AQA Psychology
A Level
at Parkstone Grammar School



Handbook

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AQA
Realising potential

Why choose AS and A-level Psychology?

Ever wondered if prison really does change criminal behaviour?

Or why some people conform?

Or perhaps if the experiences you had before the age of five really do shape the person you are today?

AS and A-level Psychology will give you an understanding of the way people think and why people behave in certain ways.

You will learn a variety of skills including analytical thinking, improved communication, problem solving and many more that will prepare you for an exciting future with the possibility of a range of fantastic careers.

Where will AS and A-level Psychology take you?

Possible degree options

According to bestcourse4me.com, the top seven degree courses taken by students who have an A-level in psychology are:

- Psychology
- English studies
- Sociology
- Business studies
- Teaching
- Sport and exercise science
- Law.

Possible career options

Studying psychology at university can give you a whole host of exciting career options, including:

- Marketing
- Business development
- Accountancy
- Human resources
- Forensic psychology
- Occupational therapy
- Clinical psychology
- Nursing
- Teaching.



Find out more
aqa.org.uk/psychology

This is a linear qualification which means that you will sit all the A Level exams at the end of the A Level course.

Course Content Overview

1 Social influence

2 Memory

3 Attachment

4 Psychopathology

5 Approaches in Psychology

6 Biopsychology

7 Research methods

8 Issues and debates in Psychology

Option 1 - Relationships

Option 2 - Stress

Option 3 - Forensic Psychology

Assessments

Paper	Content	Assessed	Questions
1. Introductory Topics in Psychology	Content 1-4 above	Written exam: 2hrs 96marks in total 33.3% of A Level	Sections A/B/C/D: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing. (24marks each)

2. Psychology in Context	Content 5-7 above	Written exam: 2hrs 96marks in total 33.3% of A Level	Sections A/B: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing. (24 marks each) Section C: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing. (48 marks)
3. Issues and Options	Content 8 and Options 1-3	Written exam: 2hrs 96marks in total 33.3% of A Level	Sections A/B/C/D: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing. (24marks each)

Specification Details

Paper 1 – Introductory Topics in Psychology

1 Social influence

- Types of conformity: internalisation, identification and compliance. Explanations for conformity: informational social influence and normative social influence, and variables affecting conformity including group size, unanimity and task difficulty as investigated by Asch.
- Conformity to social roles as investigated by Zimbardo.
- Explanations for obedience: agentic state and legitimacy of authority, and situational variables affecting obedience including proximity, location and uniform,

as investigated by Milgram. Dispositional explanation for obedience: the Authoritarian Personality.

- Explanations of resistance to social influence, including social support and locus of control.
- Minority influence including reference to consistency, commitment and flexibility.
- The role of social influence processes in social change.

2 Memory

- The multi-store model of memory: sensory register, short-term memory and long-term memory. Features of each store: coding, capacity and duration.
- Types of long-term memory: episodic, semantic, procedural.
- The working memory model: central executive, phonological loop, visuo-spatial sketchpad and episodic buffer. Features of the model: coding and capacity.
- Explanations for forgetting: proactive and retroactive interference and retrieval failure due to absence of cues.
- Factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony: misleading information, including leading questions and post-event discussion; anxiety.
- Improving the accuracy of eyewitness testimony, including the use of the cognitive interview.

3 Attachment

- Caregiver-infant interactions in humans: reciprocity and interactional synchrony. Stages of attachment identified by Schaffer. Multiple attachments and the role of the father.
- Animal studies of attachment: Lorenz and Harlow.
- Explanations of attachment: learning theory and Bowlby's monotropic theory. The concepts of a critical period and an internal working model.

- Ainsworth's 'Strange Situation'. Types of attachment: secure, insecure-avoidant and insecure-resistant. Cultural variations in attachment, including van Ijzendoorn.
- Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation. Romanian orphan studies: effects of institutionalisation.
- The influence of early attachment on childhood and adult relationships, including the role of an internal working model.

4 Psychopathology

- Definitions of abnormality, including deviation from social norms, failure to function adequately, statistical infrequency and deviation from ideal mental health.
- The behavioural, emotional and cognitive characteristics of phobias, depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).
- The behavioural approach to explaining and treating phobias: the two-process model, including classical and operant conditioning; systematic desensitisation, including relaxation and use of hierarchy; flooding.
- The cognitive approach to explaining and treating depression: Beck's negative triad and Ellis's ABC model; cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), including challenging irrational thoughts.
- The biological approach to explaining and treating OCD: genetic and neural explanations; drug therapy.

Paper 2 – Psychology in Context

1 Approaches in Psychology

Origins of Psychology: Wundt, introspection and the emergence of Psychology as a science.

The basic assumptions of the following approaches:

- Learning approaches: the behaviourist approach, including classical conditioning and Pavlov's research, operant conditioning, types of reinforcement and Skinner's research; social learning theory including imitation, identification, modelling, vicarious reinforcement, the role of mediational processes and Bandura's research.
- The cognitive approach: the study of internal mental processes, the role of schema, the use of theoretical and computer models to explain and make inferences about mental processes. The emergence of cognitive neuroscience.
- The biological approach: the influence of genes, biological structures and neurochemistry on behaviour. Genotype and phenotype, genetic basis of behaviour, evolution and behaviour.
- The psychodynamic approach: the role of the unconscious, the structure of personality, that is Id, Ego and Superego, defence mechanisms including repression, denial and displacement, psychosexual stages.
- Humanistic Psychology: free will, self-actualisation and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, focus on the self, congruence, the role of conditions of worth. The influence on counselling Psychology.
- Comparison of approaches.

2 Biopsychology

- The divisions of the nervous system: central and peripheral (somatic and autonomic).
- The structure and function of sensory, relay and motor neurons. The process of synaptic transmission, including reference to neurotransmitters, excitation and inhibition.
- The function of the endocrine system: glands and hormones.
- The fight or flight response including the role of adrenaline.

- Localisation of function in the brain and hemispheric lateralisation: motor, somatosensory, visual, auditory and language centres; Broca's and Wernicke's areas, split brain research. Plasticity and functional recovery of the brain after trauma.
- Ways of studying the brain: scanning techniques, including functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI); electroencephalogram (EEGs) and event-related potentials (ERPs); post-mortem examinations.
- Biological rhythms: circadian, infradian and ultradian and the difference between these rhythms. The effect of endogenous pacemakers and exogenous zeitgebers on the sleep/wake cycle.

3 Research methods

Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following research methods, scientific processes and techniques of data handling and analysis, be familiar with their use and be aware of their strengths and limitations.

- Experimental method. Types of experiment, laboratory and field experiments; natural and quasi-experiments.
- Observational techniques. Types of observation: naturalistic and controlled observation; covert and overt observation; participant and non-participant observation.
- Self-report techniques. Questionnaires; interviews, structured and unstructured.
- Correlations. Analysis of the relationship between co-variables. The difference between correlations and experiments.
- Content analysis.
- Case studies.

3.1 Scientific processes

- Aims: stating aims, the difference between aims and hypotheses.
- Hypotheses: directional and non-directional.
- Sampling: the difference between population and sample; sampling techniques including: random, systematic, stratified, opportunity and volunteer; implications of sampling techniques, including bias and generalisation.
- Pilot studies and the aims of piloting.
- Experimental designs: repeated measures, independent groups, matched pairs.
- Observational design: behavioural categories; event sampling; time sampling.
- Questionnaire construction, including use of open and closed questions; design of interviews.
- Variables: manipulation and control of variables, including independent, dependent, extraneous, confounding; operationalisation of variables.
- Control: random allocation and counterbalancing, randomisation and standardisation.
- Demand characteristics and investigator effects.
- Ethics, including the role of the British Psychological Society's code of ethics; ethical issues in the design and conduct of psychological studies; dealing with ethical issues in research.
- The role of peer review in the scientific process.
- The implications of psychological research for the economy.
- Reliability across all methods of investigation. Ways of assessing reliability: test-retest and inter-observer; improving reliability.
- Types of validity across all methods of investigation: face validity, concurrent validity, ecological validity and temporal validity. Assessment of validity. Improving validity.

- Features of science: objectivity and the empirical method; replicability and falsifiability; theory construction and hypothesis testing; paradigms and paradigm shifts.
- Reporting psychological investigations. Sections of a scientific report: abstract, introduction, method, results, discussion and referencing.

3.2 Data handling and analysis

- Quantitative and qualitative data; the distinction between qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques.
- Primary and secondary data, including meta-analysis.
- Descriptive statistics: measures of central tendency – mean, median, mode; calculation of mean, median and mode; measures of dispersion; range and standard deviation; calculation of range; calculation of percentages; positive, negative and zero correlations.
- Presentation and display of quantitative data: graphs, tables, scattergrams, bar charts, histograms.
- Distributions: normal and skewed distributions; characteristics of normal and skewed distributions.
- Analysis and interpretation of correlation, including correlation coefficients.
- Levels of measurement: nominal, ordinal and interval.
- Content analysis and coding. Thematic analysis.

3.3 Inferential testing

Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of inferential testing and be familiar with the use of inferential tests.

- Introduction to statistical testing; the sign test.

- Probability and significance: use of statistical tables and critical values in interpretation of significance; Type I and Type II errors.
- Factors affecting the choice of statistical test, including level of measurement and experimental design. When to use the following tests: Spearman's rho, Pearson's r, Wilcoxon, Mann-Whitney, related t-test, unrelated t-test and Chi-Squared test.

Paper 3 – Issues and Options

1 Issues and debates in Psychology

- Gender and culture in Psychology – universality and bias. Gender bias including androcentrism and alpha and beta bias; cultural bias, including ethnocentrism and cultural relativism.
- Free will and determinism: hard determinism and soft determinism; biological, environmental and psychic determinism. The scientific emphasis on causal explanations.
- The nature-nurture debate: the relative importance of heredity and environment in determining behaviour; the interactionist approach.
- Holism and reductionism: levels of explanation in Psychology. Biological reductionism and environmental (stimulus-response) reductionism.
- Idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation.
- Ethical implications of research studies and theory, including reference to social sensitivity.

2 Relationships

- The evolutionary explanations for partner preferences, including the relationship between sexual selection and human reproductive behaviour.

- Factors affecting attraction in romantic relationships: self-disclosure; physical attractiveness, including the matching hypothesis; filter theory, including social demography, similarity in attitudes and complementarity.
- Theories of romantic relationships: social exchange theory, equity theory and Rusbult's investment model of commitment, satisfaction, comparison with alternatives and investment. Duck's phase model of relationship breakdown: intra-psychic, dyadic, social and grave dressing phases.
- Virtual relationships in social media: self-disclosure in virtual relationships; effects of absence of gating on the nature of virtual relationships.
- Parasocial relationships: levels of parasocial relationships, the absorption addiction model and the attachment theory explanation.

3 Stress

- The physiology of stress, including general adaptation syndrome, the hypothalamic pituitary-adrenal system, the sympathomedullary pathway and the role of cortisol.
- The role of stress in illness, including reference to immunosuppression and cardiovascular disorders.
- Sources of stress: life changes and daily hassles. Workplace stress, including the effects of workload and control.
- Measuring stress: self-report scales (Social Readjustment Ratings Scale and Hassles and Uplifts Scale) and physiological measures, including skin conductance response.
- Individual differences in stress: personality types A, B and C and associated behaviours; hardiness, including commitment, challenge and control.
- Managing and coping with stress: drug therapy (benzodiazepines, beta blockers), stress inoculation therapy and biofeedback. Gender differences in coping with

stress. The role of social support in coping with stress; types of social support, including instrumental, emotional and esteem support.

4 Forensic Psychology

- Problems in defining crime. Ways of measuring crime, including official statistics, victim surveys and offender surveys.
- Offender profiling: the top-down approach, including organised and disorganised types of offender; the bottom-up approach, including investigative Psychology; geographical profiling.
- Biological explanations of offending behaviour: an historical approach (atavistic form); genetics and neural explanations.
- Psychological explanations of offending behaviour: Eysenck's theory of the criminal personality; cognitive explanations; level of moral reasoning and cognitive distortions, including hostile attribution bias and minimalisation; differential association theory; psychodynamic explanations.
- Dealing with offending behaviour: the aims of custodial sentencing and the psychological effects of custodial sentencing. Recidivism. Behaviour modification in custody. Anger management and restorative justice programmes.

Expectations

As a student in the psychology department you are expected to:

- Attend all lessons punctually
- Come to the lessons prepared
- Complete all tasks required during lesson time
- Complete all homework and hand it in on time – any late work will be subject to the homework policy where you will spend your next study period in a psychology classroom completing the work.

- Show respect to the teacher and other members of your class
- Ask for help if you do not understand

As a student in the psychology department you can expect from us:

- Lessons that start on time
- Relevant homework
- Assessed work returned to you within 2 weeks of it being handed in.
- Opportunities to speak to your teachers on a 1:1 basis

Psychology Recommended Reading List

General Psychology Textbooks

AQA Psychology for A Level & AS – Flanagan, Berry, Jarvis & Liddle (class text)

AQA Psychology for A Level Year 2 – Flanagan, Berry, Jarvis & Liddle (class text)

Psychology A Level Year 1 and AS – The Complete Companion Student Book. Mike Cardwell & Cara Flanagan

Psychology A Level Year 2 – The Complete Companion Student Book. Mike Cardwell & Cara Flanagan

Psychology for A Level Year 1 & AS – Jean-Marc Lawton and Eleanor Willard

Psychology 2 – Jean-Marc Lawton and Eleanor Willard

Oxford AQA Psychology A Level Year 1 & AS – Green, Lewis and Willerton

Oxford AQA Psychology A Level Year 2 – Green, Lewis and Willerton

Journals (copies of these are available in the library)

'The Psychology Review'

'The Psychologist'

' Psychologies'

Websites

www.psychology 4a.com

www.simplypsychology.org

www.psychteacher.co.uk

http://www.s-cool.co.uk

Topic Specific Textbooks

Opening Skinners Box –Lauren Slater

The Lucifer Effect –Phillip Zimbardo

The Death of Freud - Mark Edmundson

The Man who Mistook his wife for a hat – Oliver Sacks

A Dictionary of Psychology – Any author

The Man Who Shocked the World - Thomas Blass

Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View - Stanley Milgram

Sybil - Flora Rheta Schreiber

The Origin of Humankind – Richard Leakey

Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland - Christopher R Browning

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest – Ken Kesey

Lord of the Flies – William Golding

The Cases that Haunt Us – John Douglas

The Jigsaw Man – Paul Britton

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time – Mark Haddon

In Cold Blood – Truman Capote

The Case of Mary Bell – Gitta Sereny

It's Not Me, It's You – Jon Richardson

The Psychopath Test – Jon Ronson

Classic case studies in Psychology- Geoff Rolls

Rationality - Stuart Sutherland

Breakdown: A personal crisis and medical dilemma - Stuart Sutherland

I'm Eve - Chris Sizemore

Psychology and Crime - Putwain and Sammons

Welcome to your brain - Sandra Aamodt & Sam Wang

The boy who couldn't stop washing – Judith Rapoport

The man who loved a polar bear & other psychotherapist's tales – Robert Akeret

Innocent Man - John Grisham

To kill a mockingbird - Harper Lee

Before I Go To Sleep – S J Walsen

Blue Eyed Boy – Joanne Harris

Command Words

Command words are the words and phrases used in exams and other assessment tasks that tell students how they should answer the question.

Analyse - Separate information into components and identify their characteristics.

Calculate - Work out the value of something.

Choose - Select from a range of alternatives.

Comment - Present an informed opinion.

Compare - Identify similarities and/or differences.

Complete - Finish a task by adding to given information.

Consider - Review and respond to given information.

Describe - Give an account of.

Design - Set out how something will be done.

Discuss - Present key points about different ideas or strengths and weaknesses of an idea.

Distinguish - Explain ways in which two things differ. Provide detail of characteristic that enable a person to know the difference between …

Draw - Produce a diagram.

Evaluate - Judge from available evidence.

Explain - Set out purposes or reasons.

Explain how - Give a detailed account of a process or way of doing something.

Explain why - Give a detailed account of reasons in relation to a particular situation.

Identify - Name or otherwise characterise.

Give - Produce an answer from recall or from given information.

Justify - Provide reasons, reasoned argument to support, possibly provide evidence.

Label - Provide appropriate names on a diagram.

Name - Identify using a recognised technical term.

Outline - Set out main characteristics.

Select - Choose or pick out from alternatives.

State - Express in clear terms.

Suggest - Present a possible case/solution.

Which is - Select from alternatives.

What is meant by - Give a definition.

Write - Provide information in verbatim form.

Glossary

Students of psychology often ask, 'How can I get more marks for my answers, especially the longer ones?' One answer is, 'By using subject-specific vocabulary more effectively.' One characteristic of a 'better' answer is the appropriate use of this kind of vocabulary. Each topic in psychology has words and titles which are not used in other areas of life. Students will need to master the use of such terms in at least three ways:

- understand what they mean, when they are used by the teacher or in written material
- recognise situations to which they apply, eg in scenarios in questions
- be able to use them confidently in writing their own answers.

Many text books contain a glossary of key terms either at the back or where the terms first appear. Please be aware that definitions in this glossary may not be an exact match with glossaries that appear in textbooks which support the new AQA Psychology specification.

Absorbtion-addiction model

This term refers to a possible explanation for the existence of parasocial relationships. The suggestion is that people form parasocial relationships when real relationships are unpleasant or absent. People may follow a celebrity to escape from reality, gain a sense of personal identity or achieve a sense of fulfillment.

Agentic state

A term used in the context of obedience to an authority figure. It refers to the way in which an individual may obey an order, perhaps to do something that they see as 'wrong', because the individual hands over the responsibility for the outcome of the action to the authority figure.

Androcentrism

This term refers to a bias in psychological research in which a male perspective is over-emphasised at the expense of a female one.

Androgyny

This is a term used in the context of gender. It refers to the way in which a biological male or female may show high levels of both typical masculine traits and typical feminine traits.

Atavistic form

A term used in forensic psychology as a possible explanation for criminal offending. The idea is that offenders may represent a more primitive evolutionary stage of development than their contemporaries. This may be shown in a range of facial and physical features.

Aversion therapy

A treatment used to reduce addictive behaviours broadly based on classical conditioning. The addictive behaviour is paired with an unpleasant (aversive) experience such as alcohol with an emetic so that the addictive behaviour becomes associated with discomfort. Covert sensitisation is a therapy designed to create the same associations through imagery, graphic description and mental rehearsal.

Authoritarian personality

This title describes a person who holds rigid beliefs, is intolerant of ambiguity, submissive to authority and hostile to those of lower status or members of an out-group. This may be the outcome of a person experiencing harsh authoritarian parenting as a child. It is used as an explanation for high levels of obedience to authority figures and prejudice against out groups.

Beck's Negative Triad

A model of the cognitive biases which are characteristic features of depression. The triad consists of three elements, pessimistic thought patterns, about the self, the world and the future.

Co-morbidity

This term refers to the situation when a person has two disorders at the same time. For example, schizophrenia can be co-morbid with OCD.

Congruence

A term used in the humanistic approach to psychology, particularly the person-centred therapy pioneered by Carl Rogers. It refers to a state in which there is agreement/consistency between a person's 'real self' and 'ideal self'. He suggested that a higher level of congruence is a sign of better psychological health.

Conditions of worth

A term used in the humanistic approach to psychology. It describes a situation in which a child has to behave in ways that parents approve of in order to gain their praise and love. Carl Rogers suggested that this was the origin of many psychological problems. To counteract this, the therapist would offer unconditional positive regard to the client.

Correlation

This term refers to a method of research in which the researcher investigates a possible association between two variables, called co-variables. Data from such research is displayed on a scattergram. Correlational analysis involves measuring the extent of the relationship between the variables by working out the correlation co-efficient. The process could be used, for example, to investigate the relationship between levels of obesity and the incidence of coronary heart disease. Unlike

experiments, correlations do not show a cause and effect relationship between the variables.

Co-variables

These are the variables investigated in a correlation. They are not referred to as the independent and dependent variables because the study is investigating the relationship between them, not trying to show a cause and effect relationship.

Cue reactivity

This is an example of classical conditioning, where objects and environments become conditioned stimuli. In the context of addictive behaviour it refers to the way in which people experience a greater craving and a physiological reaction, such as an increased heart rate, when exposed to objects and environments associated with their addiction. For example, cigarettes, syringes and bottles of alcoholic drinks, in the context of substance abuse, or the betting shop, in the context of problem gambling. The increased craving may lead to an increase in the addictive behaviour.

Cultural relativism

This term refers to the way in which the function and meaning of a behaviour, value or attitude are relative to a specific cultural setting. Interpretations about the same behaviour may therefore differ between cultures. For example hearing the voice of a deceased relative could be a religious experience or an indication of psychosis.

De-individuation

A term used in the context of aggression and obedience. It refers to a state in which individuals have lower self-awareness and a weaker sense of personal

responsibility for their actions. This may result from the relative anonymity of being part of a crowd.

Demand characteristics

These are features of a piece of research which allow the participants to work out its aim and/or hypotheses. Participants may then change their behaviour and so frustrate the aim of the research. This is more likely in repeated measure designs for experiments. It is also a problem for repeating historical research projects as participants may be familiar with the results of original research.

Diathesis-stress model

This model proposes that people develop psychological disorders when they possess both an inherited or constitutional predispositions (diathesis) and are exposed to stressful events. For example twins may both have inherited a susceptibility to schizophrenia but only one experiences critical life events that trigger the appearance of symptoms of schizophrenias.

Differential association theory

This is a learning theory of offending behaviour. The idea is that individuals learn the values, attitudes, techniques, and motives for criminal behaviour through interactions or 'association' with intimate personal groups such as family and friends. On balance criminal behaviour is likely to occur when the individual is exposed to positive attitudes to criminal behaviour more than positive attitudes for law-abiding.

Ethological explanations

Ethology is the study of animal behaviour, often a particular type, such as aggression, across different species. Ethologists are interested in the role that the

behaviour has in natural selection. Ethological explanations for human behaviour relate it to similar animal behaviour and suggest the evolutionary advantage that it may have for humans.

Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI)

A technique of brain-scanning which uses a magnetic field and radio signals to monitor the blood flow in the brain. Areas of the brain that are involved in activities done by the person during scanning have a greater blood oxygenation and flow, so specific brain areas can be linked to specific abilities.

Gating

This term refers to the process of limiting or filtering the personal information we disclose during social interactions. In virtual relationships within social media, or emails and blogs, individuals may be less selective about what to reveal than they would in face-to-face interactions. In other words there may be an absence of gating.

General Adaptation Syndrome

This was proposed by Sely to describe a three-stage sequence of physiological changes which occur when people or animals are subjected to prolonged stress. The stages are called the alarm reaction, the stage of resistance and the stage of exhaustion.

Hemispheric lateralisation

This term refers to the fact that the left and right halves, or hemispheres, of the brain have centres that are specifically associated with different brain activities, eg speech centres on the left and the ability to make sense of 3D arrangements on the right.

Hostile attribution bias

This a tendency to perceive hostile intent on the part of others, even when it is really lacking. The term is used in the context of offending behaviour and aggression. It offers a cognitive explanation of aggression. The idea is that people may interpret, perhaps wrongly, the behaviour of others as being hostile towards them, and so react aggressively believing they are responding to provocation.

Interactional Synchrony

A term used to describe, for example, contacts between a child and a care-giver where they 'take turns' in smiling, 'cooing', making eye contact etc. Contacts like these help in a child's social development and the formation of attachments with important figures such as the mother.

Interactionist approach

Different approaches to psychology offer different explanations for a particular behaviour. A more complete explanation is gained by considering several factors which may, operating together, have an influence on it. The different approaches may provide explanations at different levels.

Interference

An explanation for forgetting when similar material, eg the vocabulary of two similar languages such as Italian and Spanish, is confused in recall from the LTM. Retroactive interference occurs when newly learned information interferes with the recall of previously learned information. Proactive interference occurs when past memories inhibit an individual's full potential to retain new memories.

Internal working model

This is a cognitive framework we use to understand the world, self and others. The internal working model developed as a result of the early attachments of an infant provides mental representations memories and expectations that influence the development of relationships throughout life.

Introspection

A technique pioneered by Wilhelm Wundt, the 'father of modern psychology' to gain insight into how mental processes work. People were trained to report in detail on their inner experiences when presented with a stimulus such as a problem to solve or something to be memorised.

Levels of explanation

Different psychological approaches offer different explanations for a particular behaviour. Some are more holistic, such as the humanistic approach, while others are more reductionist, such as the biological approach. Levels of explanation refer to the extent to which explanations are holistic/reductionist.

Locus of control

This refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events in their lives. People with an 'internal' locus of control tend to take personal responsibility for their actions and to feel that they control their own lives. People with an external locus of control tend to feel that their lives and actions are strongly influenced by luck, chance, other people and environmental factors. The term is used in looking at responses to stress and research into social influence.

Mediational processes

These are cognitive processes such as attending, understanding and decision making that occur between a stimulus and a resulting behaviour. A feature of social learning theory.

Meta-analysis

A process in which a large number of studies, which have involved the same research question and methods of research, are reviewed together and the combined data is tested by statistical techniques to assess the effect size. As the data comes from a much larger group of participants the conclusions may be regarded with more confidence.

Monotropic theory

A term used by John Bowlby to suggest that the infants have an inbuilt tendency to make an initial attachment with one attachment figure, usually the mother. He suggested that this tendency has an evolutionary origin.

Operationalisation of variables

Research ideas may begin with terms such as 'memory' or 'locus of control' as variables to manipulate or measure. In operationalisation these variables are expressed in a form that can be measured accurately. For example, 'locus of control' could be measured as the score on a suitable questionnaire, while 'memory' could be measured as 'the number of words recalled'.

Paradigms

This term refers to a set of assumptions, methods and terminology shared by psychologists. Each different 'approach' could be considered to have its own paradigm. The historical sciences are regarded as having a single paradigm often

involving observation, theory, hypothesis, empirical testing, support/challenge leading to refined theory. A paradigm shift happens when the established paradigm has been challenged to the point that a different one takes its place. The change from a predominately behaviourist approach to psychology to a cognitive one in the1960s could be an example.

Parasocial relationships

These are one-sided relationships, such as fans may feel they have with a celebrity, through concerts, TV appearances, films, magazines etc, where the celebrity is unaware of the fan's identity or even existence.

Quasi experiment

In an experiment, usually with a high degree of control of extraneous variables, a researcher manipulates an independent variable to find out its effect on a dependent one. In a quasi-experiment, the researcher is unable to freely manipulate the independent variable or randomly allocate the participants to the two conditions. An example would be a study with gender or age as the independent variable.

Recidivism

A persistent pattern of criminal offending and re-offending by an individual who may be described as a recidivist.

Restorative justice programmes

These focus on the needs of the victim, offender and wider community. They involve the offender being encouraged to meet the victim, take responsibility for the offence, apologise and try to make amends. The offender will be helped to avoid further offending behaviour.

Retrieval Failure

An explanation for forgetting when material is stored in the LTM but cannot be consciously recalled as a result of a lack of retrieval cues to 'jog the memory'.

Self-actualisation

A term used by Abraham Maslow in the humanistic approach to psychology. It refers to a state in which people achieve their full potential. He suggested that every person has a motivation to achieve this.

Social readjustment ratings scale

This is a self-report measure of stress. The designers used a large group of participants to identify a series of stressful life events, such as a marital separation or loss of employment, and give them a 'value' based on the likely level of stress experienced. The user of the scale selects the items that have occurred during, for example, the past 24 months and the values are added up to give an overall 'stress score'.

Stress inoculation therapy

This is a cognitive therapy used to teach people the skills needed to reduce their stress. It involves conceptualisation, skill acquisition and rehearsal, and application and follow-through.

Synaptic transmission

The process by which nerve impulses are carried across the small gap, the synapse, between one neuron and another. The nerve impulse is an electrical signal which is carried by chemicals called neurotransmitters.

Systematic desensitisation

A behavioural therapy for treating anxiety disorders, eg a phobia of dogs, in which the sufferer learns relaxation techniques and then faces a progressive hierarchy of exposure to the objects and situations that cause anxiety.

Thematic Analysis

A method of qualitative research linked to content analysis, which involves analysing text in a variety of media to identify the patterns within it. A coding system may be needed sort the data and to help to identify patterns.

Vicarious reinforcement

This term refers to an aspect of social learning theory. A reinforcement, such as reward, makes a behaviour more likely to happen again. When it is vicarious, the person learns by observing the consequences of another person's behaviour, eg a younger sister observing an older sister being rewarded for a particular behaviour is more likely to repeat that behaviour herself.

Exam Questions

Exam questions take various formats:

- Multiple choice
- Short answer
- Stem questions where you are asked to apply your knowledge to a novel situation they have presented in the exam
- Extended writing questions

Examples of exam papers can be found on the VLE under sample exam questions.

Help Available in the Department

If you feel that you need any additional support during the course, with perhaps understanding content, essay writing, homework etc, then first of all try asking one of your peers. If they are unable to help, then speak to the teacher who taught you that topic. They will then be able to arrange some time to help you, either on a 1:1 basis or as part of a small group. In addition to this, help is available as follows:

- Past paper questions and mark schemes on VLE
- Revision sessions in the summer term (some of which may be once study leave starts)
- Drop in lunch time sessions - these normally start later in the year and details will be advertised on the psychology noticeboard and in classrooms.
- 1:1 help with a teacher if deemed required by the psychology team
- Revision tools and resources on VLE

Staff in the Department

The psychology department has two members of staff:
Miss Emma James (Department Head)
Ms Lorraine Hilton-Meredith

You can contact the staff online via your It's Learning account. If staff are not teaching they can normally be found in the workroom, staff study area or the staffroom.

Library

The library stocks a number of psychology textbooks, both general texts relating to the syllabus and subject specific texts which can help to broaden your knowledge of and interest in Psychology. Some of the subject specific texts are fictional stories with a psychological element running through them. Many of the books listed on the reading list are held in the library as well as copies of the various journals. These are accessible to everyone and all students would benefit from doing additional reading. For those intending to study Psychology at university, it is particularly relevant to have read some of the subject specific texts.