

Psychology Departmental Curriculum Statement 2021

Psychology is the study of behaviour and mental processes. It uses Scientific methods to analyse human behaviour and aims to explain actions using a range of social, biological and behavioural explanations.

There is no set description of what a Psychology lesson will be like. However, Psychology usually involves a lot of discussion, analysing theories, comparing ideas, and applying knowledge to different scenarios. It also involves describing and evaluating different pieces of Psychological research that direct our knowledge and understanding of the different concepts taught. Lessons can take many forms; including, but is not limited to, independent research, watching videos, undertaking research, debates, condensing notes, and writing essays.

Historically our students have gone on to study a range of different subjects at University; in the past few years, students have gone on to study Psychology, Nursing, Counselling, Health & Social Care, Clinical Psychology, and Business.

There are many jobs that link to Psychology as there are many career paths that fall both directly and indirectly within the Psychology umbrella. Some examples include; Psychiatrist (identify and treat mental disorders), Forensic Psychologist (study crime and criminal behaviour), Mental Health Counsellor (conduct assessments and referrals), Teacher (teach and/or research psychology), Social Worker (involved in cases involving children), Psychologist (provide psychotherapy), and Sports Psychologist (teach skills for enhanced performance).

Psychology encourages students to be aspirational; students need to be hard working and motivated. It also emphasises the key skills of independence, through research, and communication through verbal debate and written work. Students are also expected to view Psychological research with a critical eye whilst being considerate towards other cultures, beliefs and viewpoints throughout the course.

Ambition and an inquisitive nature are essential in students. Psychology is taught by staff that are passionate about the subject; this also helps to develop student's curiosity and fostering an interest in how new things learnt are relevant to their own lives; as well as providing an appreciation for the wide reaching concepts of Psychology within and beyond the curriculum.

The subject of Psychology, the design of the curriculum, and lesson content gives students the opportunity to become independent, conscientious students with the ability to construct well-balanced arguments and appreciate the individual differences between people and cultures.

Curriculum Implementation Statement

Students study the AQA Advanced Level Psychology course across year 12 and year 13. Students sit the full A Level exam at the end of year 13 and are taught the full curriculum across two years. Topics are split between teaching staff, to allow staff to refine their areas of expertise. Additionally, this means that

students learn multiple topics at a time; this allows various skills to be developed and refined throughout the teaching as they will be introduced and revisited by different members of staff at diverse points in the sequence of teaching. Furthermore, the importance of soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and time management, is stressed and developed throughout the course.

There is a big emphasis on independent study throughout both year 12 and year 13. A planned sequence of homework is set with the focus being appraising the learning of that lesson or small sequence of lessons. Homework set covers a range of tasks including revision and exam questions; this allows the development of Assessment Objective skills from the very beginning of the course. This also helps to develop skills such as literacy (and numeracy during research methods).

The curriculum is accessible to all students through the range of pedagogical styles; examples of this include discussion, research, debate, and summarising key information. Similarly, differentiation is encompassed into lessons to ensure that all students can access the curriculum and achieve their potential. Students have access to revision guides throughout the year via the library, independent study/revision task lists, and lessons are made available electronically. Throughout the course, students can access additional help from staff at any time via email.

The scheme of work is designed to support the learning of all; this is evident through the range of resources available to students and the support provided by staff throughout the year both within and extra to timetabled lessons. Independence is a key skill that is encouraged in all students from the start as they are given the responsibility for their own learning and enhancement of their understanding.

As a department, a range of techniques are used to enhance memory, recall, analysis, and assessment skills for a range of Psychological concepts.

Curriculum Beyond the Classroom

Extra-curricular Psychology is encouraged e.g. watching Psychology themed films with discussions and notes on how the film links to Psychological concepts.

Visits that link to Psychology have previously included University and revision themed visits e.g. Salford University Psychology in Action visit for year 13 students.

Many students that take Psychology do so due to an interest in the subject outside of the classroom; the main reasons why students have chosen to study Psychology surround gaining a greater insight into the workings of the brain and human behaviour, as well as wanting to pursue Psychology as a career. An interest of Psychology outside of the curriculum is clear as 68% of year 13 students have a broader interest in Psychology than is covered by the KS5 syllabus. Additionally, many students are interested in studying Psychology at a higher level; 50% of students who are interested in attending University aspire to study Psychology or a Psychology centred course (e.g. Psychotherapy).

Links to other departments occur. For example, mixed taster days have been delivered that give students a view of a topic, e.g. committing knife crime, from multiple viewpoints. Moreover, open evenings and transition days strengthen links to other departments as Psychology and Sociology work together as a larger Social Sciences group. In previous years, big events have taken place that encourage students to think about aspects of a larger problem from the point of view of various subjects; an example of this is a crime day with links to Law, Criminology and Sociology and Science.

Subject Expertise

All staff that teach Psychology teach within their areas of interest and expertise. Staff are kept up to date with subject developments via AQA announcements and courses. Staff that teach Psychology have an interest in the subject and so try to include recent developments and relevant stories of interest in their lessons.

The chosen curriculum and teaching rota is selected to best suit the backgrounds and particular areas of expertise of the members of staff teaching it. For example, one of the optional modules is stress; the module content is Biology focussed and it is taught by a member of staff with significant experience in Biochemistry.

Staff have been on Psychology CPD provided by AQA in order to improve skills for delivering the course content and supporting students with exam skills. However, general A Level CPD and information is shared throughout the year during 6th Form Forum meetings.

Support is provided to all staff through resource sharing and discussions about particular areas of concern. The department is quite small and so good practice, ideas, and answers to questions are shared throughout the year electronically.

Destinations

Taster sessions are provided to year 10 students to support their applications to their transition from KS4 to KS5. This introduces Psychology, as for most it is a new subject, from interesting “in the news” topics e.g. explanations for knife crime.

There are open evenings for year 10 and 11 student come and discuss Psychology with subject teachers and current students along with their parents and carers. This also gives students the opportunity to see some of the studies they will learn about during lessons and take part in a piece of research.

Students in year 12 are encouraged to attend University open days and research the different options available for them if they wish to study Psychology beyond KS5. Careers in Psychology are discussed during lessons where appropriate.

Each year a proportion of year 13 students will go on to study Psychology or Psychology related degrees.

In the year 2017-2019, 47% of Psychology students who continued into further education are studying Psychology, Psychotherapy or combined honours including Psychology; destinations include Liverpool John Moores University, Edge Hill University, Leeds Trinity University, and University of Liverpool. In the year 2018-2020, 43% of Psychology students who continued into further education are studying Psychology or Applied Psychology; destinations include University of Central Lancashire, Lancaster University, and University of Reading.