative</p> <p>Homework Formative, various pieces of work are set during the term to assess understanding and allow students to practise the writing style required which is more concise and scientific than they are used to. Many find this precision difficult to adjust to.</p>	

Teacher (CHS)	Teacher (WFE)
Year 12: Spring	
<p>Research Methods (Continued from Autumn term): Some schools only teach each concept as it is embedded in other topics, but we have found students find this confusing and retention is poor.</p> <p>Psychopathology (Paper 1) (Continued from Autumn term): This topic is broken into discrete sections which make it easy to teach alongside research methods.</p> <p>Memory (Paper 1) This topic looks at the capabilities and different types of memory before looking at factors that influence the accuracy of eye-witness testimony. It involves some practical experiments that students can take part in.</p> <p>The emergence of psychology as a science is covered here.</p>	<p>Social Influence (Paper 1) Minority influence takes the social influence topic away from how a majority can influence human behaviour towards what influence a minority has on the majority.</p> <p>Study Skills and Note Taking WFE reinforces note taking skills (Cornell Method) and study skills using Psychologists such as The Learning Scientists. https://www.learningscientists.org/</p> <p>Attachment (Paper 1) The attachment topic is a good introduction to caregiver/infant interaction and a foundation of early development psychology. In this topic we cover theories that explain attachment, we look at animal studies relating to attachment and the impact of not forming an attachment. The course involves two explanations of attachment, learning theory and Bowlby’s monotropic theory. The course explains attachment types according the Mary Ainsworth and finishes with how attachment can impact our future relationships.</p>

Assessment:
Research Methods (24 marks) - Formative

Psychopathology (36 marks) - Summative, 16-mark essay included in the test.

Attachment (16 marks) - Formative, timed essay.

Homework

Formative, various pieces of work are set during the term to assess understanding.

Teacher (CHS)	Teacher (WFE)
Year 12: Summer (year 13 content)	
<p>Biopsychology (Paper 2) The first part of this topic is factual and covers the nervous and endocrine systems. It is quite scientific and some aspects, such as synaptic transmission, build on GCSE science. The more advanced areas include how the brain is structured and functions which can be quite technical.</p>	<p>Introduction to experimentation: There is opportunity to run an experiment and to put into practise the parts of the research methods course that require the students to know what happens when planning and executing research.</p> <p>Research Methods (Paper 2, imbedded in paper 1 and 3) In order to introduce inferential statistics and how to work out significance for data these topics are included when looking at the sign test. This is the only calculation of significance they need to be able to do. Types of data, significance and the sign test are taught at this stage to bridge the gap between year 12 and year 13 research methods.</p> <p>Introduction to Addiction: We use the summer term to consider the applied psychology topic of addiction. Using the introduction from, Marc Lewis (The Biology of Desire, Why Addiction is not a Disease) we start to explore the difference between drug use and addiction. This is important because addiction is complex and they can use their knowledge of psychology, so far, to understand that addictive behaviour. We start with a Discovery Channel documentary on the effects of drugs on the body.</p>

Assessment:

Mock Exams: Social Influence, Memory, Attachment, Psychopathology and Research Methods - Summative, this the topics for Paper 1, 24 marks per section, and will include research methods imbedded in the topics.

Homework

Formative, various pieces of work are set during the term to assess understanding.

Teacher (CHS)	Teacher (WFE)
Year 13: Autumn	
<p>Biopsychology (Paper 2) (Continued from Summer term): The final part looks at the biological rhythms of the body such as the sleep-wake cycle.</p> <p>Issues and Debates (Paper 3) Key debates in Psychology include assessing the value of a reductionist approach in research and whether humans are determined or have freewill.</p> <p>The issues cover gender and culture bias as well as the social sensitivity of psychological research.</p> <p>Approaches (Paper 2) Comparison of approaches can also be effectively tackled now to give practise at using the debates in a structured way. This completes the Approaches topic.</p>	<p>Addiction (Paper 3) The start of the course can be covered at the end of year 12 and deals with describing addiction and understanding dependence and tolerance. The content moves on to understanding how certain aspects of our lives such as inherited traits or family may put us at risk of developing addiction as well as exploring the risk of peers. The course then explains smoking and gambling as addictive behaviour. Smoking is seen as a substance addiction and gambling as a behavioural addiction. The course ends with treatment of addictive behaviour and looks at models that can be used to prevent addictive behaviour.</p> <p>Research Methods (Paper 2, imbedded in all topics) Inferential statistics is the part of research methods that attempts to explain if the data from an experienced is significant and whether we should accept or reject a hypothesis.</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>Mock Exam: Social Influence, Memory, Attachment & Psychopathology - Summative, complete paper 1 paper.</p> <p>Research Methods and Addiction - Summative, topics covered in paper 2 and 3</p> <p>Homework</p>	

Formative, various pieces of work are set during the term to assess understanding.

Teacher (CHS)	Teacher (WFE)
Year 13: Spring	
<p>Issues and Debates (Paper 3) Continued from Autumn term.</p> <p>Eating Behaviour (Paper 3) This topic includes how diets are influenced by evolution and environment as well as different theories for obesity and anorexia nervosa.</p>	<p>Research Methods (Paper 2, imbedded in all topics) Factors of science and the scientific process is a theoretical section of research methods that requires the student to understand what science is and why psychology can be considered a science. There is a section on the application of science that refers to peer review and the impact of research on the economy that we complete at this stage in the course.</p> <p>Relationships (Paper 3) The course includes an evolutionary explanation for relationships, factors affecting attraction and theories of relationships. The course finishes with virtual and para-social relationships.</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>Mock Exams: Issues and Debates, Approaches - summative Research Methods - summative</p>	
Final Exam	