

Your guide to our Edexcel

# AS and A level Psychology

first teaching 2015



# Hello and welcome

We've listened to feedback from all parts of the Psychology subject community, including Higher Education, and used this opportunity of curriculum change to redesign qualifications that reflect the demands of a truly modern and evolving environment – qualifications that enable your students to think like psychologists and give them the skills to succeed in their chosen pathway.

This guide gives you an overview of our new qualifications and sets out the ways in which you can co-teach **AS and A level Psychology** from 2015 as we know from our conversations with you that this is important.

## Take a look through this guide to find out more about:

- what **the new AS and A level Psychology specification looks like** – pages 3-5
- approaches to teaching AS and A level Psychology** – pages 6-7
- why you may want to **continue teaching AS** – pages 6-7
- the comprehensive resources and support we are planning** for you to make sure that you are in a position to provide your students with the very best opportunity to succeed and get the results they deserve – page 8.

We look forward to meeting you at our launch events and answering any questions you might have about our new specification.



**Kam Sohal**  
Psychology Product  
Manager



**Stephen Nugus**  
Science Subject  
Advisor

## Our new Edexcel **AS and A level Psychology**

- Clear and coherent structure** – four engaging and up-to-date topic areas, assessed through two AS and three A level examined papers.
- Supports progress** – using psychological topics, students are introduced to the foundations of psychology before they develop the understanding and consider the various applications that help put their learning into real-world contexts.
- Thinking like a psychologist** – students use psychological concepts and theories to give them an insight to the world of a psychologist. They focus on the fundamental areas that have laid the foundations of modern psychological understanding and then develop this further by considering how our understanding of psychology is applied today.
- Reflects developments in psychology** – the new specification content provides students with a dynamic, engaging and contemporary course of study, by applying real-world contexts to develop knowledge and understanding of key contemporary questions for today's society.
- Develops transferable skills for progression to higher education** – students will develop a multitude of skills, including numeracy, communication, practical skills and critical thinking in order to make a smooth transition to the next level of study.



# Your at-a-glance guide to AS and A level Psychology

## A level

<b>Topic 1: Social Psychology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obedience</li> <li>• Prejudice</li> <li>• Issues and debates*</li> </ul>	<b>Topic 2: Cognitive Psychology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memory</li> <li>• Issues and debates*</li> </ul>	<b>Topic 3: Biological Psychology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggression</li> <li>• Brain functioning</li> <li>• CNS &amp; Neurotransmitter functioning</li> <li>• Issues and debates*</li> </ul>	<b>Topic 4: Learning Theories</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conditioning</li> <li>• Social learning theory</li> <li>• Phobias</li> <li>• Issues and debates*</li> </ul>
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## AS

<b>Topic 1: Social Psychology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obedience</li> <li>• Prejudice</li> </ul>	<b>Topic 2: Cognitive Psychology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memory</li> </ul>	<b>Topic 3: Biological Psychology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggression</li> <li>• Brain functioning</li> <li>• CNS and Neurotransmitter functioning</li> </ul>	<b>Topic 4: Learning Theories</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conditioning</li> <li>• Social learning theory</li> <li>• Phobias</li> </ul>
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The content for Topics 1, 2, 3 and Topic 4 is the same for the AS and A level qualifications, so even though they are separate qualifications you can co-teach them.

<b>Topic 5: Clinical Psychology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abnormality</li> <li>• Schizophrenia and one from anorexia, OCD or unipolar depression</li> <li>• DSM</li> <li>• Issues in diagnosis</li> <li>• Treatment for disorders</li> <li>• Issues and debates*</li> </ul>	<b>Topic 6: Criminological Psychology</b> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jury decision making</li> <li>• Eye witness testimony</li> <li>• Causes and treatments of crime</li> <li>• Issues and debates*</li> </ul>	<b>Topic 7: Child Psychology</b> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attachment</li> <li>• Deprivation/ Privation</li> <li>• Developmental issues of Autism</li> <li>• Issues and debates*</li> </ul>	<b>Topic 8: Health Psychology</b> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nicotine/Alcohol/ Heroin – drug behaviour</li> <li>• Psychological strategies behind campaigns</li> <li>• Treatments for drugs misuse</li> <li>• Issues and debates*</li> </ul>
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<b>Paper 1</b> Social and Cognitive Psychology 70 marks, 1.5 hour exam <b>50% of qualification</b>	<b>Paper 2</b> Biological Psychology and Learning Theories 70 marks, 1.5 hour exam <b>50% of qualification</b>
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<b>Topic 9: Psychological Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Methodologies</li> <li>• Review of Studies</li> <li>• Review of Issues and Debates</li> </ul>
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<b>Paper 1: Foundations of Psychology</b> Social, Cognitive, Biological and Learning 90 marks, 2 hour exam, <b>35% of qualification</b>	<b>Paper 2: Applications of Psychology</b> Clinical and either Criminological/Child/ Health 90 marks, 2 hour exam <b>35% of qualification</b>	<b>Paper 3: Psychological Skills</b> Review of Methodology, Review of studies and Review of Issues and Debates 80 marks, 2 hour exam <b>30% of qualification</b>
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### AS and A level: key points

- AS and A level have been 'decoupled', which means that AS marks or grades do not count towards the full A level.
- Students can still take AS exams at the end of Year 12 – but if they go on to do a full A level course, they will be assessed on the full content of that A level at the end of their study. This means that students will need to sit all three A level papers.
- A level assessments will be set at a higher level of demand than AS assessments. This means that while students will be assessed on some of the same content at A level that they were at AS, the questions they encounter will look different.

Note: \* issues and debates for A level specifications only.

# Approaches to teaching AS and A level Psychology

## Separate AS and A level classes

The benefits of a separate, linear A level course include:

- more flexibility in structuring the course – for example, teaching all the research methods together (Topic 9) or following the specification sequentially and using AS papers for a mock exam at the end of year 12
- greater opportunity for students to make links between different elements of the course as they progress – for example, across the clinical psychology content
- more time for teaching and learning in the first year.

Running separate classes requires students to decide at the start whether to follow AS or A level, and potentially limits their options for switching later on.

	September 2015	January 2016	June 2016	September 2016	January 2017	June 2017
<b>Separate AS class</b>	Topics 1 & 2	Topics 3 & 4	Enter for AS qualification			
<b>Separate A level class</b>	Topics 1-5 (compulsory topics) one topic from 6, 7 or 8 (optional topics) and topic 9 (synoptic/revision topic)					Enter for A level qualification

## Co-teaching AS and A level

Co-teaching AS and A level provides flexibility for you and your students. Centres co-teaching the AS will deliver Topics 1, 2, 3 and Topic 4 in the first year. The topics could be run in parallel or taught sequentially, depending on what is most appropriate for staffing and timetabling within each centre.

	September 2015	January 2016	June 2016	September 2016	January 2017	June 2017
<b>AS</b>	Topics 1 & 2	Topics 3 & 4	Enter for AS qualification			
<b>A level option 1</b>	Topics 1 & 2	Topics 3 & 4	Mock for Topics 1 to 4	Topic 5 & one topic from 6, 7, or 8	Topic 9	Enter for A level qualification
<b>A level option 2</b>	Topics 1 & 2	Topics 3 & 4	Enter for AS level qualification	Topic 5 & one topic from 6, 7, or 8	Topic 9	Enter for A level qualification

## Why offer AS?

We know that many of you will want to continue to offer AS Psychology alongside the full A level, despite the fact that it no longer contributes to the full A level grade. You have told us that:

### Breadth is important to students

– some students may wish to supplement a three-A level programme of study with an additional AS in Psychology due to their interest in the subject, even though they might not want to take it further. They may well know this at the outset of their course.

### Some students will make the decision later

– some students may wish to start on four A level courses knowing they are likely to ‘drop down’ to three full A levels in their second year. They may wish to postpone making this decision until they have taken one or more AS qualifications and seen the results.

### AS gives focus to Year 12 and would allow you to track student progress

– some students may decide from the beginning of the course that they want to take the full A level, but entering them for the AS could provide a useful way of tracking their progress at the end of the first year of the course.

### It also gives universities visibility of a student's progress in a subject



# Supporting you

Plan and implement the new specification with your package of support.



## Planning

Your **Getting Started** guide will provide an overview of the new AS and A level specifications to help you get to grips with the changes to content and assessment, and to help you understand what these changes mean for you and your students. You will also receive a **course planner** and **scheme of work** that you can adapt to suit your department, and **mapping documents** to highlight key differences between the new and 2008 specifications.

## Teaching and learning

There will be lots of **free teaching and learning support** to help you deliver the new specifications: component guides with suggested **resource lists** and **guidance on practicals** and **quantitative skills**, a **student guide** and **materials for your options evenings**.

## Understanding the standard

**Exemplar student work** with examiner commentaries for the **sample assessment materials** will help your students to understand the standard for the grade they are targeting.

## Tracking student progress

**ResultsPlus** provides the most detailed analysis available of your students' exam performance. It can help you identify topics and skills where students could benefit from further learning. **Mock Analysis** provides feedback for your students through our past papers and mock exams.

## Support

Our **subject advisor service**, led by Stephen Nugus, will ensure you receive help and guidance from us as well as sharing ideas and information with each other. You can sign up to receive e-newsletters from Stephen Nugus to keep up-to-date with qualification updates, and product and service news.

Learn more at:

[www.edexcel.com/2015psychology](http://www.edexcel.com/2015psychology)

