



A Level Psychology – 7 Year Curriculum Plan

Rationale:

Through an A level psychology we wish to equip widen our students' awareness of psychology and the scientific study of mind and behaviour. By the end of the course we want students to have a broad understanding of approaches and methods related to the core areas of Psychology .They will be conversant with explanations from different approaches linked with topic areas in psychology. They will have a balanced perspective of issues and debates within psychological study. The topics are carefully chosen so that students experience an interesting, diverse and coherent course of study. A strong theme is research methods and the ability to undertake statistical analysis and the scientific method. An A'level in psychology will prepare students for a degree in psychology as well as a range of degrees and careers that involve understanding human behaviour.

During the course students will develop a critical understanding of the 6 different psychological approaches in understanding human behaviour.

These are:

- Behaviourism
- Social Learning Theory
- Cognitive
- Psychodynamic
- Humanistic
- Biological

They will also be able to understand the application of the perspectives in the following topic areas:

- Social Influence
- Attachment
- Psychopathology
- Memory
- Schizophrenia
- Forensic Psychology
- Sex and Gender

Throughout the course students will explore issues and themes that are pertinent in understanding humanity including gender and cultural bias, ethical issues in research. They will also consider a variety of perspectives on debates in psychology and will develop the ability to have an eclectic understanding of psychological theory and to argue different positions on the debates.

The practical elements of psychology as a science feature in all the topics they study. Students need to be able to plan, interpret and evaluate research. They will develop their application of number skills as a result.

As The Cedars Academy does not currently offer GCSE Psychology students will have limited prior knowledge of psychology. The first unit to be covered in the course 'approaches in psychology, provides much of the foundational knowledge needed to succeed in the course and introduces students to basic concepts that they can apply throughout the course. Students will also have a weekly lesson on the practical research methods within psychology. Students will need to develop their skills from GCSE maths as they understand the statistical techniques required to do empirical research.

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Transition work is set which focuses on the knowledge required in the first term. This is completed in the summer between GCSEs and starting the A'level course. There is a further piece of transition work that is completed at the end of the first year of the course which gives students the opportunity to complete a psychological research project on a topic that they have studied in the first year of the course.

Students are given a knowledge organiser for each topic they study. Each booklet has additional questions and past papers to be used as part of their ongoing revision and review of the course.

Curriculum Overview

Year 12	Half term 1	Half term 2	Half term 3	Half term 4	Half term 5	Half term 6
	Approaches in psychology Research Methods	Social Influence Research Methods	Memory Research Methods	Psychopathology Research Methods	Attachment Research Methods	Biopsychology Research Methods
Year 13	Sex and Gender Research Methods	Schizophrenia Research Methods	Forensic Psychology Research Methods	Issues and debates Research Methods	Revision	

Timetabling

Students have 5 lessons a week with one teacher who is the sole Business Studies teacher at the school.

Key Stage 5

Topics are determined by the examining body.

The examining board has been chosen for several reasons. The practical element of psychology is very strong.

- In Topic 1 students learn about the key approaches within psychology. As they then study the different topics they will develop a critical understanding of how different view points influence theories of human behaviour. They also develop their critical understanding of the different approaches in psychology in explaining behaviour.
- The examining body is used by the other A level providers in the Trust which allows for moderation of marked assessments across the Trust
- Students also develop their critical thinking skills by being able to apply 'issues and debates'.

A key theme that runs through all topics is understanding the approaches in Psychology and the nature of scientific enquiry. As students progress through the topics they learn that they cannot put aside previous learning and must use it to strengthen their arguments

Topics are delivered in way that allows students who have not been exposed to psychology before to understand explanations in psychology. As they study the different topics they see how the different approaches are used in context. For example, behaviourism is studied during the first half term as one of the key approaches in psychology. As they then study different topics they see behaviourism applied both in a theoretical and practical context. For example as an explanation of how attachments are formed in the attachment topic, both as an explanation and a therapy for phobias in psychopathology, as a treatment for schizophrenia and for criminals in forensic psychology.

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The issues and debates are used throughout the course to help students develop their critical awareness. These include ethical issues, gender and cultural bias, nature vs nurture, freewill vs determinism, an idiographic vs a nomothetic approach and holism vs reductionism. As these are used in discussions throughout the course students can then effectively use the topics to show their synoptic understanding of the debates in the final topic in the course. The scientific methodology is developed throughout the course as students need to know how to conduct their own scientific research as well as critically evaluate that conducted by others. Research methods is examined across all three papers in their final exam.

The course provides the ideal stepping stone for students who want to complete a psychology related course at University or go on to career related to psychology. Careers in psychology are diverse ranging from occupational psychology to sports psychology and from counselling to advertising.

Assessment

Formative and Summative assessment are timetabled on a regular basis. Assessments are cumulative because of the nature of the course as described above. Students follow the 'plan for your exam, booklets. These booklets include knowledge organisers, planning grids to be used as a starting point for revision and question banks.

Students demonstrate progress through the quality of responses to regular timed questions and school wide assessments such as trial exams. Students use DIRT time to review their answers and improve them with their formative assessments.

Literacy

Subject specific literacy is taught and utilised through the booklets and rewarded in written work. Due to the nature of the course there is ample opportunity for students to communicate their thoughts and arguments in class and listen to a variety of arguments before committing to an answer on paper.

Students will explore a range of viewpoints on the following debates in psychology and they need to develop the ability to argue different viewpoints as well as to develop their own reasoned conclusion:

- ethical issues in theory and research
- Socially Sensitive research
- gender and cultural bias
- nature vs nurture
- freewill vs determinism
- an idiographic vs a nomothetic approach
- holism vs reductionism

The above debates not only strengthen students' skills in constructing an argument as there are no black and white answers but also better prepare them to be active participants in society as many of them have an ethical standpoint.

Beyond the classroom

Students can utilise their learning from maths in order to aid them in the statistical elements of the course as well as other social science and science subjects such as Sociology, Business, Biology and health and social care when understanding human behaviour

Differentiation

Students accessing the courses with varying levels of confidence are supported through three main strategies



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Teaching to the top and ensuring that students are challenged and supported through all material. Articles are utilised from magazines such as Psychological Review and current affairs topics giving them access to rich material and vocabulary. .

Support through Plan for your exam booklets which allow students to access words and concepts before teaching takes place so they can reference the booklet at any time. Further support is provided through lots of examples.

Differentiated questioning in the classroom also ensures that students are both challenged and supported.

The school wide PP policy and T&L strategies are implemented to support students from poorer socio economic backgrounds. The teacher works with the SEN coordinator to ensure that the needs of any SEN students is being met.

Marking and Feedback

The school wide marking and feedback policy is implemented.