



Psychology subject outline

First examinations 2011

This document explains the major features of the course, and outlines the syllabus and assessment requirements.

More detailed information about the course can be obtained by referring to the guide for this subject, which is available on the subject page of the IB online curriculum centre (OCC) website (<http://occ.ibo.org>) and can also be purchased from the IB store (<http://store.ibo.org>).

Nature of the subject

Psychology is the systematic study of behaviour and mental processes. Psychology has its roots in both the natural and social sciences, leading to a variety of research designs and applications, and providing a unique approach to understanding modern society.

IB psychology examines the interaction of biological, cognitive and sociocultural influences on human behaviour, thereby adopting an integrative approach. Understanding how psychological knowledge is generated, developed and applied enables students to achieve a greater understanding of themselves and appreciate the diversity of human behaviour. The ethical concerns raised by the methodology and application of psychological research are key considerations in IB psychology.

Prior learning

No prior study of psychology is expected. No particular background in terms of specific subjects studied for national or international qualifications is expected or required of students. The skills needed for the psychology course are developed during the course itself.

Links to the Middle Years Programme

Psychology can be offered as one of the disciplines within the humanities subject group of the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP). The concepts of MYP humanities, such as time and change, can provide a useful foundation for students who go on to study Diploma Programme psychology. Analytical and investigative skills developed in the MYP humanities course are augmented and expanded through the psychology course.

Aims

Group 3 aims

The aims of all subjects in **group 3, individuals and societies** are to:

1. encourage the systematic and critical study of: human experience and behaviour; physical, economic and social environments; and the history and development of social and cultural institutions
2. develop in the student the capacity to identify, to analyse critically and to evaluate theories, concepts and arguments about the nature and activities of the individual and society
3. enable the student to collect, describe and analyse data used in studies of society, to test hypotheses, and to interpret complex data and source material
4. promote the appreciation of the way in which learning is relevant to both the culture in which the student lives, and the culture of other societies
5. develop an awareness in the student that human attitudes and beliefs are widely diverse and that the study of society requires an appreciation of such diversity
6. enable the student to recognize that the content and methodologies of the subjects in group 3 are contestable and that their study requires the toleration of uncertainty.

Psychology aims

In addition, the aims of the **psychology** course at SL and at HL are to:

7. develop an awareness of how psychological research can be applied for the benefit of human beings
8. ensure that ethical practices are upheld in psychological inquiry
9. develop an understanding of the biological, cognitive and sociocultural influences on human behaviour
10. develop an understanding of alternative explanations of behaviour
11. understand and use diverse methods of psychological inquiry.

Assessment objectives

Having followed the psychology course at SL or at HL, students will be expected to demonstrate the following.

1. Knowledge and comprehension of specified content
 - Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of key terms and concepts in psychology
 - Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of psychological research methods
 - Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of a range of appropriately identified psychological theories and research studies
 - Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of the biological, cognitive and sociocultural levels of analysis
 - Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of one option at SL or two options at HL
2. Application and analysis
 - Demonstrate an ability to use examples of psychological research and psychological concepts to formulate an argument in response to a specific question
 - At HL only, analyse qualitative psychological research in terms of methodological, reflexive and ethical issues involved in research
3. Synthesis and evaluation
 - Evaluate psychological theories and empirical studies
 - Discuss how biological, cognitive and sociocultural levels of analysis can be used to explain behaviour
 - Evaluate research methods used to investigate behaviour
4. Selection and use of skills appropriate to psychology
 - Demonstrate the acquisition of knowledge and skills required for experimental design, data collection and presentation, data analysis and interpretation
 - At HL only, analyse data using an appropriate inferential statistical test
 - Write an organized response

Syllabus outline

Syllabus component	Teaching hours	
	SL	HL
Part 1: Core (SL/HL) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The biological level of analysis The cognitive level of analysis The sociocultural level of analysis 	90	90
Part 2: Options (SL/HL) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abnormal psychology Developmental psychology Health psychology Psychology of human relationships Sport psychology 	30	60
Part 3: Qualitative research methodology (HL only) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative research in psychology 		50
Part 4: Simple experimental study (SL/HL) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to experimental research methodology 	30	40
Total teaching hours	150	240

Assessment outline—SL

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Assessment component	Weighting
External assessment (3 hours)	75%
Paper 1 (2 hours) Section A: Three compulsory questions on part 1 of the syllabus. Section B: Three questions on part 1 of the syllabus. Students choose one question to answer in essay form. (46 marks)	50%
Paper 2 (1 hour) Fifteen questions on part 2 of the syllabus. Students choose one question to answer in essay form. (22 marks)	25%
Internal assessment A report of a simple experimental study conducted by the student. (20 marks)	25%

Assessment outline—HL

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Assessment component	Weighting
External assessment (4 hours)	80%
Paper 1 (2 hours) Section A: Three compulsory questions on part 1 of the syllabus. Section B: Three questions on part 1 of the syllabus. Students choose one question to answer in essay form. (46 marks)	35%
Paper 2 (2 hours) Fifteen questions on part 2 of the syllabus. Students choose two questions to answer in essay form. (44 marks)	25%
Paper 3 (1 hour) Three compulsory questions based on an unseen text, covering part 3 of the syllabus. (30 marks)	20%
Internal assessment A report of a simple experimental study conducted by the student. (28 marks)	20%