

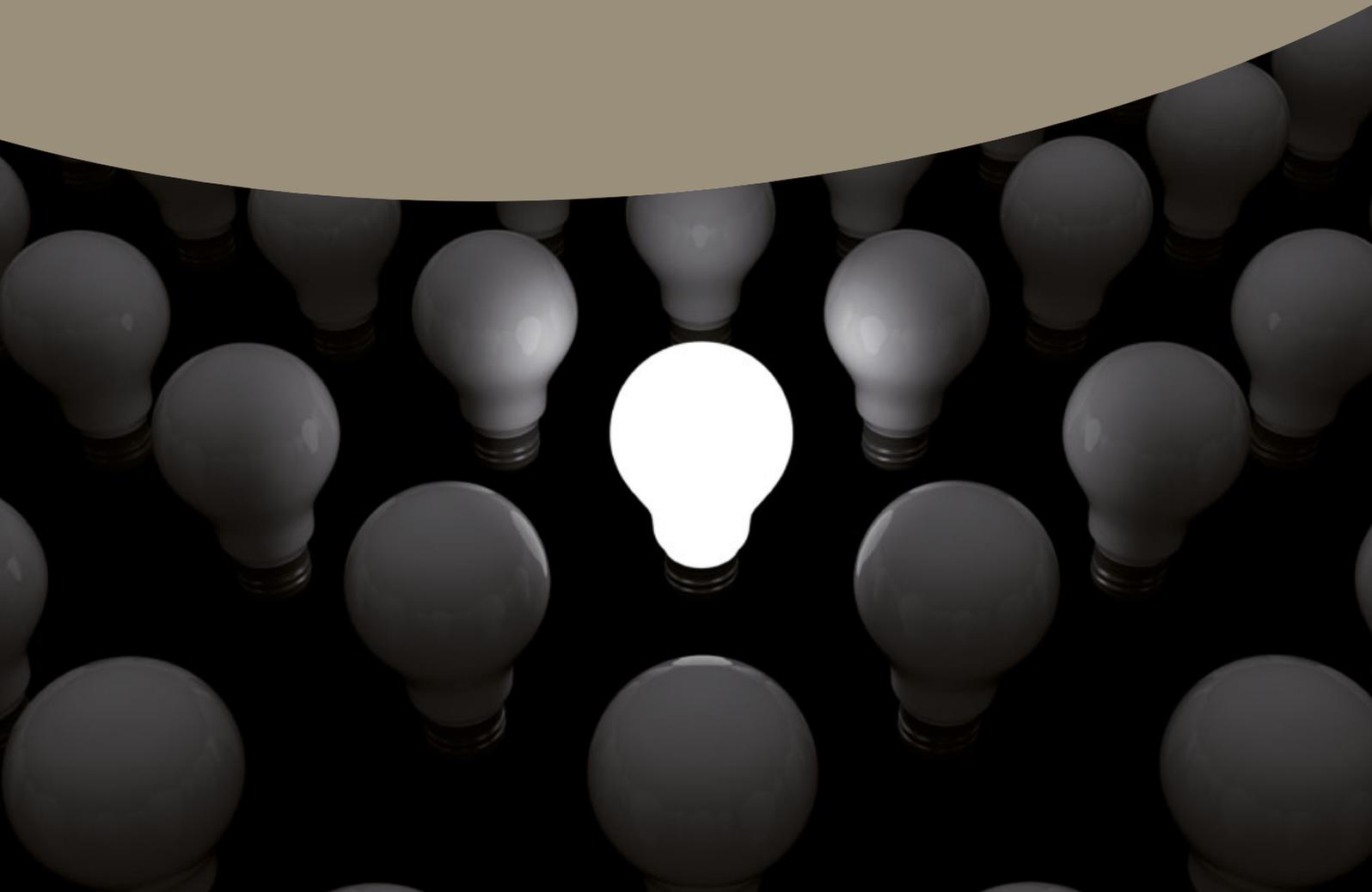
GCE

AS and A Level Specification

Psychology A

For exams from June 2014 onwards

For certification from June 2014 onwards



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Vertical black lines indicate a significant change or addition to the previous version of this specification.

1 Introduction

1

1.1 Why choose AQA?

It's a fact that AQA is the UK's favourite exam board and more students receive their academic qualifications from AQA than from any other board. But why does AQA continue to be so popular?

- **Specifications**

Ours are designed to the highest standards, so teachers, students and their parents can be confident that an AQA award provides an accurate measure of a student's achievements. And the assessment structures have been designed to achieve a balance between rigour, reliability and demands on candidates.

- **Support**

AQA runs the most extensive programme of support meetings; free of charge in the first years of a new specification and at a very reasonable cost thereafter. These support meetings explain the specification and suggest practical teaching strategies and approaches that really work.

- **Service**

We are committed to providing an efficient and effective service and we are at the end of the phone when you need to speak to a person about an important issue. We will always try to resolve issues the first time you contact us but, should that not be possible, we will always come back to you (by telephone, email or letter) and keep working with you to find the solution.

- **Ethics**

AQA is a registered charity. We have no shareholders to pay. We exist solely for the good of education in the UK. Any surplus income is ploughed back into educational research and our service to you, our customers. We don't profit from education, you do.

If you are an existing customer then we thank you for your support. If you are thinking of moving to AQA then we look forward to welcoming you.

1.2 Why choose Psychology A?

This specification has been designed to provide a broad introduction to the scope and nature of psychology as a science, bringing the content up to date while at the same time retaining the popular features of the previous Psychology Specification A.

The emphasis is on applying knowledge and understanding rather than just acquiring knowledge, thereby developing students' transferable skills of analysis, evaluation and critical thinking.

At AS, the specification offers a broad range of topics, with research methods in context.

At A2, there is a range of topic-based options which bring together explanations from different approaches and engage students in issues and debates in contemporary psychology. Teachers can select a route through the A2 to suit the needs and interests of their students.

1.3 How do I start using this specification?

Already using the existing AQA Psychology A specification?

- Register to receive further information, such as mark schemes, past question papers, details of teacher support meetings, etc, at **<http://www.aqa.org.uk/rn/askaqa.php>**
Information will be available electronically or in print, for your convenience.
- Tell us that you intend to enter candidates. Then we can make sure that you receive all the material you need for the examinations. This is particularly important where examination material is issued before the final entry deadline. You can let us know by completing the appropriate Intention to Enter and Estimated Entry forms. We will send copies to your Exams Officer and they are also available on our website
http://www.aqa.org.uk/admin/p_entries.html

Not using the AQA Specification currently?

- Almost all centres in England and Wales use AQA or have used AQA in the past and are approved AQA centres. A small minority are not. If your centre is new to AQA, please contact our centre approval team at **centreapproval@aqa.org.uk**

1.4 How can I find out more?

Ask AQA

You have 24-hour access to useful information and answers to the most commonly asked questions at **<http://www.aqa.org.uk/rn/askaqa.php>**

If the answer to your question is not available, you can submit a query for our team. Our target response time is one day.

Teacher Support

Details of the full range of current Teacher Support meetings are available on our website at **<http://www.aqa.org.uk/support/teachers.html>**

There is also a link to our fast and convenient online booking system for Teacher Support meetings at **<http://events.aqa.org.uk/ebooking>**

If you need to contact the Teacher Support team, you can call us on 01483 477860 or email us at **teachersupport@aqa.org.uk**

2 Specification at a Glance

AS Examinations

Unit 1 – PSYA1

Cognitive Psychology, Developmental Psychology and Research Methods

50% of the total AS marks, 25% of the total A2 marks
1 hour 30 minutes

Structured compulsory questions based on Cognitive Psychology, Developmental Psychology and Research Methods.

Questions include short answer, stimulus material and one 12-mark question requiring extended writing in which QWC will be assessed.

Available June only

Unit 2 – PSYA2

Biological Psychology, Social Psychology and Individual Differences

50% of the total AS marks, 25% of the total A2 marks
1 hour 30 minutes

Three compulsory structured questions, one based on the Biological Psychology content, one based on the Social Psychology content and one based on the Individual Differences content.

Questions include short answer, stimulus material and one or more 12-mark questions requiring extended writing in which QWC will be assessed.

Available June only

AS
Award
1181

A2 Examinations

Unit 3 – PSYA3

Topics in Psychology

25% of the total A Level marks
1 hour 30 minutes

Three essay-style questions chosen from eight topics:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (a) Biological rhythms and sleep | (b) Perception |
| (c) Relationships | (d) Aggression |
| (e) Eating behaviour | (f) Gender |
| (g) Intelligence and learning | (h) Cognition and development |

QWC will be assessed in each essay

Available June only

Unit 4 – PSYA4

Psychopathology, Psychology in Action and Research Methods

25% of the total A Level marks
2 hours

Three sections

Psychopathology: One essay-style question chosen from four. QWC will be assessed in this essay.

Psychology in Action: One question chosen from three.

Research Methods: One compulsory structured question.

Available June only

A Level
Award
2181

AS + A2 = A Level

3 Subject Content

3.1 Unit 1 PSYA1 Cognitive Psychology, Developmental Psychology and Research Methods

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate:

- knowledge and understanding of concepts, theories and studies in relation to Cognitive Psychology and Developmental Psychology
- skills of analysis, evaluation and application in relation to Cognitive Psychology and Developmental Psychology
- knowledge and understanding of Research Methods associated with these areas of psychology
- knowledge and understanding of ethical issues associated with these areas of psychology.

Knowledge and understanding of Research Methods should be developed through:

- direct study of Research Methods
- undertaking practical research activities involving collection, analysis and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data
- analysis and evaluation of studies relevant to the Cognitive and Developmental Psychology content of this unit.

3

Cognitive Psychology - Memory	
Models of memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The multi-store model, including the concepts of encoding, capacity and duration. Strengths and limitations of the model • The working memory model, including its strengths and limitations
Memory in everyday life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyewitness testimony (EWT). Factors affecting the accuracy of EWT, including misleading information, anxiety, age of witness • Improving accuracy of EWT, including the use of the cognitive interview • Strategies for memory improvement

Developmental Psychology – Early Social Development	
Attachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanations of attachment, including learning theory and Bowlby's theory • Types of attachment: secure attachment, insecure-avoidant and insecure-resistant • Use of the "Strange Situation" in attachment research • Cultural variations in attachment • The effects of disruption of attachment, failure to form attachment (privation) and institutional care
Attachment in everyday life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of different forms of day care on children's social development, including the effects on aggression and peer relations • How research into attachment and day care has influenced child care practices

Research Methods	
Methods and techniques	<p>Candidates will be expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following research methods, their advantages and weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experimental method, including laboratory, field and natural experiments • Studies using a correlational analysis • Observational techniques • Self-report techniques including questionnaire and interview • Case studies
Investigation design	<p>Candidates should be familiar with the following features of investigation design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims • Hypotheses, including directional and non-directional • Experimental design (independent groups, repeated measures and matched pairs) • Design of naturalistic observations, including the development and use of behavioural categories • Design of questionnaires and interviews • Operationalisation of variables, including independent and dependent variables • Pilot studies • Control of extraneous variables • Reliability and validity • Awareness of the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics • Ethical issues and ways in which psychologists deal with them • Selection of participants and sampling techniques, including random, opportunity and volunteer sampling • Demand characteristics and investigator effects
Data analysis and presentation	<p>Candidates should be familiar with the following features of data analysis, presentation and interpretation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and interpretation of quantitative data including graphs, scattergrams and tables • Analysis and interpretation of quantitative data. Measures of central tendency including median, mean, mode. Measures of dispersion including ranges and standard deviation • Analysis and interpretation of correlational data. Positive and negative correlations and the interpretation of correlation coefficients • Presentation of qualitative data • Processes involved in content analysis

3.2 Unit 2 PSYA2 Biological Psychology, Social Psychology and Individual Differences

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate:

- knowledge and understanding of concepts, theories and studies in relation to individual differences, social psychology, biological psychology
- skills of analysis, evaluation and application in relation to individual differences, social psychology, biological psychology
- knowledge and understanding of research methods associated with these areas of psychology
- knowledge and understanding of ethical issues associated with these areas of psychology.

Knowledge and understanding of research methods should be developed through:

- undertaking practical research activities involving collection, analysis and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data
- analysis and evaluation of studies relevant to the content for each area of psychology in this unit.

3

Biological Psychology - Stress	
Stress as a bodily response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The body's response to stress, including the pituitary-adrenal system and the sympathomedullary pathway in outline • Stress-related illness and the immune system
Stress in everyday life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life changes and daily hassles as sources of stress • Workplace stress including the effects of workload and control • Personality factors, including Type A and Type B behaviour, hardiness • Psychological and biological methods of stress management, including stress inoculation therapy and drug therapy

Social Psychology - Social Influence	
Social influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conformity (majority influence) and explanations of why people conform, including informational social influence and normative social influence • Types of conformity, including internalisation and compliance • Obedience to authority, including Milgram's work and explanations of why people obey
Social influence in everyday life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanations of independent behaviour, including locus of control, how people resist pressures to conform and resist pressures to obey authority • How social influence research helps us to understand social change; the role of minority influence in social change

Individual Differences – Psychopathology (Abnormality)	
Defining and explaining psychological abnormality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of abnormality, including deviation from social norms, failure to function adequately and deviation from ideal mental health, and limitations of these definitions of psychological abnormality • The biological approach to psychopathology • Psychological approaches to psychopathology including the psychodynamic, behavioural and cognitive approaches
Treating abnormality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological therapies, including drugs and ECT • Psychological therapies, including psychoanalysis, systematic de-sensitisation and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

3

3.3 Unit 3 PSYA3 Topics in Psychology

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate:

- knowledge, understanding and skills of analysis and evaluation in relation to three topics selected from the following.
 - o Biological rhythms and sleep
 - o Perception
 - o Relationships
 - o Aggression
 - o Eating behaviour
 - o Gender
 - o Intelligence and learning
 - o Cognition and development
- knowledge, understanding and skills of analysis and evaluation in relation to relevant theories, explanations and studies in each of the three topics studied
- an understanding of the major approaches in psychology (cognitive, biological, behavioural and psychodynamic) through their study of the topics
- an appreciation of issues and debates as relevant to each topic studied: for example, issues of bias, including gender and culture, the role of animals in research, ethical issues, the nature/nurture debate, free will and determinism and reductionism.

Biological rhythms and sleep	
Biological rhythms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circadian, infradian, and ultradian rhythms, including the role of endogenous pacemakers and of exogenous zeitgebers in the control of circadian rhythms • Disruption of biological rhythms, for example shift work, jet lag
Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of sleep including stages of sleep and lifespan changes in sleep • Functions of sleep, including evolutionary and restoration explanations
Disorders of sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanations for sleep disorders, including insomnia, sleep walking and narcolepsy

Perception	
Theories of perceptual organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gregory's top down/indirect theory of perception • Gibson's bottom up/direct theory of perception
Development of perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of perceptual abilities, including depth/distance, visual constancies. • Perceptual development, including infant and cross-cultural research
Face recognition and visual agnosias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruce and Young's theory of face recognition, including case studies and explanations of prosopagnosia

Relationships	
The formation, maintenance and breakdown of romantic relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories of the formation, maintenance and breakdown of romantic relationships: for example, reward/need satisfaction, social exchange theory
Evolutionary explanations of human reproductive behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship between sexual selection and human reproductive behaviour • Sex differences in parental investment
Effects of early experience and culture on adult relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influence of childhood on adult relationships • The influence of culture on romantic relationships

Aggression	
Social psychological approaches to explaining aggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social psychological theories of aggression, for example, social learning theory, deindividuation • Institutional aggression
Biological explanations of aggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neural and hormonal mechanisms in aggression • Genetic factors in aggressive behaviour
Evolution and human aggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evolutionary explanations of human aggression, including infidelity and jealousy • Evolutionary explanations of group display in humans, for example sport and warfare

Eating behaviour	
Eating behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors influencing attitudes to food and eating behaviour, for example cultural influences, mood, health concerns • Explanations for the success and failure of dieting
Biological explanations of eating behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neural mechanisms involved in controlling eating behaviour • Evolutionary explanations of food preference
Eating disorders	<p>In relation to either anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa or obesity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological explanations • Biological explanations, including neural and evolutionary explanations

Gender	
Psychological explanations of gender development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive developmental theory, including Kohlberg • Gender schema theory
Biological influences on gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of hormones and genes in gender development • Evolutionary explanations of gender • The biosocial approach to gender development including gender dysphoria
Social influences on gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social influences on gender for example, the influence of parents, peers, schools, media • Cultural influences on gender role

Intelligence and learning	
Theories of intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychometric theories, for example, Spearman, Cattell, Thurstone • Information processing theories, for example, Sternberg, Gardner
Animal learning and intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple learning (classical and operant conditioning) and its role in the behaviour of non-human animals • Intelligence in non-human animals, for example, self-recognition, social learning, Machiavellian intelligence
Human intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evolutionary factors in the development of human intelligence, for example, ecological demands, social complexity, brain size • Genetic and environmental factors associated with intelligence test performance, including the influence of culture

Cognition and development	
Development of thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories of cognitive development, including Piaget and Vygotsky • Applications of cognitive development theories to education
Development of moral understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kohlberg's theory of moral understanding
Development of social cognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the child's sense of self, including Theory of Mind • Development of children's understanding of others, including perspective-taking for example, Selman • Biological explanations of social cognition, including the role of the mirror neuron system

3.4 Unit 4 Psychopathology, Psychology in Action and Research Methods

Candidates will be expected to:

- develop knowledge and understanding of theories and studies relevant to the content for each area of psychology in this unit
- analyse and evaluate theories, explanations and studies relevant to the content for each area of psychology in this unit
- undertake practical research activities involving collection, analysis and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data.

This unit is divided into three sections.

Section A

Psychopathology

Candidates will be expected to:

- develop knowledge and understanding of one of the following disorders:
 - o schizophrenia
 - o depression
 - o phobic disorders
 - o obsessive compulsive disorder
- apply knowledge and understanding of models, classification and diagnosis to their chosen disorder.

<p>In relation to their chosen disorder:</p> <p>schizophrenia</p> <p>or</p> <p>depression</p> <p>or</p> <p>phobic disorders</p> <p>or</p> <p>obsessive compulsive disorder</p> <p>candidates should be familiar with the following:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical characteristics of the chosen disorder • Issues surrounding the classification and diagnosis of their chosen disorder, including reliability and validity • Biological explanations of their chosen disorder, for example, genetics, biochemistry • Psychological explanations of their chosen disorder, for example, behavioural, cognitive, psychodynamic and socio-cultural • Biological therapies for their chosen disorder, including their evaluation in terms of appropriateness and effectiveness • Psychological therapies for their chosen disorder, for example, behavioural, psychodynamic and cognitive-behavioural, including their evaluation in terms of appropriateness and effectiveness
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Section B

Psychology in Action

Candidates choose one contemporary application of psychology to investigate in detail.

Candidates will be expected to:

- develop knowledge, understanding and critical thinking in relation to one of the following contemporary applications of psychology:
 - o media psychology
 - o the psychology of addictive behaviour
 - o anomalous psychology
- apply their knowledge and understanding of research methods to unfamiliar situations.
- develop an appreciation of the relationship between research, policy and practices in applying psychology in everyday life.

Media psychology	
Media influences on social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanations of media influences on pro- and anti-social behaviour • The positive and negative effects of computers and video games on behaviour
Media and persuasion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application of Hovland-Yale and Elaboration Likelihood models in explaining the persuasive effects of media • Explanations for the persuasiveness of television advertising
The psychology of 'celebrity'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The attraction of 'celebrity', including social psychological and evolutionary explanations • Research into intense fandom, including, celebrity worship and celebrity stalking

The psychology of addictive behaviour	
Models of addictive behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological, cognitive and learning approaches to explaining initiation, maintenance and relapse, and their applications to smoking and gambling
Vulnerability to addiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk factors in the development of addiction, including stress, peers, age and personality • Media influences on addictive behaviour
Reducing addictive behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The theory of planned behaviour as a model for addiction prevention • Types of intervention and their effectiveness, including biological, psychological and public health interventions

Anomalistic psychology	
The study of anomalous experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pseudoscience and the scientific status of parapsychology • Methodological issues related to the study of paranormal cognition (ESP, including Ganzfeld) and paranormal action (psychokinesis)
Explanations for anomalous experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of coincidence and probability judgements in anomalous experience • Explanations for superstitious behaviour and magical thinking • Personality factors underlying anomalous experience
Research into exceptional experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological research into and explanations for psychic healing, near death and out of body experiences, and psychic mediumship

Section C

Psychological Research and Scientific Method

Candidates will be expected to:

- extend their knowledge, understanding and skills of research design, data analysis, and data interpretation and reporting gained at AS
- develop an understanding of the nature of science and scientific method.

This section builds on the knowledge and skills developed at AS level.

Candidates will be expected to:

- understand the application of scientific method in psychology
- design investigations
- understand how to analyse and interpret data arising from such investigations,
- report on practical investigations.

In order to gain sufficient understanding of the design and conduct of scientific research in psychology, candidates will need to practise these skills by carrying out, analysing and reporting small-scale investigation.

The application of scientific method in psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The major features of science, including replicability, objectivity, theory construction, hypothesis testing, the use of empirical methods • Validating new knowledge and the role of peer review
Designing psychological investigations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection and application of appropriate research methods • Implications of sampling strategies, for example, bias and generalising • Issues of reliability, including types of reliability, assessment of reliability, improving reliability • Assessing and improving validity, including internal and external • Ethical considerations in design and conduct of psychological research
Data analysis and reporting on investigations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate selection of graphical representations • Probability and significance, including the interpretation of significance and Type 1/Type 2 errors • Factors affecting choice of statistical test, including levels of measurement • The use of inferential analysis, including Spearman's Rho, Mann-Whitney, Wilcoxon, Chi-Squared • Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data • Conventions of reporting on psychological investigations

3.5 How Science Works

How Science Works is an underpinning set of concepts and is the means whereby students come to understand how scientists investigate scientific phenomena in their attempts to explain the world about us. Moreover, *How Science Works* recognises the contribution scientists have made to their own disciplines and to the wider world.

Further, it recognises that scientists may be influenced by their own beliefs and that these can affect the way in which they approach their work. Also, it acknowledges that scientists can and must contribute to debates about the uses to which their work is put and how their work influences decision making in society.

In general terms, it can be used to promote students' skills in solving scientific problems by developing an understanding of the following.

- The concepts, principles and theories that form the subject content
- The procedures associated with the valid testing of ideas and, in particular, the collection, interpretation and validation of evidence
- The role of the scientific community in validating evidence and also in resolving conflicting evidence.

More details of these principles and procedures are given in (A) to (I) below. These are taken from paragraph 3.6 of the GCE AS and A level Subject Criteria for Science (September 2006) which sets out the requirements for the skills, knowledge and understanding of *How Science Works*.

When students are proficient in dealing with the matters given in (A) to (I), we may say that they

have achieved a level of scientific literacy: they have learned the 'language' of science. Students are then, and only then, able to engage with the place and contribution of science in the wider world. (See (J) to (L) below, again taken from paragraph 3.6 of the science criteria.) In particular, students will begin to recognise:

- the contribution that scientists can make to decision-making and the formulation of policy
- the need for regulation of scientific enquiry and how this can be achieved
- how scientists can contribute legitimately in debates about those claims which are made in the name of science.

Clearly, an examination specification, covering a given body of scientific content and designed for students working at a particular level, cannot cover to the same depth and comprehensiveness all the issues dealt with under (A) to (L) below, as these describe in general terms scientific activity which permeates all scientific disciplines. This specification will concentrate on those aspects which, it is deemed, are most appropriate at this level and taking into account the content to be studied. In doing so, it bears in mind considerations of what is reasonable, manageable and practicable. So, under each of (A) to (L) is indicated the general approach by which the specification will attempt to deal with the individual concepts and associated activities: also, brief illustrative examples of areas of the specification where the particular idea(s) may be assessed are included. These examples are not exhaustive and, therefore, do not prescribe every area where *How Science Works* will be assessed.

A Use theories, models and ideas to develop and modify scientific explanations

Scientists use theories and models to attempt to explain observations. These theories or models can form the basis for scientific experimental work.

Scientific progress is made when validated evidence is found that supports a new theory or model.

In each unit, candidates will be expected to apply knowledge of psychological theories, models and ideas to:

- designing research to test psychological theories and models
- explaining results of studies in terms of psychological theory and concepts

- analysing and evaluating explanations of psychological processes
- generating explanations of unfamiliar situations.

Example of Learning Activity: from Unit 3 Cognitive Development. Students might be required to analyse a theory of moral understanding and use knowledge of alternative theories to suggest strengths and weaknesses of the theory.

Assessment Example: In Unit 1, candidates may be presented with a scenario about a person who needed to improve his/her memory, and then be required to apply their knowledge of theories of memory to suggest appropriate improvement strategies.

B Use knowledge and understanding to pose scientific questions, define scientific problems, present scientific arguments and scientific ideas

Scientists use their knowledge and understanding when observing objects and events, in defining a scientific problem and when questioning the explanations of themselves or of other scientists.

Scientific progress is made when scientists contribute to the development of new ideas, materials and theories.

In each unit, candidates will be expected to use knowledge of psychological theory and research to:

- propose psychological hypotheses
- identify appropriate issues for psychological investigations

- explain psychological processes and concepts
- present informed psychological arguments.

Example of Learning Activity: In Unit 2, students might be divided into two groups, one group to research and present a defence of the value of day care and one to challenge this view and the implications of day care for social development.

Assessment Example: In Unit 3, candidates might be required to evaluate psychological explanations of one eating disorder.

C Use appropriate methodology, including ICT, to answer scientific questions and solve scientific problems

Observations ultimately lead to explanations in the form of hypotheses. In turn, these hypotheses lead to predictions that can be tested experimentally. Observations are one of the key links between the 'real world' and the abstract ideas of science.

Once an experimental method has been validated, it becomes a protocol that is used by other scientists.

ICT can be used to speed up, collect, record and analyse experimental data.

In each unit, candidates will be expected to:

- undertake practical research activities as a means of developing their understanding of how science works and in particular research methods as detailed in Unit 1 and Unit 4
- select appropriate research methods and techniques of data collection to investigate specific psychological problems and explain why the chosen method is appropriate and why other methods may not be

- select appropriate means of data analysis
- use ICT to research background information, generate or present materials and to analyse statistical data.

Example of Learning Activity: In Unit 1, students might choose to design and carry out an observational study of obedience in their school, using a word-processing package to prepare a behavioural categorisation chart to record student responses to a notice such as "Do Not Walk on the Grass" and use PowerPoint to present the data to the rest of the class, and/or use an IT package to assess the statistical significance of the data.

Assessment Example: In Unit 4, candidates might be required to identify an appropriate inferential test of statistical significance to analyse a set of data from a research study.

D Carry out experimental and investigative activities, including appropriate risk management in a range of contexts

Scientists perform a range of experimental skills that include manual and data skills (tabulation, graphical skills, etc).

Scientists should select and use equipment that is appropriate when making accurate measurements and should record these measurements methodically.

Scientists carry out experimental work in such a way as to minimise the risk to themselves and others.

In each unit, candidates will be expected to:

- participate in planning and conducting research to investigate psychological theories, models and ideas and in analysing and interpreting the findings of such research

- consider possible physical and psychological risks to participants, researchers or researcher confederates and to adjust activities accordingly.

Example of Learning Activity: In Units 1 and 4, in a class discussion, students might be asked to outline psychological investigations which they would find interesting to undertake and then to discuss the physical and psychological risks associated with these proposals.

Assessment Example: In Unit 4, candidates might be asked to identify risks associated with a study which has been outlined for them and to suggest ways in which the researcher might address the potential risks.

E Analyse and interpret data to provide evidence, recognising correlations and causal relationships

Scientists look for patterns and trends in data as a first step in providing explanations of phenomena. The degree of uncertainty in any data will affect whether alternative explanations can be given for the data.

Anomalous data are those measurements that fall outside the normal, or expected, range of measured values. Decisions on how to treat anomalous data should be made only after examination of the event.

In searching for causal links between factors, scientists propose predictive theoretical models that can be tested experimentally. When experimental data confirm predictions from these theoretical models, scientists become confident that a causal relationship exists.

In each unit, candidates will be expected to:

- analyse and interpret raw and summary data from psychological investigations undertaken in class

- explain and interpret summary data from psychological investigations in examinations
- interpret and draw conclusions from findings of their own and others' investigations
- understand the difference between correlation and cause and effect relationships.

Example of Learning Activity: In Unit 2, students might collect data on life events and stress using a questionnaire, correlate the two sets of data, then discuss the reasons why even statistically significant correlations cannot be used to infer cause and effect.

Assessment Example: In Unit 1, candidates might be given a table of summary data from an investigation into serial position effect and asked to draw conclusions from the data, and explain the implications of the findings for the multi-store model of memory.

F Evaluate methodology, evidence and data, and resolve conflicting evidence

The validity of new evidence, and the robustness of conclusions that stem from it, is constantly questioned by scientists.

Experimental methods must be designed adequately to test predictions.

Solutions to scientific problems are often developed when different research teams produce conflicting evidence. Such evidence is a stimulus for further scientific investigation, which involves refinements of experimental technique or development of new hypotheses.

In each unit, candidates will be expected to:

- evaluate research methods in terms of issues such as reliability, validity, bias and ethics
- evaluate evidence on the basis of sampling, data

collection techniques and operationalising and control of variables

- explain inconsistencies in data and anomalous scores in a set of data
- evaluate the use of descriptive and inferential statistics.

Example of Learning Activity: In Unit 4, students might be given reports of two studies yielding conflicting evidence and be asked to suggest why their findings are different and to suggest which set of findings they have greatest confidence in and why.

Assessment Example: In Unit 4, candidates might be asked to discuss evidence for and against biological explanations of schizophrenia.

G Appreciate the tentative nature of scientific knowledge

Scientific explanations are those that are based on experimental evidence, which is supported by the scientific community.

Scientific knowledge changes when new evidence provides a better explanation of scientific observations.

Candidates will be able to understand that scientific knowledge is founded on experimental evidence and that such evidence must be shown to be reliable and reproducible. If such evidence does not support a theory, the theory must be modified or replaced with a different theory. Just as previous scientific theories have been proved inadequate or incorrect, our present theories may also be flawed.

In each unit, candidates will be expected to:

- explore conflicting explanations and evidence
- understand the scientific nature of psychology including the subject matter, the role of theory, hypothesis testing, replication, generalisation.

Example of Learning Activity: In Unit 4, students might explore the historical emergence of the different approaches in psychology and examine the meaning and significance of these in relation to psychopathology and therapies.

Assessment Example: In Unit 2, candidates may be asked to discuss definitions of abnormality and their limitations.

H Communicate information and ideas in appropriate ways using appropriate terminology

By sharing the findings of their research, scientists provide the scientific community with opportunities to replicate and further test their work, thus either confirming new explanations or refuting them.

Scientific terminology avoids confusion amongst the scientific community, enabling better understanding and testing of scientific explanations.

In each unit, candidates will be expected to:

- use the appropriate psychological terminology to express psychological ideas, describe psychological concepts, interpret and explain psychological findings and describe and discuss psychological theories.

Example of Learning Activity: In Unit 4, small groups of students might be asked to research different models of abnormality and then to present an outline of the model to the class as a whole, employing appropriate concepts and psychological terminology.

Assessment Example: In Unit 3, candidates should make appropriate reference to Piagetian concepts in a discussion of Piaget's theory of cognitive development.

I Consider applications and implications of science and appreciate their associated benefits and risks

Scientific advances have greatly improved the quality of life for the majority of people. Developments in technology, medicine and materials continue to further these improvements at an increasing rate.

Scientists can predict and report on some of the beneficial applications of their experimental findings.

Scientists evaluate, and report on, the risks associated with the techniques they develop and applications of their findings.

In each unit, candidates will be expected to:

- understand and appreciate applications of psychology

- understand and appreciate the implications of psychological findings
- evaluate the contribution of psychological research in terms of benefits and risks.

Example of Learning Activity: In Unit 1, students might carry out a classroom investigation into eyewitness testimony and compare the accuracy of recall using traditional and cognitive interviews.

Assessment Example: In Unit 4, candidates might discuss various treatments for psychological disorders, with reference to the benefits and risks to the patient and to society as a whole.

J Consider ethical issues in the treatment of humans, other organisms and the environment

Scientific research is funded by society, either through public funding or through private companies that obtain their income from commercial activities. Scientists have a duty to consider ethical issues associated with their findings.

Individual scientists have ethical codes that are often based on humanistic, moral and religious beliefs.

Scientists are self-regulating and contribute to decision making about what investigations and methodologies should be permitted.

Candidates will be able to appreciate how science and society interact. They should examine how science has provided solutions to problems but recognise that the solutions require society to form judgements as to whether the solution is acceptable in view of moral issues that result. Issues such as the effects on the planet, and the economic and

physical well-being of the living things on it should be considered.

In each unit, candidates will be expected to:

- understand and appreciate the British Psychological Society code of ethics
- apply the code of ethics in their investigations
- discuss others' psychological investigations in relation to the code of ethics.

Example of Learning Activity: In Unit 2, students might investigate ethical issues in social influence research and then participate in a debate between 'Milgram' and 'Milgram's critics'.

Assessment Example: In Unit 2, candidates might be asked to discuss ethical issues arising from Milgram's research into obedience.

K Appreciate the role of the scientific community in validating new knowledge and ensuring integrity

The findings of scientists are subject to peer review before being accepted for publication in a reputable scientific journal.

The interests of the organisations that fund scientific research can influence the direction of research. In some cases, the validity of those claims may also be influenced.

Candidates will understand that scientists need a common set of values and responsibilities. They should know that scientists undertake a peer review of the work of others. They should know that scientists work with a common aim to progress scientific knowledge and understanding in a valid way and that accurate reporting of findings takes precedence over recognition of success of an individual. Similarly, the value of findings should be based on their intrinsic value and the credibility of the research.

In each unit, candidates will be expected to:

- understand the way in which the scientific community assesses new contributions to a body of research
- understand the process of peer review as a pre-requisite to publication
- understand the role of professional journals.

Example of Learning Activity: In Unit 4, students might compare a published journal article on an aspect of their Psychology in Action topic with a magazine article that has not been subject to peer review.

Assessment Example: Candidates might discuss the role of peer review in validating research.

L Appreciate the ways in which society uses science to inform decision making

Scientific findings and technologies enable advances to be made that have potential benefit for humans.

In practice, the scientific evidence available to decision makers may be incomplete.

Decision makers are influenced in many ways, including by their prior beliefs, their vested interests, special interest groups, public opinion and the media, as well as by expert scientific evidence.

Candidates will be able to appreciate that scientific evidence should be considered as a whole. They should realise that new scientific developments inform new technology. They should realise the media and pressure groups often select parts of scientific evidence that support a particular viewpoint and that this can influence public opinion, which in turn may influence decision makers. Consequently,

decision makers may make socially and politically unacceptable decisions based on incomplete evidence.

In each unit, candidates will be expected to:

- understand how psychological research has contributed to policy, practices and decision-making.

Example of Learning Activity: In Unit 1, students analyse a study skills guide and identify theory and research findings on which the advice/strategies are based.

Assessment Example: In Unit 1, candidates might be asked to discuss the implications of research into attachment and day care for child care practices.

3.6 Mathematical Requirements

In order to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in science, candidates need to have been taught, and to have acquired competence in, the appropriate areas of mathematics relevant to the subject as set out below.

	Candidates should be able to:
Arithmetic and numerical computation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise and use expressions in decimal and standard form • use ratios, fractions and percentages • make estimates of the results of calculations (without using a calculator)
Handling data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use an appropriate number of significant figures • find arithmetic means • construct and interpret frequency tables and diagrams, bar charts and histograms • have sufficient understanding of probability, eg to understand how genetic ratios arise • understand the principles of sampling as applied to scientific data • understand the importance of chance when interpreting data • understand the terms mean, median and mode • use a scatter diagram to identify a correlation between two variables • use a simple statistical test • make order of magnitude calculations
Algebra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand and use the symbols: =, <, <<, >>, >, ∞, ~ • substitute numerical values into algebraic equations using appropriate units for physical quantities
Graphs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • translate information between graphical, numerical and algebraic forms • plot two variables from experimental or other data

4 Scheme of Assessment

4.1 Aims

AS and A Level courses based on this specification should encourage candidates to:

- (a) develop their interest in and enthusiasm for the subject, including developing an interest in further study and careers in the subject
- (b) appreciate how society makes decisions about scientific issues and how the sciences contribute to the success of the economy and society
- (c) develop and demonstrate a deeper appreciation of the skills, knowledge and understanding of *How Science Works*
- (d) develop essential knowledge and understanding of different areas of the subject and how they relate to each other.

4.2 Assessment Objectives (AOs)

The Assessment Objectives are common to AS and A Level. The assessment units will assess the following Assessment Objectives in the context of the content and skills set out in Section 3 (Subject Content).

AO1: Knowledge and understanding of science and of *How Science Works*

Candidates should be able to:

- (a) recognise, recall and show understanding of scientific knowledge
- (b) select, organise and communicate relevant information in a variety of forms.

AO2: Application of knowledge and understanding of science and of *How Science Works*

Candidates should be able to:

- (a) analyse and evaluate scientific knowledge and processes
- (b) apply scientific knowledge and processes to unfamiliar situations including those related to issues
- (c) assess the validity, reliability and credibility of scientific information.

AO3: *How Science Works* - Psychology

Due to the likely age of A Level candidates and the possible nature of investigative activities in psychology, candidates will not be expected to demonstrate the skills of investigation through internal assessment. Candidates should therefore be able to:

- (a) describe ethical, safe and skilful practical techniques and processes, selecting appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods
- (b) know how to make, record and communicate reliable and valid observations and measurements with appropriate precision and accuracy, through using primary and secondary sources
- (c) analyse, interpret, explain and evaluate the methodology, results and impact of their own and others' experimental and investigative activities in a variety of ways.

It is expected, however, that candidates should still carry out investigative activities appropriate for the study of psychology at this level.

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

In GCE specifications which require candidates to produce written material in English, candidates must:

- ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that meaning is clear
- select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and to complex subject matter

- organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.

In this specification, QWC will be assessed in all units. It will be assessed in answers to selected longer questions. The criteria for QWC are incorporated into the mark bands for those questions.

Weighting of Assessment Objectives for AS

The table below shows the approximate weighting of each of the Assessment Objectives in the AS units.

Assessment Objectives	Unit Weightings (%)		Overall Weighting of AOs (%)
	Unit 1	Unit 2	
AO1	16.66	20.83	37.49
AO2	16.66	20.83	37.49
AO3	16.66	8.33	24.99
Overall weighting of units (%)	50	50	100

Weighting of Assessment Objectives for A Level

The table below shows the approximate weighting of each of the Assessment Objectives in the AS and A2 units.

Assessment Objectives	Unit Weightings (%)				Overall Weighting of AOs (%)
	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	
AO1	8.33	10.42	8.33	5.72	32.80
AO2	8.33	10.42	12.50	8.43	39.68
AO3	8.33	4.16	4.17	10.84	27.50
Overall weighting of units (%)	25	25	25	25	100

4

4.3 National Criteria

This specification complies with the following.

- The Subject Criteria for Science
- The Code of Practice for GCE
- The GCE AS and A Level Qualification Criteria
- The Arrangements for the Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland: Common Criteria

4.4 Prior Learning

There are no prior learning requirements.

The specification builds on, but does not depend upon, the knowledge, understanding and skills specified for GCSE Psychology. No prior knowledge of psychology is necessary. It is suggested, however, that candidates should be able to demonstrate

knowledge, understanding and skills equivalent to those required to gain at least Grade C in GCSE Mathematics and English. It must be emphasised that this is not a **requirement** for candidates wishing to study the course offered through this specification. Any requirements are set at the discretion of centres.

4.5 Synoptic Assessment and Stretch and Challenge

Synoptic Assessment

The compulsory content at AS ensures candidates have a sound basis on which to build their understanding at A2 and permits assumptions to be made about the knowledge base of those moving on to A2.

At A2, centres select from a range of topic-based options, each of which draws on two or more core areas, brings together explanations from different approaches and engages students in consideration of issues and debates in psychology.

In Unit 4, students will be required to develop further their understanding and skills in relation to research methods and to develop an in-depth understanding of the application of psychological theory and methods to contemporary issues.

Stretch and Challenge

The specification affords opportunities for stretch and challenge in terms of both content and assessment.

The content of the options at A2 has been selected to ensure that each option involves rigorous consideration of how science works, theories, studies and concepts ranging from relatively simple concrete concepts to more complex abstract concepts.

Contextualising issues, debates and approaches ensures accessibility of basic concepts for less able candidates through consideration of specific examples in context, yet offers a challenge for the most able candidates who will explore more abstract complex concepts, address more subtle sensitive issues and extend their critical thinking skills. For example, a less able student might be able to point out that genetic explanations for aggression are deterministic; a more able candidate would extend this to consider the implications of the free will vs determinism debate for policy and practices.

By selecting contemporary topics that are engaging for students and lend themselves to rigorous scientific analysis, it is hoped that candidates will be motivated to undertake practical research and develop independent research skills.

Stretch and challenge in assessment is achieved largely through differentiation by outcomes, though in some questions the demands of each part are different, allowing less able candidates to show their skills, and more able candidates to be challenged.

Most of the assessment tasks at A2 build on the extended writing requirements at AS. In Unit 3, the essay style questions require skills of analysis, evaluation, application and effective written communication. In response to broad essay questions, the most able candidates distinguish themselves through their ability to organise and structure their knowledge and understanding and to develop clear lines of argument. More specific questions target the ability to select and focus on explicit question requirements. In terms of stretch and challenge, applied questions are effective in differentiating between able students who have learned material and can reproduce it, and the most able students who can use their material effectively and can think like a psychologist in relation to unfamiliar material.

In the case of assessment of research methods at A2, the incorporation of a variety of cues in a question stem/scenario makes it possible for the description of a study to be understood and appreciated at a variety of levels, thereby stretching the most able candidates. The inclusion of questions which require candidates to design a study or analyse, interpret or discuss findings of a study presented in the form of a scenario likewise offers stretch and challenge. In particular, such questions allow more able candidates who have engaged in a range of more complex practical studies during their course to excel.

4.6 Access to Assessment for Disabled Students

AS/A Levels often require assessment of a broader range of competences. This is because they are general qualifications and, as such, prepare candidates for a wide range of occupations and higher level courses.

The revised AS/A Level qualification and subject criteria were reviewed to identify whether any of the competences required by the subject presented a potential barrier to any disabled candidates. If this was the case, the situation was reviewed again to ensure that such competences were included only where essential to the subject. The findings of this process were discussed with disability groups and with disabled people.

Reasonable adjustments are made for disabled candidates in order to enable them to access the assessments. For this reason, very few candidates will have a complete barrier to any part of the assessment.

Candidates who are still unable to access a significant part of the assessment, even after exploring all possibilities through reasonable adjustments, may still be able to receive an award. They would be given a grade on the parts of the assessment they have taken and there would be an indication on their certificate that not all the competences had been addressed. This will be kept under review and may be amended in the future.

5 Administration

5.1 Availability of Assessment Units and Certification

After June 2013, examinations and certification for this specification are available in June only.

5.2 Entries

Please refer to the current version of *Entry Procedures and Codes* for up to date entry procedures. You should use the following entry codes for the units and for certification.

Unit 1 - PSYA1

Unit 2 - PSYA2

Unit 3 - PSYA3

Unit 4 - PSYA4

AS certification - 1181

A Level certification - 2181

5.3 Private Candidates

This specification is available to private candidates. As we are no longer providing supplementary guidance in hard copy, see our website for guidance and information on taking exams and assessments as a private candidate:

www.aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/entries/private-candidates.

5.4 Access Arrangements and Special Consideration

We have taken note of equality and discrimination legislation and the interests of minority groups in developing and administering this specification.

We follow the guidelines in the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) document: *Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration: General and Vocational Qualifications*. This is published on the JCQ website (<http://www.jcq.org.uk>) or you can follow the link from our website (<http://www.aqa.org.uk>).

Access Arrangements

We can make arrangements so that candidates with disabilities can access the assessment. These arrangements must be made **before** the examination. For example, we can produce a Braille paper for a candidate with a visual impairment.

Special Consideration

We can give special consideration to candidates who have had a temporary illness, injury or indisposition at the time of the examination. Where we do this, it is given **after** the examination.

Applications for access arrangements and special consideration should be submitted to AQA by the Examinations Officer at the centre.

5.5 Language of Examinations

We will provide units in English only.

5.6 Qualification Titles

Qualifications based on this specification are:

- AQA Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Psychology (Specification A), and
- AQA Advanced Level GCE in Psychology (Specification A).

5.7 Awarding Grades and Reporting Results

The AS qualification will be graded on a five-point scale: A, B, C, D and E. The full A Level qualification will be graded on a six-point scale: A*, A, B, C, D and E. To be awarded an A*, candidates will need to achieve a grade A on the full A Level qualification and an A* on the aggregate of the A2 units.

For AS and A Level, candidates who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade E will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate. Individual assessment unit results will be certificated.

5.8 Re-sits and Shelf-life of Unit Results

Unit results remain available to count towards certification, whether or not they have already been used, as long as the specification is still valid.

Each unit is available in June only. Candidates may re-sit a unit any number of times within the shelf-life of the specification. The best result for each unit will count towards the final qualification. Candidates

who wish to repeat a qualification may do so by re-taking one or more units. The appropriate subject award entry, as well as the unit entry/entries, must be submitted in order to be awarded a new subject grade.

Candidates will be graded on the basis of the work submitted for assessment.

Appendices

A Performance Descriptions

Introduction

These performance descriptions show the level of attainment characteristic of the grade boundaries at A Level. They give a general indication of the required learning outcomes at the A/B and E/U boundaries at AS and A2. The descriptions should be interpreted in relation to the content outlined in the specification; they are not designed to define that content.

The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the Assessment Objectives (see Section 4) overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of the examination may be balanced by better performances in others.

AS Performance Descriptions

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3
Assessment objectives	<p>Knowledge and understanding of science and of how science works</p> <p>Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise, recall and show understanding of scientific knowledge select, organise and communicate relevant information in a variety of forms. 	<p>Application of knowledge and understanding of science and of how science works</p> <p>Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse and evaluate scientific knowledge and processes apply scientific knowledge and processes to unfamiliar situations including those related to issues assess the validity, reliability and credibility of scientific information. 	<p>How science works</p> <p>Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate and describe ethical, safe and skilful practical techniques and processes, selecting appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods make, record and communicate reliable and valid observations and measurements with appropriate precision and accuracy analyse, interpret, explain and evaluate the methodology, results and impact of their own and others' experimental and investigative activities in a variety of ways.

A/B boundary performance descriptions	Candidates characteristically: a) demonstrate relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge of a range of psychological concepts, theories, studies, research methods, applications, principles and perspectives from the AS specification b) show understanding of most principles and concepts from the AS specification c) select relevant information from the AS specification d) organise and present information clearly, using psychological terminology in appropriate contexts.	Candidates characteristically: a) apply principles and concepts in familiar and new contexts involving only a few steps in the argument b) engage with the issue, using relevant analysis and evaluation of psychological theories, concepts, studies and research methods c) describe significant trends and patterns shown by data presented in tabular or graphical form and interpret phenomena with few errors and present arguments and evaluations clearly d) comment critically on statements, conclusions or data e) successfully translate data presented as prose, diagrams, drawings, tables or graphs from one form to another.	Candidates characteristically: a) show sound knowledge and understanding of the principles of research design b) comment effectively on strengths, limitations and ethical issues in research design c) interpret and draw appropriate conclusions from data.
E/U boundary performance descriptions	Candidates characteristically: a) demonstrate basic knowledge of theories, concepts, studies and research methods from the AS specification b) show basic understanding of some relevant information c) present information, using basic psychological terminology from the AS specification terminology.	Candidates characteristically: a) apply a given principle to material presented in familiar or closely related contexts involving only a few steps in the argument b) make some attempt to focus on the issue, showing a rudimentary analysis and evaluation of psychological theories, concepts, studies and research methods c) describe some trends or patterns shown by data presented in tabular or graphical form d) when directed, identify inconsistencies in conclusions or data e) successfully translate data from one form to another in some contexts.	Candidates characteristically: a) show basic knowledge and understanding of the principles of research design b) comment on strengths, limitations and ethical issues in research design c) interpret or draw conclusions from data.

A2 Performance Descriptions

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2	Assessment objective 3
Assessment objectives	<p>Knowledge and understanding of science and of how science works</p> <p>Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise, recall and show understanding of scientific knowledge select, organise and communicate relevant information in a variety of forms. 	<p>Application of knowledge and understanding of science and of how science works</p> <p>Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse and evaluate scientific knowledge and processes apply scientific knowledge and processes to unfamiliar situations including those related to issues assess the validity, reliability and credibility of scientific information. 	<p>How science works</p> <p>Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate and describe ethical, safe and skilful practical techniques and processes, selecting appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods make, record and communicate reliable and valid observations and measurements with appropriate precision and accuracy analyse, interpret, explain and evaluate the methodology, results and impact of their own and others' experimental and investigative activities in a variety of ways.
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge of a range of psychological concepts, theories, studies, research methods, applications, principles and perspectives from the A2 specification show understanding of most principles and concepts from the A2 specification select relevant information from the A2 specification organise and present information clearly, using psychological terminology in appropriate contexts. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> apply principles and concepts in familiar and new contexts involving several steps in the argument directly address the issue, showing effective analysis and evaluation when considering psychological concepts, theories, studies, research methods, applications, principles and perspectives describe significant trends and patterns shown by complex data presented in tabular or graphical form, interpret phenomena with few errors, and present arguments and evaluations clearly critically evaluate statements, conclusions or data successfully translate data presented as prose, diagrams, drawings, tables or graphs from one form to another. 	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> show sound knowledge and understanding of the principles of research and design give clearly reasoned justification for design decisions comment effectively on strengths, limitations and ethical issues in research design comment effectively on the issues of the reliability and validity of data interpret and draw appropriate conclusions from data.

		<p>f) select a wide range of facts, principles and concepts from both AS and A2 specifications</p> <p>g) link together appropriate facts principles and concepts from different areas of the specification.</p>	
E/U boundary performance descriptions	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <p>a) demonstrate basic knowledge of appropriate psychological concepts, theories, studies, research methods, applications, principles and perspectives from the A2 specification</p> <p>b) show understanding of some principles from the A2 specification</p> <p>c) select some relevant information from the A2 specification</p> <p>d) present information using some psychological terminology from the A2 specification.</p>	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <p>a) apply given principles or concepts in familiar and new contexts involving a few steps in the argument</p> <p>b) partially address the issue, showing basic analysis and evaluation of psychological concepts, theories, studies, research methods, applications, principles and perspectives</p> <p>c) describe, and provide a limited explanation of, trends or patterns shown by complex data presented in tabular or graphical form</p> <p>d) when directed, identify inconsistencies in conclusions or data</p> <p>e) successfully translate data from one form to another in some contexts</p> <p>f) select some facts, principles and concepts from both AS and A2 specifications</p> <p>g) put together some facts, principles and concepts from different areas of the specification.</p>	<p>Candidates characteristically:</p> <p>a) show basic knowledge and understanding of the principles of research design</p> <p>b) justify some design decisions</p> <p>c) comment on strengths, limitations and ethical issues in research design</p> <p>d) comment on the reliability or validity of data</p> <p>e) interpret or draw conclusions from data.</p>

B Spiritual, Moral, Ethical, Social and other Issues

The study of psychology can contribute to candidates' understanding of spiritual, moral, ethical, social and other issues. The study of psychology should engender an awareness of the variety and complexity of the human mind, human behaviour and human relationships. It will promote understanding of self, other people, moral behaviour and thought as well as cultural differences/similarities. The specification provides ample opportunities for the study of moral and ethical issues which form important learning outcomes.

European Dimension

AQA has taken account of the 1988 Resolution of the Council of the European Community in preparing this specification and associated specimen units.

Environmental Education

AQA has taken account of the 1988 Resolution of the Council of the European Community and the Report "Environmental Responsibility: An Agenda for Further and Higher Education" 1993 in preparing this specification and associated specimen units.

Avoidance of Bias

AQA has taken great care in the preparation of this specification and specimen units to avoid bias of any kind.

C Overlaps with other Qualifications

There is overlap between some aspects of GCE Psychology and GCE Health and Social Care.

D Key Skills

Key Skills qualifications have been phased out and replaced by Functional Skills qualifications in English, Mathematics and ICT from September 2010.



GCE Psychology A (2180) For exams from June 2014 onwards

Qualification Accreditation Number: AS 500/2499/1 - A Level 500/2500/4

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Every specification is assigned a discounting code indicating the subject area to which it belongs for performance measure purposes.

The discount codes for this specification are:

AS PK1

A Level 4850

The definitive version of our specification will always be the one on our website, this may differ from printed versions.

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Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.