



A LEVEL – YEAR 12 – PSYCHOLOGY – CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Autumn Term		Spring Term		Summer Term	
Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Key Themes	Key Themes	Key Themes	Key Themes	Key Themes	Key Themes
Approaches is the most fundamental of the topics – it is the theory that underpins all the other topics. Although it is placed in unit two on the spec, it is difficult to understand topics like psychopathology, or attachment, or memory, without having a working knowledge of the perspectives like the biological approach, cognitive approach or learning approach first. Some centres choose to teach the whole of the approaches topic together (6 approaches) but I opt to teach the year 1/AS content only (4 approaches) at this stage, for the very reason that it is so theoretical and can be a bit heavy for the novice psychologist. Fits nicely straight after the biological approach, especially to understand further the “biological structures” assumption. Again, I only teach the Year 1/AS content at this stage. The content covered for approaches and biopsychology in half term one therefore complete the year 1/AS knowledge students need for this area, and so AS exam papers can be used easily (Approaches and Biopsychology are combined as a topic in year one papers) and also for the reason given below in bold.	Following on from approaches, I launch straight into Psychopathology, which is centred around applying the three main approaches we have just overed to understanding and treating mental illness. This therefore acts as consolidation of their understanding of the approaches topic. 4.1.4 Psychopathology - Definitions of abnormality, including deviation from social norms, failure to function adequately, statistical infrequency and deviation from ideal mental health. - The behavioural, emotional and cognitive characteristics of phobias, depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). - The behavioural approach to explaining and treating phobias: the two-process model, including classical and	We then move on to Memory after Christmas. Memory gives students their first real taste of key psychological studies (in greater detail) and is a fairly practical topic with lots of opportunities for class experiments. It tends to be a more popular topic and during the long winter months it gets them involved and active a bit more. 4.1.2 Memory - The multi-store model of memory: sensory register, short-term memory and long-term memory. Features of each store: coding, capacity and duration. - Types of long-term memory: episodic, semantic, procedural. - The working memory model: central executive, phonological loop, visuo-spatial sketchpad and episodic buffer. Features of the model: coding and capacity. - Explanations for forgetting: proactive and	Social influence is taught after the Feb half term. This is often a shorter half term and social influence is one of the smaller topics .and providing year 13s with catch up opportunities to go over content they may have missed in good time before their end of course exams. The order of these three topics can be interchangeable, especially social influence and attachment depending on where Easter falls in any given year. 4.1.1 Social influence Types of conformity: internalisation, identification and compliance. Explanations for conformity: informational social influence and normative social influence, and variables affecting conformity including group size, unanimity and task difficulty as investigated by Asch.	Attachment is taught after Easter. This is often a longer half term and attachment is one of the larger topics. providing year 13s with catch up opportunities to go over content they may have missed in good time before their end of course exams. The order of these three topics can be interchangeable, especially social influence and attachment depending on where Easter falls in any given year. It is also one of the least preferred topics so I prefer to leave it as near to the Year 12 end of year exams as I can, so that students don't lose motivation. 4.1.3 Attachment - Caregiver-infant interactions in humans: reciprocity and interactional synchrony. Stages of attachment identified by Schaffer. Multiple attachments and the role of the father. - Animal studies of attachment: Lorenz and Harlow. - Explanations of attachment: learning theory and Bowlby's monotropic theory. The concepts of a critical	We revisit the Approaches topic after May half term and cover the remaining two approaches. As one of these approaches is Freud, I prefer to leave until the end of year one in the hope the students may be more mature than at the start of the course!! We finish off year one by returning to Biopsychology. They cover the second-year content, which usually spills over slightly into September by one or two weeks. Approaches - - The psychodynamic approach: the role of the unconscious, the structure of personality, that is Id, Ego and Superego, defence mechanisms including repression, denial and displacement, psychosexual stages. - Humanistic Psychology: free will, self-actualisation and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, focus on the self, congruence, the role of



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4.2.1 Approaches in Psychology Origins of Psychology: Wundt, introspection and the emergence of Psychology as a science. The basic assumptions of the following approaches: • Learning approaches: i) the behaviourist approach, including classical conditioning and Pavlov's research, operant conditioning, types of reinforcement and Skinner's research; ii) social learning theory including imitation, identification, modelling, vicarious reinforcement, the role of mediational processes and Bandura's research. • The cognitive approach: the study of internal mental processes, the role of schema, the use of theoretical and computer models to explain and make inferences about mental processes. The emergence of cognitive	operant conditioning; systematic desensitisation, including relaxation and use of hierarchy; flooding. • The cognitive approach to explaining and treating depression: Beck's negative triad and Ellis's ABC model; cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), including challenging irrational thoughts. • The biological approach to explaining and treating OCD: genetic and neural explanations; drug therapy. • Observational techniques. Types of observation: naturalistic and controlled observation; covert and overt observation; participant and non-participant observation. • Self-report techniques. Questionnaires; interviews, structured and unstructured.	retroactive interference and retrieval failure due to absence of cues. • Factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony: misleading information, including leading questions and post-event discussion; anxiety. • Improving the accuracy of eyewitness testimony, including the use of the cognitive interview 4.2.3.1 Scientific processes • Aims: stating aims, the difference between aims and hypotheses. • Hypotheses: directional and non-directional. • Sampling: the difference between population and sample; sampling techniques including: random, systematic, stratified, opportunity and volunteer; implications of sampling techniques, including bias and generalisation.	• Conformity to social roles as investigated by Zimbardo. • Explanations for obedience: agentic state and legitimacy of authority, and situational variables affecting obedience including proximity and location, as investigated by Milgram, and uniform. - Dispositional explanation for obedience: the Authoritarian Personality. • Explanations of resistance to social influence, including social support and locus of control. • Minority influence including reference to consistency, commitment and flexibility. • The role of social influence processes in social change 4.2.3.2 Data handling and analysis • Quantitative and qualitative data; the distinction between	period and an internal working model. • Ainsworth's 'Strange Situation'. Types of attachment: secure, insecure-avoidant and insecure-resistant. - Cultural variations in attachment, including van Ijzendoorn. • Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation. Romanian orphan studies: effects of institutionalisation. • The influence of early attachment on childhood and adult relationships, including the role of an internal working model.	conditions of worth. The influence on counselling Psychology. • Comparison of approaches. Biopsychology • Localisation of function in the brain and hemispheric lateralisation: motor, somatosensory, visual, auditory and language centres; Broca's and Wernicke's areas, split brain research. Plasticity and functional recovery of the brain after trauma. • Ways of studying the brain: scanning techniques, including functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI); electroencephalogram (EEGs) and event-related potentials (ERPs); postmortem examinations. • Biological rhythms: circadian, infradian and ultradian and the difference between these rhythms.
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neuroscience. • The biological approach: the influence of genes, biological structures and neurochemistry on behaviour. Genotype and phenotype, genetic basis of behaviour, evolution and behaviour. 4.2.2 Biopsychology • The divisions of the nervous system: central and peripheral (somatic and autonomic). • The structure and function of sensory, relay and motor neurons. The process of synaptic transmission, including reference to neurotransmitters, excitation and inhibition. • The function of the endocrine system: glands and hormones. • The fight or flight response including the role of adrenaline. 4.2.3 Research methods Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the	• Correlations. Analysis of the relationship between co-variables. The difference between correlations and experiments. • Content analysis. • Case studies.	• Pilot studies and the aims of piloting. • Experimental designs: repeated measures, independent groups, matched pairs. • Observational design: behavioural categories; event sampling; time sampling. • Questionnaire construction, including use of open and closed questions; design of interviews. • Variables: manipulation and control of variables, including independent, dependent, extraneous, confounding; operationalisation of variables. • Control: random allocation and counterbalancing, randomisation and standardisation. • Demand characteristics and investigator effects. • Ethics, including the role of the British Psychological Society's code of ethics; ethical issues	qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. • Primary and secondary data, including meta-analysis. • Descriptive statistics: measures of central tendency – mean, median, mode; calculation of mean, median and mode; measures of dispersion; range and standard deviation; calculation of range; calculation of percentages; positive, negative and zero correlations. • Presentation and display of quantitative data: graphs, tables, scattergrams, bar charts, histograms. • Distributions: normal and skewed distributions; characteristics of normal and skewed distributions. • Analysis and interpretation of correlation, including correlation coefficients.		The effect of endogenous pacemakers and exogenous zeitgebers on the sleep/ wake cycle.
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following research methods, scientific processes and techniques of data handling and analysis, be familiar with their use and be aware of their strengths and limitations. • Experimental method. Types of experiment, laboratory and field experiments; natural and quasi-experiments.		in the design and conduct of psychological studies; dealing with ethical issues in research. • The role of peer review in the scientific process.	• Levels of measurement: nominal, ordinal and interval.		
Research methods, as well as being a stand-alone topic, is embedded in other topics throughout the course. Students could be tested on their RM knowledge in any of the other areas of the exam. For this reason, I teach it for one period a week throughout the two years. Those who are not mathematically or scientifically able also find some of the RM areas hard going when taught as a whole block, so it breaks up the content. In Year 1 we cover all the Year 1/AS content for the reason given below, and also case studies and content analysis, which are second year topics but are useful for year one in evaluating studies in other areas. By May half term students will have all the year one content under their belts. In year two we cover the remainder of the unit, as well as two practical investigations that require students to put their RM knowledge to good use by designing, conducting and analysing their own research. Although not required as such, many centres do this as it allows students to really understand the process, reflect on how science works, and prepares them for undergraduate study.					
Assessment /	Assessment /	Assessment /	Assessment /	Assessment /	Assessment /



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Composite Tasks	Composite Tasks	Composite Tasks	Composite Tasks	Composite Tasks	Composite Tasks
Short answer exam questions Application questions Non application essay End of topic test	Short answer exam questions Application questions Application essay End of topic test Short RM practical RM test	Short answer exam questions Application questions Non application essay End of topic test	Short answer exam questions Application questions Non application essay End of topic test RM test	Short answer exam questions Application questions Application essay End of topic test Year 12 exams	Short answer exam questions Application questions Non application essay End of topic test