

WJEC A Level Psychology:

Subject Content

Unit 1: Psychology: Past to Present

The purpose of this unit is to give a solid grounding in some of the basic core elements of psychology. The intention is to allow the learner, through the study of classic research to gain an appreciation that psychology continues to develop and evolve. The early ideas should not be dismissed but rather studied in context with consideration of the advances made in more recent years. For each of the five psychological approaches (biological, psychodynamic, behaviourist, cognitive and positive)

Unit 2: Psychology: Using Psychological Concepts

Section A - Contemporary debate

The explorations of five contemporary debates provide an opportunity for independent research into areas that psychology has influenced. Both sides of the debate should be considered from a psychological perspective (including the ethical, social and economic implications as well as the consideration of social and cultural diversity). Learners are asked to explore the debates using their knowledge and understanding of the five approaches in Unit 1. This section provides an opportunity to consider psychological work carried out in Wales.

Section B - Principles of research and application of research methods

Principles of research

The focus for this section is that of psychological research, from the initial planning stages through to the final stage of analysis and evaluation. It is designed to introduce candidates to the methodologies used by psychologists in working scientifically and to gain an appreciation of the impact of choices made on the outcomes of the work and consequently the possible applications. Learners should appreciate the limitations of scientific research and when dealing with the complexities of humans as test material, there are several issues which need to be considered. To achieve this appreciation learners are encouraged to carry out appropriately supervised, ethical investigations. To give an appropriate context for the teaching, two pieces of research from the work of social and developmental psychologists should be studied. Application of research methods to a novel scenario. This section requires learners to apply their knowledge and understanding of research methods to a novel research scenario, making judgements on the details of psychological research.

Unit 3 Psychology: Implications in the Real World

Having learnt about the various psychological approaches in Unit 1, learners are expected to apply this knowledge and understanding to human / animal behaviours. Learners should be able to explain and draw conclusions about the possible causes of these behaviours and understand that psychology then has the potential to impact on society as a whole by developing methods of modifying behaviour. In addition, learners should explore five controversies that continue to pose challenges for psychology. These controversies can be considered synoptically and draw on the content from the whole of the specification.

Unit 4 Psychology: Applied Research Methods

Section A: Personal investigations

It is necessary for learners to know and understand the methodologies used in psychology and be able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these. To ensure true appreciation of these methodologies the learners are expected to gain first-hand experience of two research methods. Learners will be required to respond to questions concerning these investigations in the assessment. The two investigations required each year are outlined in Appendix B. Learners are encouraged to use ICT in researching, designing, analysing and presenting their investigation. Learners will be expected to apply their knowledge of research methods to each investigation, including the following aspects: hypotheses; variables; methodology (including experimental design if appropriate); sampling; descriptive statistics; graphical representations; inferential statistics; reliability; validity; ethics.

Section B: Application of research methods to novel scenarios

The second aspect of this component is for learners to apply their knowledge and understanding of research methods to novel research scenarios, making judgements on the details of psychological research.

How it's assessed

Unit 1 Psychology: Past to Present Written examination: 1 hour 30 minutes 20% of qualification marks	80
Compulsory questions relating to five psychological approaches and classic pieces of research.	
Unit 2 Psychology: Using Psychological Concepts Written examination: 1 hour 30 minutes 20% of qualification marks	80
Section A: Contemporary debate One question linked to the given debates.	
Section B: Principles of research and application of research methods	
Principles of research Compulsory questions on the theory of psychological research (including the work of social and developmental psychologists).	
Application of research methods to a novel scenario Compulsory questions requiring a response to a piece of research previously unseen.	

The above plus a further 2 units)

A2 Unit 3 Psychology: Implications in the Real World Written examination: 2 hours 30 minutes 40% of qualification marks	100
Section A: The study of behaviours Three structured essays from a choice of six.	
Section B: Controversies in psychology One question from a choice of two requiring a synoptic exploration of psychological controversies.	
A2 Unit 4 Psychology: Applied Research Methods Written examination: 1 hour 30 minutes 20% of qualification marks	60
Section A: Personal investigations Compulsory questions based on investigative activities carried out prior to the assessment.	
Section B: Application of research methods to novel scenarios Compulsory questions requiring a response to pieces of research.	