New AS and A-levels
What the changes mean for you

A-levels are changing across the board, with government introducing new regulations about subject content and assessment.

All subjects are moving from modular to linear assessment, with exams at the end of a two-year A-level course. The AS becomes a stand-alone qualification, which doesn’t contribute to the A-level grade.

Faced with change, we’ve taken a fresh look at our qualifications, working with teachers, universities and others to raise the bar. We’ve refreshed and updated our offer, building on the best of what went before. With the needs of teachers front of mind, we’re making the move to the new specifications as simple as possible.

What this means for Psychology

Our focus for the new specification has been on providing continuity for teachers. You will see many familiar and popular topics from our previous specifications. Where changes have been necessary because of government requirements, these have been kept to a minimum and reflect the increased emphasis on science and will enhance the status of psychology within the scientific community. We have also taken the opportunity to make minor amendments to refresh the content of our specification so it is clear, relevant and up-to-date.

Our response to change
Turning new rules into classroom inspiration

When change comes you can ignore it, live with it or embrace it. We decided to embrace it, seizing this chance to listen and learn before acting to produce best in class qualifications.

As an education charity and the largest provider of qualifications in England and Wales, meeting the needs of teachers and students is central to what we do. Great teaching brings every subject to life and our new AS and A-level specification is designed to support you in the classroom with updated content, resources and support.

But we couldn’t do this on our own.

Listening

Government and the regulator told us the new rules. We listened to be clear about what was needed.

Working together

In workshops, seminars and conferences, we worked with thousands of teachers across all subjects. We wanted to know what you needed – not guess what you might want. Your views, hopes and aspirations have been crucial.

Learning lessons

With all of the insights and ideas from so many teachers, we paid attention and refined our new AS and A-level specification to ensure we hit the mark.

See how we’re supporting teachers through the changes to A-levels at: aqa.org.uk/changes-to-exams
AS and A-level Psychology

What’s changed and what’s stayed the same

Teachers told us that our current market-leading Psychology specifications are working well, so we have taken an evolutionary approach to change to reduce the impact of moving to the new AS and A-level specification. We’ve listened and learnt from teachers, a panel of experts from HE and the British Psychological Society to produce a refreshed, relevant and stimulating specification that will be good to teach and inspire students of all abilities.

One unified specification

We have worked hard throughout the development process to ensure continuity and familiarity from our previous specifications. In doing so, we have produced a single specification for both AS and A-level.

Our new specification builds on the success of our previous specifications, by structuring content and assessment so that students develop a sound and holistic understanding of psychology as a discipline, at both AS and A-level. The compulsory elements have been designed to enable both levels to be co-taught and provide valuable currency with both universities and employers.

New subject criteria

Government requires that at least 25–30% of Psychology assessment should focus on research methods and 10% should test maths. We’ve worked with these changes to produce a specification that will minimise the impact on your teaching, backed with resources and support.

A revised focus for practical investigations

Experimentation is crucial in Psychology and our new AS and A-level specification encourages practical investigations. Students will be examined on their knowledge and understanding of research methods at the end of the course.

Content continuity

Much of the content in our new AS and A-level specification will be familiar to you, with minor changes to what went before. The existing core content (cognitive, social, developmental, individual differences, biological and research methods) will continue with the new AS and A-level specification.

Freedom to choose

You will have a great deal of freedom in how you approach practical work and you will have a choice of popular, optional topics at A-level, including Forensic Psychology, Relationships and Stress.

End of year exams

Like our current specifications, the new Psychology specification will continue to be assessed purely by examinations at the end of the one year AS level and at the end of the two year A-level.

“We’ve provided broad and balanced content – great for progression to HE and the workplace

Behind each of our qualifications is a team of specialists with in-depth knowledge of the subject and a commitment to do the right thing for teachers and students. Dave Basnett is Qualifications Manager for Psychology.

“We wanted to minimize the impact of change on teachers and with the new specification I believe we’ve achieved that, and I hope we have again produced the best specification on the market.

As part of the science suite of subjects, Psychology needs practical investigation, so throughout the specification we have included research methods to encourage practical work in the classroom. These are tested in one of the exam papers and without a good grounding in practical work students will struggle to answer these.

But we won’t leave teachers just to get on with it. We’ll provide help and support so teachers will be able to embed practical work into their teaching from the word go. This approach has been endorsed by our HE panel as a way that will help to bring the subject to life by encouraging practicals and experimentation. There’s more of a focus on understanding research methods, and teachers will have the freedom to choose how they go about teaching this.

The AS and first year of A-level form a coherent first year of study, in which students build up their skills and knowledge gradually. Those students studying the A-level revisit some of the first year topics in their second year to increase their depth of knowledge before starting work on the optional topics. The aim is to ensure that we have provided broad and balanced A-level content – great for progression into HE and the workplace.

We have worked hard to look after all of our teachers throughout the development process. In doing so, we have produced a single specification, one that provides recognisable routes through the content and offers familiar assessment styles for teachers who have taught the content before, and clear, accessible content for those who have not.

I hope that the resources we’re producing for the new specification will be welcomed by teachers, including schemes of work, lesson plans and a choice of three textbooks. This will all help to ease the transition to the new specification.”

Dave Basnett, Qualifications Manager
Why choose our new AS and A-level Psychology specification?

1. Co-teachability of AS and A-level
   Our AS and A-level are fully co-teachable so you’ll be able to teach and inspire a mixed class of AS and year one A-level students if you choose to do so. This will help with resourcing and timetabling, giving AS students the chance to progress onto the full A-level if they wish.

2. New resources and support to help teaching and learning
   We’ve worked with publishers to develop a choice of specification-specific textbooks and digital media. These are backed by our new suite of free resources and events that will help you to plan, teach and assess the specification, helping your students to fulfill their potential.

3. The biggest teaching community
   We’re the most popular choice for AS and A-level Psychology and by choosing our specification you’ll be part of the country’s largest community of Psychology teachers. This will give you access to the widest network of support to help your teaching.

4. Progression to HE or the world of work
   Using your teaching skills to help you to deliver the course content, your students will learn how to analyse arguments and evidence, test hypotheses and make informed judgements – all skills valued by HE and employers.

5. Assessment you can trust
   The new AS and A-level specification has clear, well-structured mark schemes and our exemplar materials will show you how these are applied to real student work. The exams will test students by a variety of familiar question types, including short and extended answer questions found in structured, scenario-based and methods-based contexts.

6. Suitable for mixed ability classes
   While our Psychology AS and A-level specification has the academic rigour you would expect, they remain suitable and appropriate for students of all abilities and interests. The AS in particular could be a great choice for a student taking a vocational route who wishes to broaden his or her understanding of certain areas.

What’s in the specification?

How will it be assessed?

Turning regulation into inspirational teaching
We’re confident that you will enjoy teaching the new AS and A-level specification – and that your students will be motivated by what they learn.

Assessment objectives
Psychology is one of the science group of subjects and has the same assessment objectives as the other A-level sciences. These are set by Ofqual and our exams will measure how well students have achieved them.

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures.

AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures:

• in a theoretical and practical context
• when handling qualitative and quantitative data.

AO3: Analyse, interpret and evaluate scientific information, ideas and evidence, including in relation to issues, to:

• make judgements and reach conclusions
• develop and refine practical design and procedures.

Subject content
Under the new regulations for both AS and A-level:

• 10% of the overall assessment of Psychology will contain maths skills equivalent to Level 2 or above
• 25-30% of the overall assessment will assess knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to research methods.
### A-level Psychology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Social Influence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Memory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Attachment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Psychopathology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2 hour written exam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 96 marks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 33.3% of A-level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Four compulsory sections all requiring written answers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Approaches in Psychology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Biopsychology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research Methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2 hour written exam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 96 marks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 33.3% of A-level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Three compulsory sections all requiring written answers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### AS Psychology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology</th>
<th>Paper 2: Psychology in Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Social Influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Memory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Attachment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1 hour 30 minutes written exam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 72 marks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 50% of AS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Three compulsory sections all requiring written answers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology</th>
<th>Paper 2: Psychology in Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Issues and Debates in Psychology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- One from: Relationships; Gender; Cognition and Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- One from: Schizophrenia, Eating Behaviour; Stress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- One from: Aggression; Forensic Psychology; Addiction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1 hour 30 minutes written exam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 72 marks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 50% of AS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Three compulsory sections all requiring written answers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Find out more
Read the specifications in full at: [aqa.org.uk/psychology](http://aqa.org.uk/psychology)
The results your students deserve

Assessment you can trust

You want to be sure that your students receive the grade their work deserves – and that’s our priority too. We’ve worked hard to ensure that our marking is fair, reliable and consistent.

Getting the marking right

The quality of marking is at the heart of our assessment procedures and we do everything to ensure that we are able to publish the right results first time. To achieve this, we recruit high calibre examiners, train and standardise them to a high standard and monitor their marking through rigorous quality control.

Clear question papers

We’ve developed consistent and well-structured question papers to ensure that students understand precisely what is being asked.

Well structured mark schemes and exemplar materials

Our mark schemes are designed to give you insights into what is needed to earn the best marks. We’ll provide exemplar materials with student answers and commentary from our senior examiners which will help you to understand how the mark schemes are applied.

Assessment support

Support from our Psychology subject team combined with our suite of new resources will help you to prepare your students for their exams.

Understanding assessment

To show exactly how we award grades and give you a better understanding of how assessment works, we’ve produced a short animated film.

Visit aqa.org.uk/explaining-assessment to see our Explaining assessment and How a specification is created videos

You can analyse your students’ results with Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA), our free online results analysis tool. Register at aqa.org.uk/era

For information about results, including grade boundaries and our post-results services, visit aqa.org.uk/results

Resources to support great teaching

We’re here to support you through the changes and we’ve worked closely with experienced, practising teachers to develop high quality materials and support that will help you to teach memorable lessons.

Whatever your experience in teaching Psychology, these will help you to plan lessons, teach and assess your students.

Here’s an overview of what’s available to help you and your students succeed.

• Free face-to-face events to launch the new specification and help you to prepare to teach them.
• Schemes of work and lesson plans.
• Specimen question papers.
• Clear, well structured mark schemes.
• Exemplar materials, showing how student responses are marked in light of the mark schemes.
• Training and professional development opportunities.

For the new specification we are also working with publishers to produce new textbooks and digital resources.

And as well as providing our own materials we will signpost high quality online resources to support your teaching. You will also benefit from professional development training opportunities.

New textbooks and digital resources

To support teaching and learning we’re working with established publishers to produce a range of material specifically focused on our new AS and A-level specification.

You’ll also be able to communicate directly with the Psychology team by telephone and email. Our trained staff will be happy to deal with any queries.

Find out more

Check what courses and events are available: coursesandevents.aqa.org.uk

Read more about professional development opportunities: aqa.org.uk/professional-development
Who’s Who

Rebecca Ashcroft
Customer Support Manager

Dave Basnett
Qualifications Manager

Keep in touch

To contact the Psychology team:

Telephone: 01483 477 822

Email: psychology@aqa.org.uk

To receive regular updates about Psychology, register with us at:
aqa.org.uk/update

The information in this guide is based on the draft specifications submitted to Ofqual in June 2014, and is subject to change. We will publish the accredited specification and specimen question papers as soon as we receive Ofqual accreditation expected in autumn.

You will always find the most up to date information on our website at aqa.org.uk/psychology

Copyright © AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

AQA Education (AQA) is a registered charity (number 1073334) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (number 3644723). Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.