

Summary of changes

Introduction

This resource outlines the changes we have made to the A-level Psychology (7182) specification.

In response to teacher feedback and earlier exam dates, we have made some updates to our A-level Psychology specification for first teaching in September 2025.

The purpose of the updates is to:

- reduce the overall specification content
- provide teachers and learners with greater clarity about the specification content
- update the language used to be more reflective of society.

This resource has been created to provide a summary of the updates made. Only changes to the subject content are listed in the summary. No other changes have been made to the specification.

New specification content

With the exception of the gender topic, there is minimal new specification content.

A summary of the topics with new content is below:

- Research methods
- Relationships
- Gender

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The changes have been coded as follows:

Change to the specification	This means	Coding	Impact on teaching and learning
Removed	Specification content has been removed.	Strikethrough	No longer a requirement to teach. Review planning and teaching materials in light of change.
Reworded	Change to the terminology used in the specification.	Italics	Amend teaching resources to reflect the new terminology used in the updated specification. No change to specification content.
Reordered	The order of bullet points or the positioning of specification content has changed.	Bold	May impact planning, SOW and order of delivery of the specification content.

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Paper 1 (7182/1): Introductory topics in Psychology

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Paper 1 Current specification content	Paper 1 Updates to specification content
Memory	The following specification content is:
 The multi-store model of memory: sensory register, short-term memory and long-term memory. Features of each store: coding, capacity and duration. 	Removed Types of long-term memory episodic, semantic, procedural.
Types of long-term memory: episodic, semantic, procedural.	References to 'misleading information' and 'Improving the
• The working memory model: central executive, phonological loop, visuo-spatial sketchpad and episodic buffer. Features of the model: coding and capacity.	accuracy of eyewitness testimony'. Reordered
 Explanations for forgetting proactive and retroactive interference and retrieval failure due to absence of cues. 	 The use of the cognitive interview has been moved to the end of the previous bullet point ('factors affecting the accuracy of
 Factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony: misleading information, including leading questions and post- event discussion; anxiety. 	eyewitness testimony'). This now reads: Factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony: leading questions, post-event discussion; anxiety; the use of
 Improving the accuracy of eyewitness testimony, including the use of the cognitive interview. 	cognitive interview.

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Paper 1 Current specification content	Paper 1 Updates to specification content
Attachment	The following specification content is:
 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 ljzendoorn. 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. 	 Removed Caregiver-infant interactions in humans: reciprocity and interactional synchrony. Stages of attachment identified by Schaffer. Multiple attachments and the role of the father. Reworded 'Romanian orphan studies' changed to 'English and Romanian Adoptees project'.

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Paper 2 (7182/2): Psychology in context

Paper 2 Current specification content

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: i) the behaviourist approach, including classical conditioning and Pavlov's research, operant conditioning, types of reinforcement and Skinner's research; ii) 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.

Paper 2 Updates to specification content

The following specification content is:

Removed

- Origins of Psychology: Wundt, introspection and the emergence of Psychology as a science.
- 'modelling'
- 'The emergence of' removed from 'cognitive neuroscience', now simply 'Cognitive neuroscience'.
- 'Influence of genes' removed from the biological approach.
- 'Focus on the self' and 'The influence on counselling. Psychology' removed from Humanistic Psychology.

Reworded

 Theoretical and computer models no longer referenced separately. Changed to 'the use of models'.

Reordered

- Cognitive neuroscience remains and is now incorporated into the biological approach ('The emergence of removed).
- Biological approach content restructured and 'influence of genes' removed as redundant. This now reads:
 - The biological approach: the genetic basis of behaviour: genotype, phenotype and evolution. Influence of biological structures and neurochemistry on behaviour. Cognitive neuroscience.

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Paper 2 Current specification content	Paper 2 Updates to specification content
 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 following specification content is: Removed 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.
 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. 	 Reordered Ordering of bullet points changed. 'Ways of studying the brain' bullet point will now appear after the 'The fight or flight response including the role of adrenaline' bullet point (i.e. now bullet point 5 rather than 6).
 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. 	

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Paper 2 Current specification content	Paper 2 Updates to specification content
 Research methods 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 	The following specification content is: Removed • Confounding variables.
 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. 	 Thematic analysis. Reworded Sampling 'techniques' changed to sampling 'methods'. 'Assessing' reliability changed to 'measuring' reliability. 'Assessment' of validity changed to 'Measurement' of validity. Content analysis remains but has been slightly reworded to 'Coding in content analysis'.
 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. 	 *New* Addition of 'control groups' to 'Control' bullet point. This now reads: Control: random allocation and counterbalancing, randomisation, standardisation and control groups.
 Experimental designs: repeated measures, independent groups, matched pairs. Observational design: behavioural categories; event sampling; time sampling. 	

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Paper 2 Updates to specification content

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Paper 2 Current specification content	Paper 2 Updates to specification content
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.	
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. When to use the sign test; calculation of the sign test.	
Probability and significance: use of statistical tables and critical values in interpretation of significance; Type I and Type II errors.	

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Paper 2 Current specification content	Paper 2 Updates to specification content
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.	

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Paper 3 (7182/3): Issues and options in Psychology

Paper 3 Current specification content	Paper 3 Updates to specification content
Issues and debates	The following specification content is:
 Gender and culture in Psychology – universality and bias. Gender bias including androcentrism and alpha and beta bias; cultural bias, including ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. 	Reworded The final bullet point has been reworded. This now reads:
 Free will and determinism: hard determinism and soft determinism; biological, environmental and psychic determinism. The scientific emphasis on causal explanations. 	 Social sensitivity in psychological research.
• 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.	

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Paper 3 Current specification content	Paper 3 Updates to specification content
Relationships	The following specification content is:
 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' changed to 'Online relationships'. * 'in virtual relationships' and 'on the nature of virtual relationships' no longer included in bullet point, see reworded
 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. 	 *New* *Use of deception' is added to the reworded 'Online relationships' bullet point (after self-disclosure). This now reads Online relationships: self-disclosure, use of deception, effects of absence of gating.

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Paper 3 Current specification content	Paper 3 Updates to specification content
 Gender (6 bullet points) Sex and gender. Sex-role stereotypes. Androgyny and measuring androgyny including the Bem Sex Role Inventory. The role of chromosomes and hormones (testosterone, oestrogen and oxytocin) in sex and gender. Atypical sex chromosome patterns: Klinefelter's syndrome and Turner's syndrome. Cognitive explanations of gender development, Kohlberg's theory, gender identity, gender stability and gender constancy; gender schema theory. Psychodynamic explanation of gender development, Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Oedipus-complex; Electra complex; identification and internalisation. Social learning theory as applied to gender development. The influence of culture and media on gender roles. Atypical gender development: gender dysphoria; biological and social explanations for gender dysphoria. 	 Due to the number of changes please find below the updated specification content for the gender topic: The role of chromosomes and hormones (testosterone, oestrogen and oxytocin) in biological sex. Diversity in sex development, including androgen insensitivity syndrome, Klinefelter's syndrome and Turner's syndrome. Gender identities, including binary, non-binary and gender fluid. How gender has been measured using the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Biological explanations of gender development, including chromosomes and hormones. Cognitive explanations of gender development, Kohlberg's theory, gender identity, gender stability and gender constancy; Martin and Halverson's gender schema theory. Social learning theory as applied to gender development. The influence of culture and media on gender roles. Gender incongruence: biological and social/cultural explanations.

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Paper 3 Current specification content	Paper 3 Updates to specification content
Cognition and development (4 bullet points)	The following specification content is:
 Piaget's theory of cognitive development: schemas, assimilation, accommodation, equilibration, stages of intellectual development. Characteristics of these stages, including object permanence, conservation, egocentrism and class inclusion. Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development, including the zone of proximal development and scaffolding. 	 Removed 'Including theory of mind as an explanation of autism' (N.B. theory of mind remains).
 Baillargeon's explanation of early infant abilities, including knowledge of the physical world; violation of expectation research. 	
The development of social cognition: Selman's levels of perspective-taking; theory of mind, including theory of mind as an explanation for autism; the Sally-Anne study. The role of the mirror neuron system in social cognition.	

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Paper 3 Current specification content	Paper 3 Updates to specification content
 Schizophrenia Classification of schizophrenia. Positive symptoms of schizophrenia, including hallucinations and delusions. Negative symptoms of schizophrenia, including speech poverty and avolition. Reliability and validity in diagnosis and classification of schizophrenia, including reference to co-morbidity, culture and gender bias and symptom overlap. Biological explanations for schizophrenia: genetics and neural correlates, including the dopamine hypothesis. Psychological explanations for schizophrenia: family dysfunction and cognitive explanations, including dysfunctional thought processing. Drug therapy: typical and atypical antipsychotics. Cognitive behaviour therapy and family therapy as used in the treatment of schizophrenia. Token economies as used in the management of schizophrenia. 	Paper 3 Updates to specification content The following specification content is: Removed References to classification, reliability and validity. Token economies as used in the management of schizophrenia. Reworded Final sentence of the first bullet point now reads: Issues in diagnosis: co-morbidity, culture and gender bias and symptom overlap.
The importance of an interactionist approach in explaining and treating schizophrenia; the diathesis-stress model.	

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Paper 3 Current specification content	Paper 3 Updates to specification content
Eating behaviour	The following specification content is:
 Explanations for food preferences: the evolutionary explanation, including reference to neophobia and taste aversion; the role of learning in food preference, including social and cultural influences. 	Removed • Explanations for success and failure of dieting.
 Neural and hormonal mechanisms involved in the control of eating behaviour, including the role of the hypothalamus, ghrelin and leptin. 	Rewording Very minor rewording of points 3 and 5 i.e. removal of 'including' (bullet point 3) and (symlan stip of (bullet point 5)
Biological explanations for anorexia nervosa, <i>including</i> genetic and neural explanations.	(bullet point 3) and 'explanation' (bullet point 5).
 Psychological explanations for anorexia nervosa: family systems theory, including enmeshment, autonomy and control; social learning theory, including modelling, reinforcement and media; cognitive theory, including distortions and irrational beliefs. 	
Biological explanations for obesity; genetic and neural explanation.	
 Psychological explanations for obesity, including restraint theory, disinhibition and the boundary model. Explanations for the success and failure of dieting. 	

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Paper 3 Current specification content	Paper 3 Updates to specification content
Stress	The following specification content is:
 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, 	Removed Reference to named drugs in managing and coping with stress (bullet point 6).
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. 	

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Paper 3 Current specification content	Paper 3 Updates to specification content
Aggression	No change to the Aggression topic.
 Neural and hormonal mechanisms in aggression, including the roles of the limbic system, serotonin and testosterone. Genetic factors in aggression, including the MAOA gene. 	
 The ethological explanation of aggression, including reference to innate releasing mechanisms and fixed action patterns. Evolutionary explanations of human aggression. 	
 Social psychological explanations of human aggression, including the frustration-aggression hypothesis, social learning theory as applied to human aggression, and de-individuation. 	
 Institutional aggression in the context of prisons: dispositional and situational explanations. 	
 Media influences on aggression, including the effects of computer games. The role of desensitisation, disinhibition and cognitive priming. 	

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Paper 3 Current specification content	Paper 3 Updates to specification content
Forensic Psychology	The following specification content is:
 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 	 Removed An historical approach (atavistic form). Psychodynamic explanations. Recidivism.
moral reasoning and cognitive distortions, including hostile attribution bias and minimalisation; differential association theory; psychodynamic explanations.	 Reworded Changes in terminology for offender profiling. 'Top-down' is changed to 'typology' and 'bottom-up' is changed to 'data-driven'. This now reads:
 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. 	 Offender profiling: the typology approach, including organised and disorganised types; the data driven appro including investigative psychology; geographical profiling

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Paper 3 Current specification content	Paper 3 Updates to specification content
Addiction	The following specification content is:
 Describing addiction: physical and psychological dependence, tolerance and withdrawal syndrome. Risk factors in the development of addiction, including genetic vulnerability, stress, personality, family influences and peers. 	Removed • Theory of planned behaviour.
 Explanations for nicotine addiction: brain neurochemistry, including the role of dopamine, and learning theory as applied to <i>smoking behaviour</i> including reference to cue reactivity. Explanations for gambling addiction: learning theory as applied to gambling, including reference to partial and variable reinforcement; cognitive theory as applied to gambling, including reference to cognitive bias. 	 Separate references to stress, family influences and peers in factors in the development of addiction are now subsumed under the more generic 'social influences. This now reads: Risk factors in the development of addiction, including genetic vulnerability, personality and social influences.
 Reducing addiction: drug therapy; behavioural interventions, including aversion therapy and covert sensitisation; cognitive behaviour therapy. 	Slight change of wording in bullet point 3 to read 'nicotine addiction' instead of 'smoking behaviour'.
 The application of the following theories of behaviour change to addictive behaviour; the theory of planned behaviour and Prochaska's six-stage model of behaviour change. 	

Version 1.0 October 2024