

Psychology

A Level

Head of department: Vivien Louizos

Email: vlouizos@esher.ac.uk

Exam Board: AQA



What is the course about?

Psychology is the scientific study of human behaviour. You learn the theories psychologists have developed in various areas of the discipline and the research studies they are based on. There is a lot to learn and remember for the exams.

For the AS level you will study:

During the AS year we examine 5 key topics in Psychology:

Developmental Psychology - early infant development and attachment

Cognitive Psychology - the nature of memory

Abnormal Psychology - the nature of mental illness

Social Psychology - how people influence others: conformity and obedience

Physiological Psychology - the nature of stress and stress management

Scientific research methods (including statistical techniques) are integrated into each topic and form a major part of the exam assessment.

For the A2 you will study:

You study particular topics selected from aggression, gender, sleeping and dreaming, relationships, cognitive development. You also study specific mental illnesses (such as phobias) and contemporary psychological issues (such as addictive behaviour). In addition you study research methods in greater depth and learn more complex statistical techniques.

How is the course assessed?

The course is assessed entirely by written examinations in January and May/June each year. At AS these consist of a mixture of structured questions and longer essay style questions. In the A2 exams all the questions require full essays in response. There is no coursework.

What skills will I need and develop on this course?

Psychology is not usually available at GCSE but the GCSE subjects that are closest to the ways in which you will need to work are Additional Science or Biology (where there are technical terms and theories to learn) and History (where there are mini-essays to write). You need to be good at (and enjoy) reading and extended writing and you will also need to feel comfortable with scientific and mathematical approaches. The course develops your skills in analysis, evaluation, research and the analysis of data.

Subject combination advice:

Psychology combines well with any other subject. Many students combine it with another Science subject such as Biology or Maths with Statistics. Others combine it with Social Sciences and Humanities subjects such as History or Economics. If you wish to study it at university - it is officially regarded as a Science and degree level Psychology has a heavy biological and statistical emphasis.

What can the course lead to in terms of Higher Education and Careers?

To study Psychology at most universities you would need to have a substantial scientific component within your A level programme. This need not be A level Psychology itself, though in many cases A level Psychology would be enough to supply this. It would also indicate a commitment to the subject, provide a sound foundation for university work in it and enable you to get to grips with what is involved in the scientific study of the subject. The more science-orientated degrees in Psychology at some of the "top" universities would favour a more strongly science-orientated programme at A level, including another science (such as Biology) and / or Mathematics. Psychology can be studied as a single or joint honours degree. To work as a professional, accredited psychologist you will need a higher degree (MSc). Professional psychologists work in a range of fields including forensic psychology, health psychology, counselling psychology and educational psychology. However A level Psychology is not just for those thinking of taking a Psychology degree and going on to work as psychologists. Any career which involves dealing with people will be enhanced by studying Psychology at A level. This includes teaching, the police, nursing, social work and work in human resources.

What are the formal entry requirements for this course?

Aside from the general entry criteria that the College requires, you will also need to achieve at least a Grade C in GCSE English Language, in GCSE Mathematics and in GCSE Science.

What extra support / enrichment activities are on offer?

The department offers subject tutorials and internal and external revision lectures to support students. Each year we invite an external examiner in to talk to students about the exams. When possible we may arrange trips to see theatre productions related to Psychology. We visit London Zoo for a demonstration of therapy to help people with fears and phobias. We offer a practical application of Psychology in our "16-19 Counselling Skills" course. This is a nationally recognised qualification for young people wishing to improve their skills as peer supporters. In the college's Wider Skills Week we offer a number of trips to museums and to the zoo as well as a taster of the counselling skills course. We also offer a course in Psychology (including its application to film) as part of the College's complementary studies programme.

What is the difference between Psychology and Sociology?

Both subjects are interested in human behaviour, but ask different questions from a different perspective. For example: Psychology might ask what makes individuals aggressive while Sociology might ask why violence has increased in society as a whole. Psychology is a science and you study explanations of behaviour based in Biology. A level Psychology also has a strong emphasis on scientific research methods and statistical analysis of data, whereas A level Sociology is more descriptive.



ESHER
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Weston Green Road, Thames Ditton, Surrey, KT7 0JB
Tel: 020 8398 0291 Fax: 020 8339 0207
Email: eshercollege@esher.ac.uk

