

GCSE Psychology

GCSE Psychology for
Non-Specialist Teachers

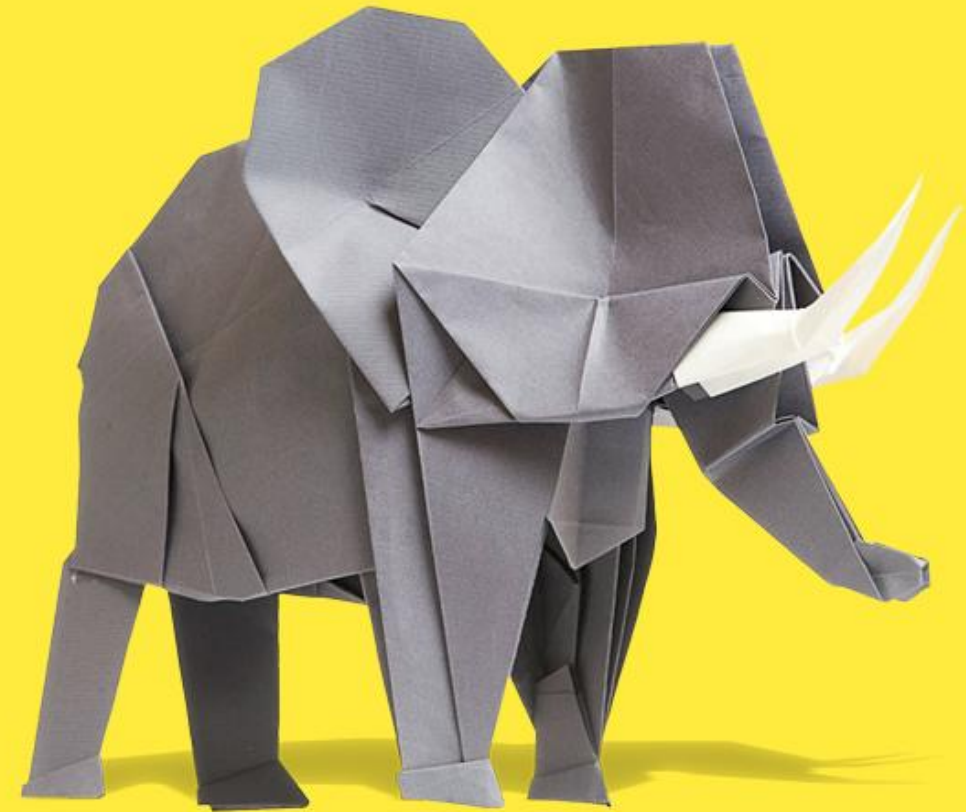


Introduction

Welcome to our training session designed specifically for teachers delivering Pearson Edexcel GCSE Psychology.

The session will focus on equipping you with the tools and strategies needed to effectively deliver GCSE Psychology as a non-subject specialist.

GCSE (9-1) Psychology



Specification

Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in Psychology (1PS0)

First teaching from September 2017

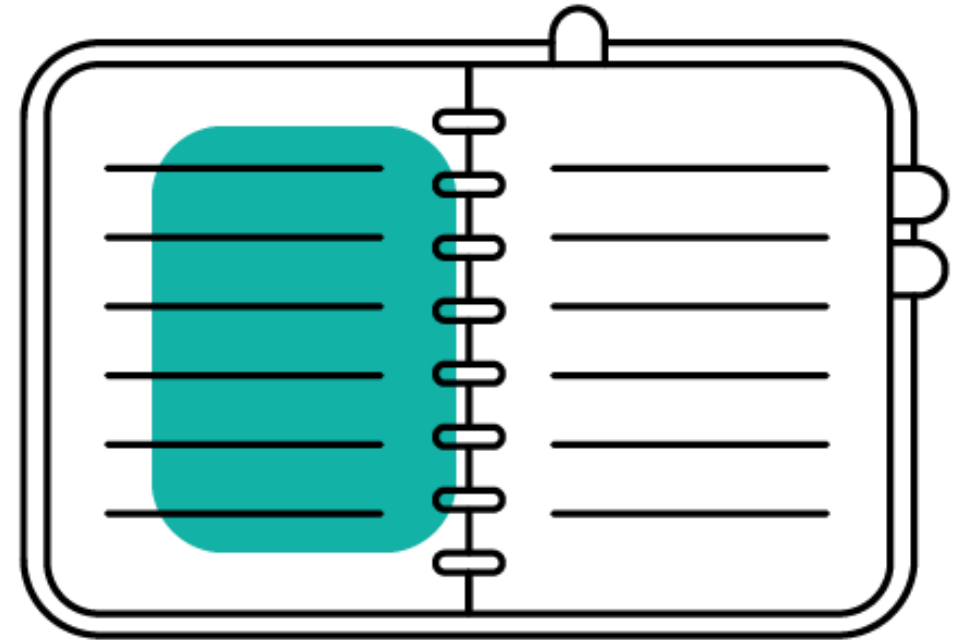
First certification from June 2019

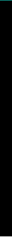

Issue 1

Agenda

The session will focus on:

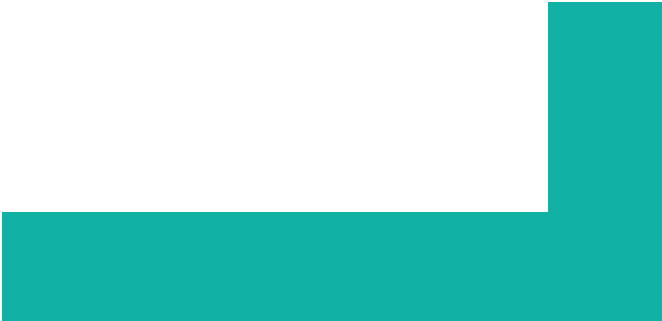
- Course content overview
- Assessment structure
- Skills
- Assessment tips
- Support for learning

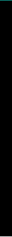





Poll: What current subjects do you teach?

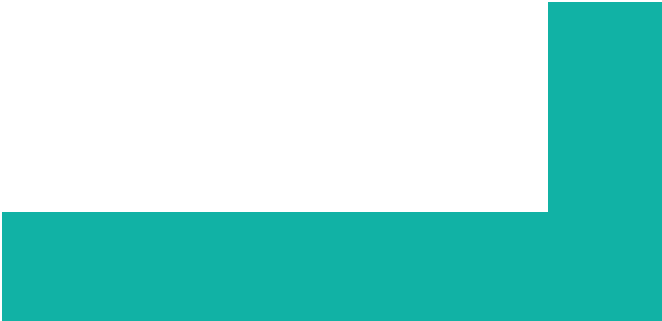
Chat: What do you hope to take away from this session?





Poll: How long have you taught
GCSE Psychology?

Poll: Do you teach in an
international centre?



Introduction: What Psychology Studies

Psychology is the scientific study of **how people think, feel, and behave**. It explores everyday topics like memory, learning, mental health, social behaviour, and brain function.

GCSE Psychology aims to introduce students to key concepts and principles.

Students are expected to be able to use their knowledge to explain examples of behaviour.

Course Content Overview



GCSE Psychology

The course aims to offer an introduction to some key areas in psychology. These are core ideas and principles about what drives behaviour such as:

- biological processes
- thinking or cognitive processes
- the role of social influences.

These core ideas are applied to specific behaviours such as criminality, sleep and dreaming, perception, language, and the self.

What candidates need to develop is an understanding of those concepts and be able to explain how they affect people's behaviour and experience.

They also need to be able to explain how this knowledge has been created through understanding research studies and what methods those studies used.

Course Content Overview

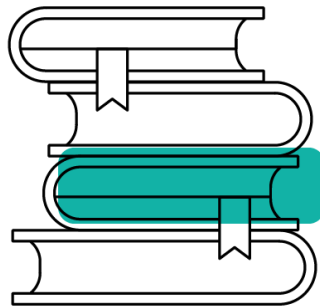
The course is divided into **two papers**:

Paper 1: Cognitive, Social, and Biological Psychology

(Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes, 55% of the qualification)

Paper 2: Research Methods, and Optional Topics

(Written exam: 1 hour 20 minutes, 45% of the qualification)



Content overview Paper 1

Written examination: 1 hour and 45 minutes 55% of the qualification 98 marks.

- Topic 1: Development – How did you develop?
- Topic 2: Memory – How does your memory work?
- Topic 3: Psychological problems – How would psychological problems affect you?
- Topic 4: The brain and neuropsychology – How does your brain affect you?
- Topic 5: Social influence – How do others affect you?

For example: Biological: The brain and neuropsychology

Know	Know the structure and function of the brain
Understand	Understand the lateralisation of function in the hemispheres
Know	Know what neurons and synapses are
Understand	Understand the impact of neurological damage on cognitions and behaviour
Understand	Understand the aims, procedures and findings (results and conclusions), strengths and weaknesses of 2 Studies: Damasio et al (1994) The Return of Phineas Gage and Sperry (1968) Hemisphere Deconnection
Debate/Issue	Understand how psychology has changed over time

Content overview Paper 2

Topics 6 to 10 are optional; students must study two of them. Topic 11 is compulsory.

- Topic 6: Criminal psychology
- Topic 7: The self
- Topic 8: Perception
- Topic 9: Sleep and dreaming
- Topic 10: Language, thought and communication
- Topic 11: Research methods

Paper 2 Research Methods – Compulsory Content

Research Methods

- Types of research (experiments, observations, self-reports, correlations)
- Sampling techniques
- Ethical considerations
- Designing investigations: variables, control, reliability, validity
- Data analysis: mean, median, mode, range, graphical representation
- Interpreting results and drawing conclusions

Optional Topics

Choose 2:

- Topic 6: Criminal psychology – Why do people become criminals?
- Topic 7: The self – What makes you who you are?
- Topic 8: Perception – How do you interpret the world around you?
- Topic 9: Sleep and dreaming – Why do you need to sleep and dream?
- Topic 10: Language, thought and communication – How do you communicate with others?

Structure Paper 1

All topics are compulsory for Paper 1.

Students should attempt all questions on this paper.

For each topic students need to learn:

- multiple theories or concepts for each topic that offer distinct explanations for processes or behaviour
- two research studies in detail
- relevant issue or debate.

Paper 1

- The paper consists of six sections.
- The first five sections each cover one of the topics.
- These sections will include multiple-choice, short-open and open-response questions.
- The sixth section will contain two extended open-response questions - essays.
- These questions will focus on debates within psychology and the interrelationships between the core areas of psychology.

1PS0/01

1 hour and 45 mins

98 marks

55% Overall Grade

Paper 2 Structure

SECTION A: Research Methods – Compulsory

SECTION B: Options Paper – You choose two of the options to teach. The students then complete only those sections of Paper 2.

Paper 2

- Students must answer: All questions from Section A. 1PS0/02
- All questions from the 2 options they studied in sections – B to F. 1 hour and 20 mins
- Section A: Research methods – How do you carry out psychological research? 79 marks
45% Overall Grade
- This section will focus on Topic 11: Research methods and it can draw on material from Topics from Paper 1.
- It will contain question types that include calculations, multiple-choice, open response questions, and one extended 12-mark essay question.
- Sections B to F: Optional topics – each of these sections covers one of the optional topics.
- These sections will include multiple-choice open-response questions, and one extended 9-mark essay question.
- Calculators may be used in the examination.



Q and A check in

Skill Development and Assessment



Skill Development and Assessment

In Edexcel GCSE Psychology, students are assessed across **three key assessment objectives: AO1, AO2, and AO3.**

Understanding these is crucial for answering exam questions effectively:

AO1 35%

AO2 35%

AO3 30%

Assessment Objective	What It Tests	What You Need to Do
AO1: Knowledge and Understanding	Recall and describe psychological concepts, theories, and studies	Define terms, describe theories/models, outline studies accurately
AO2: Application	Apply knowledge to novel situations, scenarios, or real life	Use psychological ideas to explain behaviours or situations described in a question
AO3: Analysis and Evaluation	Analyse, interpret, and evaluate information	Assess strengths/weaknesses, methodological issues, alternative explanations, and implications

AO1 Knowledge And Understanding

What it looks like:

- 'Describe Piaget's stages of cognitive development.'
- 'Describe the multi-store model of memory.'

Tips:

- Learn key terms and definitions.
- Memorise study details, aims, methods, results, conclusions.
- Use accurate psychological vocabulary.



AO1 Knowledge And Understanding

Example 1 – Topic: Memory

Question (2 marks):

Define what is meant by 'encoding' in memory.

Model answer:

Encoding is the process of changing information into a form that can be stored in the brain. For example, information may be encoded acoustically, visually or semantically.

Example 2 – Topic: Social Influence

Question (3 marks):

Give one explanation of conformity.

Model answer:

One explanation of conformity is normative social influence. This is when someone changes their behaviour to fit in with a group because they want to be liked or accepted. They may not agree privately but go along with the group to avoid rejection.

AO1 Knowledge And Understanding

Notes for students:

- **AO1** questions ask for 'describe', 'outline', or 'define'.
- These are 'command' words that signify the question is assessing AO1 skills.
- Keep answers concise but precise.
- Use psychological terminology correctly.
- You don't need evaluation or application for AO1, the goal is accurate recall of key facts.

AO2 Application

What it looks like:

- ‘Explain, using your knowledge of short-term memory, why someone forgets their shopping list.’
- ‘Explain using Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, why children display aggressive behaviour.’

Tips:

- Focus on the scenario: underline key phrases in the question.
- Link specific parts of theory or study to the example.
- Avoid generic descriptions and tailor your answer to the context.

AO2 Application

Example 1 – Topic: Social Influence

Question (2 marks):

Amir is new at school and notices that all the other students wear a particular style of trainer.

Even though Amir prefers a different style, he asks his parents to buy him the same trainers, so he doesn't stand out.

Explain one reason for Amir's behaviour, you must refer to conformity in your answer.

Model answer:

Amir is showing normative social influence. He wants to fit in with the group and avoid standing out, so he conforms by choosing the same trainers as everyone else. He may not actually prefer the trainers but goes along with the group to be accepted socially.

AO2 Application

Example 2 – Topic: Depression

Question (2 marks):

Shayna often has negative thoughts about herself, thinking she is a failure, and no one likes her. Explain one reason for Shayna's thoughts, you must use Beck's cognitive theory of depression to justify your answer.

Model answer:

According to Beck, Shayna is experiencing negative automatic thoughts. These are part of the negative triad: negative views about herself e.g. :‘I am a failure’, the world e.g. :‘no one likes me’, and the future. These patterns contribute to depression.

AO2 Application

AO2 answering tips for students:

- Identify the psychological concept clearly.
- Command words for AO2 are 'Explain', 'Apply'.
- Apply it directly to the named character or situation (don't just define the theory).
- Use names and details from the scenario to show you're applying knowledge precisely.

AO3 Analysis And Evaluation

What it looks like:

- 'Assess how well social learning theory explains incidents of aggression.'
- 'Assess how well Bartlett's theory of memory explains incorrect eyewitness testimony.'

What to include:

- Strengths (e.g., supported by research, real-world applications).
- Weaknesses (e.g., low validity, ethical concerns, sample issues).
- **Consider alternative theories, bias, replicability, nature vs nurture, etc.**

Tips:

- *Use phrases like 'A strength of this study is...', 'However, a limitation is...'*
- Try to balance your points (e.g., one strength and one weakness).
- Aim for depth, not just listing points.

AO3 Analysis And Evaluation

Study Scenario

A psychologist conducted a study to investigate the effect of background noise on students' concentration levels. Twenty students were asked to complete a reading comprehension task under two conditions:

Condition A: Quiet environment **Condition B:** Background noise (e.g., music playing)

Each student completed the task in both conditions. The number of correct answers out of 20 was recorded for each condition. The average scores were:

Condition A: 16 correct answers **Condition B:** 12 correct answers

Explain the conclusion that background noise negatively affects students' concentration levels. (2 Marks)

Answer

The average score decreased from 16 in a quiet environment to 12 with background noise. Since the same students participated in both conditions, individual differences are controlled therefore the conclusion is that background noise negatively impacts concentration.

AO1 & AO2

Some questions assess knowledge (AO1) and application (AO2)

Example:

Misha wants to conduct a study about conformity. The study will use the population of males and females aged between 21 years old and 49 years old in his local town. He decides to use stratified sampling. Describe how Misha would use stratified sampling.

(2 marks)

Stratified sampling is when the researcher makes sure different groups in the population are proportionally represented. Misha would split participants by age and gender, then randomly pick the right number of people from each group to reflect the local population.

AO2 & AO3

Archie dreamt that he was running through a forest with his best friend and his grandma. As they came towards the end of the forest there was a large office building in front of them with a gorilla sitting in the doorway eating a pizza. The gorilla waved at Archie, who then fell through a hole that appeared in the floor. He then woke up.

Explain one reason why Archie may have had this dream.

You must use Activation Synthesis Theory to justify your answer.

Model answer:

Activation synthesis theory is the belief that dreams are just random memories that are fired into the synapse. This means that Archie's dream was random memories that have been formed into a story e.g.: that he went to the zoo, he saw his Grandma and ate some pizza.

Essay questions

Paper 1

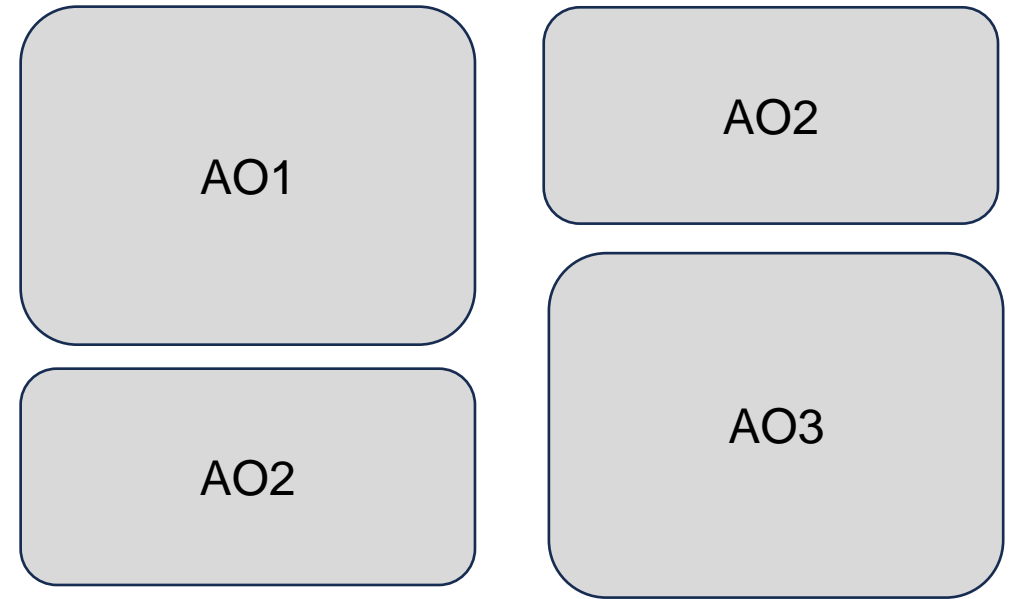
- Paper 1 will have two essays worth 9 marks each and will use the 'Assess' command word.
- AO1, AO2, AO3 will all be required as part of the essays.
- The first essay will always assess issues and debates.
- The second essay will always assess the interrelationships between the core topic areas (topics 1–5).

Paper 2

- Paper 2 will have three essay questions – one worth 12 marks (research methods) and two worth 9 marks (one in each chosen option topic).
- AO1, AO2, AO3 will all be required as part of the essays.
- The essay in section A will always use the 'Evaluate' command word and will assess research methods.
- The essays in the option topics will always use the 'Assess' command word and will consider content from that topic.

Essays

- All of the mark schemes require a balance between the AO1/2/3 presented by the candidate.
- Approximately equal amounts of AO1, AO2, AO3 should be presented.
- For a 9-mark question, usually candidates write approximately 1.5–2 pages when achieving a Level 3 response.
- For a 12-mark question, usually candidates write approximately 2.5–3 pages when achieving a Level 4 response.
- Candidates should aim to organise their writing with structure and logical chains of reasoning.



*Possible approach to organising an essay
(separated approach)*

Levels-based mark schemes

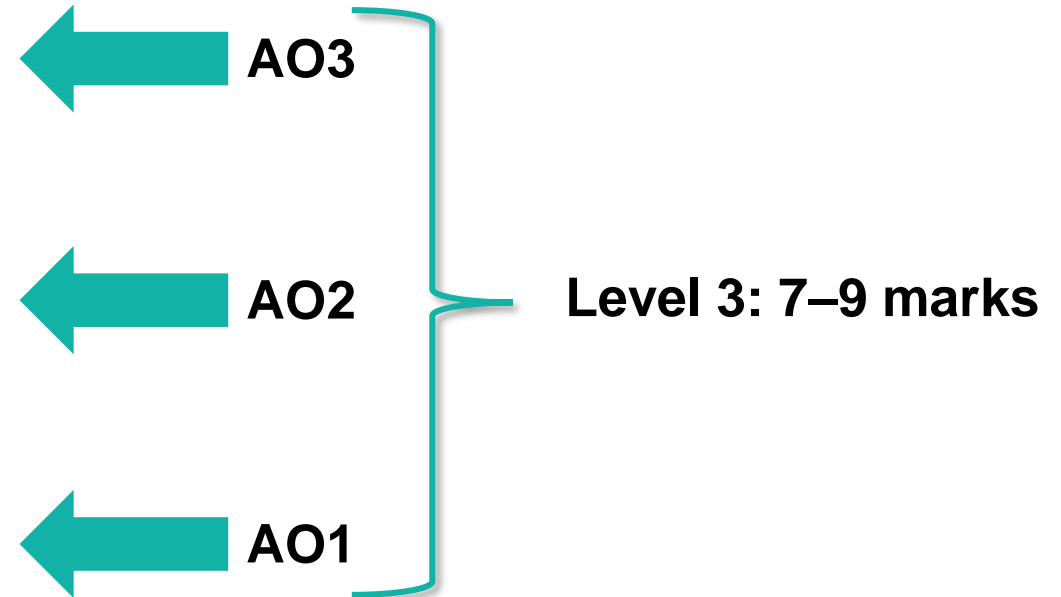
Candidates may benefit from being guided through the difference between the levels and what is required to achieve the higher levels and therefore marks.

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates isolated elements of knowledge and understanding of a limited range of psychological ideas (AO1). Provides little or no reference to relevant psychological ideas related to the context (AO2). Limited attempt to deconstruct relevant psychological ideas. Limited consideration of supporting/refuting evidence, leading to generic judgements (AO3).
Level 2	4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates mostly accurate understanding of some relevant psychological ideas (AO1). Provides some reference to relevant psychological ideas related to the context but this may be limited or lack relevance at times (AO2). Deconstructs relevant psychological ideas using mostly logical chains of reasoning. Some consideration of supporting/refuting evidence, leading to a judgement (AO3).
Level 3	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of relevant psychological ideas (AO1). Provides sustained reference to relevant psychological ideas related to the context (AO2). Deconstructs relevant psychological ideas using logical chains of reasoning. Sustained consideration of supporting/refuting evidence, showing an awareness of competing arguments, leading to a judgement (AO3).

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of psychological processes and procedures, may not always be relevant (AO1). Little or no application of psychological processes and procedures to the context (AO2). Limited attempt to evaluate psychological processes and procedures. Little or no connections between the elements in the question, with unsupported, generic judgements. Limited conclusion that is not fully justified (AO3).
Level 2	4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates mostly accurate knowledge and understanding of relevant psychological processes and procedures (AO1). Some application of psychological processes and procedures to the context but may be limited or lack relevance (AO2). Some attempt to evaluate psychological processes and procedures but may draw on limited evidence. Mostly logical chains of reasoning, leading to judgements. Basic conclusion reached but may be superficial (AO3).
Level 3	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of relevant psychological processes and procedures (AO1). Relevant and accurate application of psychological processes and procedures to the context (AO2). Sustained and accurate evaluation of psychological processes and procedures, supported with accurate evidence. Sustained and logical chains of reasoning, leading to relevant judgements with justified conclusion (AO3).
Level 4	10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates comprehensive and accurate knowledge and understanding of relevant psychological processes and procedures throughout (AO1). Sustained relevant and accurate application of psychological processes and procedures to the context (AO2). Comprehensive evaluation of psychological processes and procedures supported with accurate and thorough use of evidence. Sustained and logical chains of reasoning, leading to fully supported judgements with well-justified conclusion (AO3).

Marking a response

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of psychological processes and procedures, may not always be relevant (AO1). • Little or no application of psychological processes and procedures to the context (AO2). • Limited attempt to evaluate psychological processes and procedures. Little or no connections between the elements in the question, with unsupported, generic judgements. Limited conclusion that is not fully justified (AO3).
Level 2	4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates mostly accurate knowledge and understanding of relevant psychological processes and procedures (AO1). • Some application of psychological processes and procedures to the context but may be limited or lack relevance (AO2). • Some attempt to evaluate psychological processes and procedures but may draw on limited evidence. Mostly logical chains of reasoning, leading to judgements. Basic conclusion reached but may be superficial (AO3).
Level 3	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates accurate and thorough knowledge and understanding of relevant psychological processes and procedures (AO1). • Relevant and accurate application of psychological processes and procedures to the context (AO2). • Sustained and accurate evaluation of psychological processes and procedures, supported with accurate evidence. Sustained and logical chains of reasoning, leading to relevant judgements with justified conclusion (AO3).
Level 4	10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates comprehensive and accurate knowledge and understanding of relevant psychological processes and procedures throughout (AO1). • Sustained relevant and accurate application of psychological processes and procedures to the context (AO2). • Comprehensive evaluation of psychological processes and procedures supported with accurate and thorough use of evidence. Sustained and logical chains of reasoning, leading to fully supported judgements with well-justified conclusion (AO3).





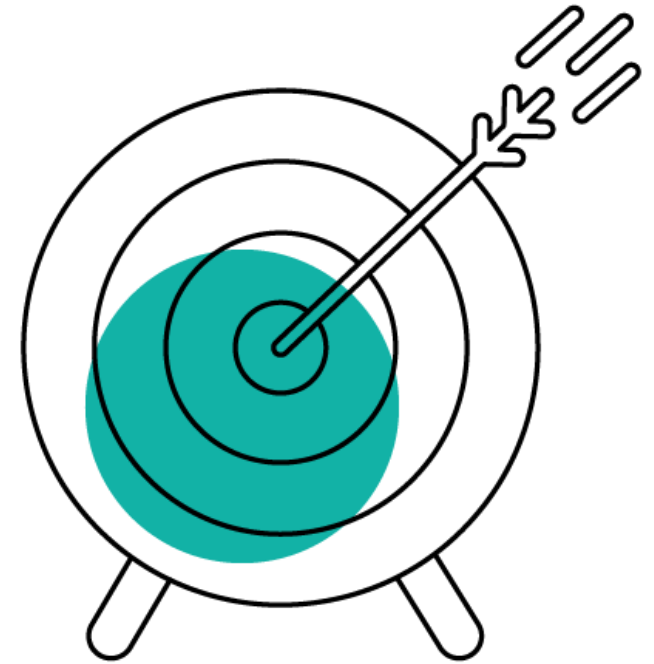
Q and A check in

Tips for success



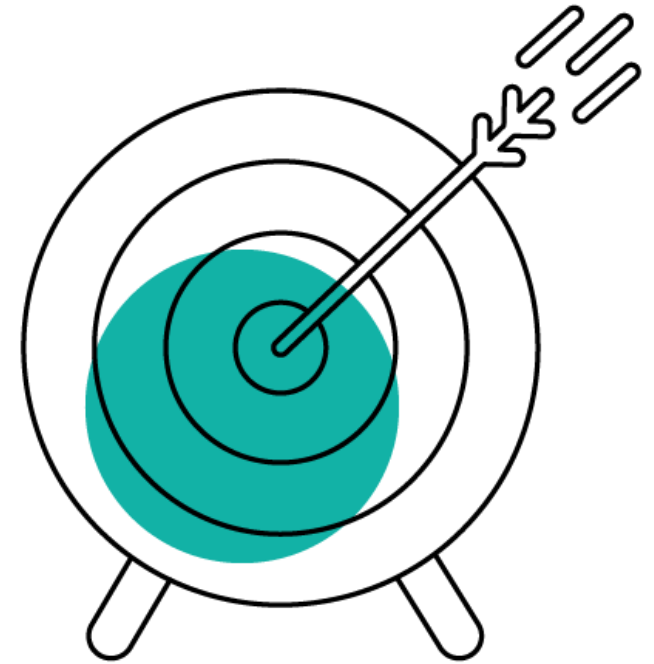
Tips For Success

- Many evaluations are linked to Research Methods. Methods underpins so many aspects of the course, including how theories are tested.
- For each aspect of research methods there is a strength and a weakness.
- E.g. A lab experiment is a controlled environment and therefore other variables/distractions have not affected the results.
- BUT – It is an unrealistic environment, this means that behaviour might be different to real life, therefore it lacks ecological validity.
- A field experiment is conducted in a realistic environment so behaviour should be more natural.
- BUT – It is a less controlled environment which means that other factors (distractions) could have affected the results.



Tips For Success

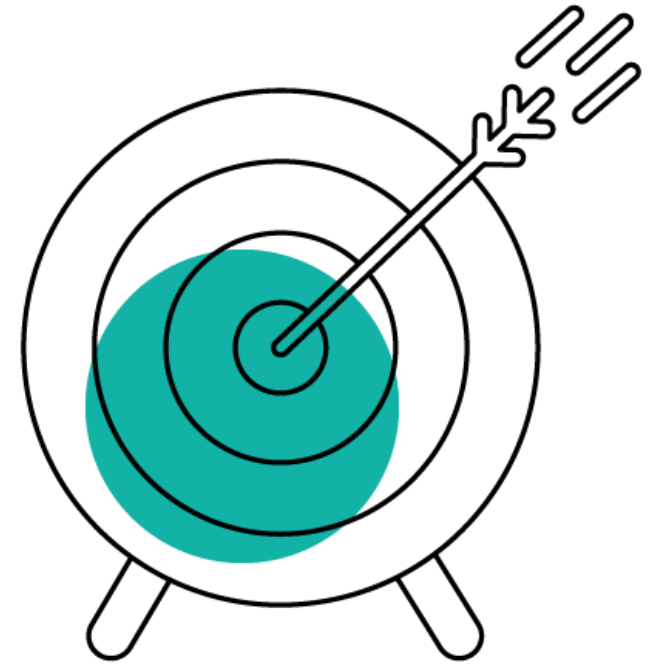
- Get students used to applying their knowledge. Scaffolding, simple matching exercises early on to recognise correct explanations. Build up to creating their own.
- 35% of the marks across GCSE will be for AO2 application.
- Where stimulus material / scenarios are given, students are expected to apply their knowledge and understanding to the scenario.
- Where no reference is made to a stimulus / scenario, a response or statement is considered generic and no marks are awarded.
- Just using a person's name from the scenario or copying information given in the question is not enough to demonstrate the skill of application.



Tips For Success

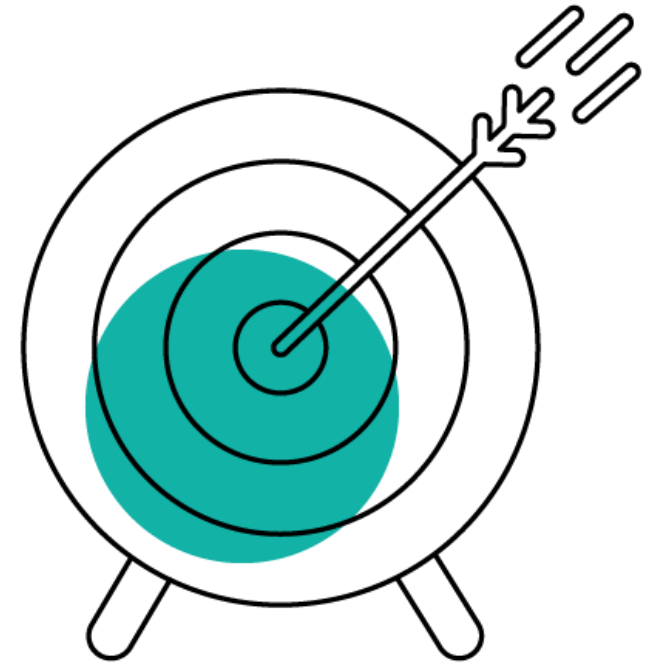
30% of the marks across GCSE will be for AO3.

- The AO3 content within 'Explain' questions is the reasoning/justification that is required.
- On Paper 1, they are in relation to conclusions, improvements, and have some in the strengths and/or weaknesses.
- On Paper 2, they are in relation to conclusions in research methods and are the two questions prior to the essays in the option sections have some AO3 – one which requires justification, the other typically is asking for strengths and/or weaknesses or ways that something can be reasoned/justified.
- For the AO3 justification mark, there needs to be reasoning why the identified point made is a strength / weakness / improvement etc.



Tips For Success – Essays

- Candidates will be required to do 5 essays in their final exams:
- Paper 1 will have 2 essays (2 x 9-mark)
- Paper 2 will have 3 essays (1 x 12-mark, 2 x 9-mark)
- Total mark allocation of essays is 48 marks (out of 177 raw marks) which equates to more than 27% of their marks for the GCSE psychology qualification.
- Essays use specific command words – ‘Evaluate’, ‘Assess’.
- Levels-based marking is used where the quality of the response is judged using level descriptors.
- Examiners assess AO1, AO2, AO3. A mid-point is then decided between which level the different skills are at.





Q and A check in

Support for Learning

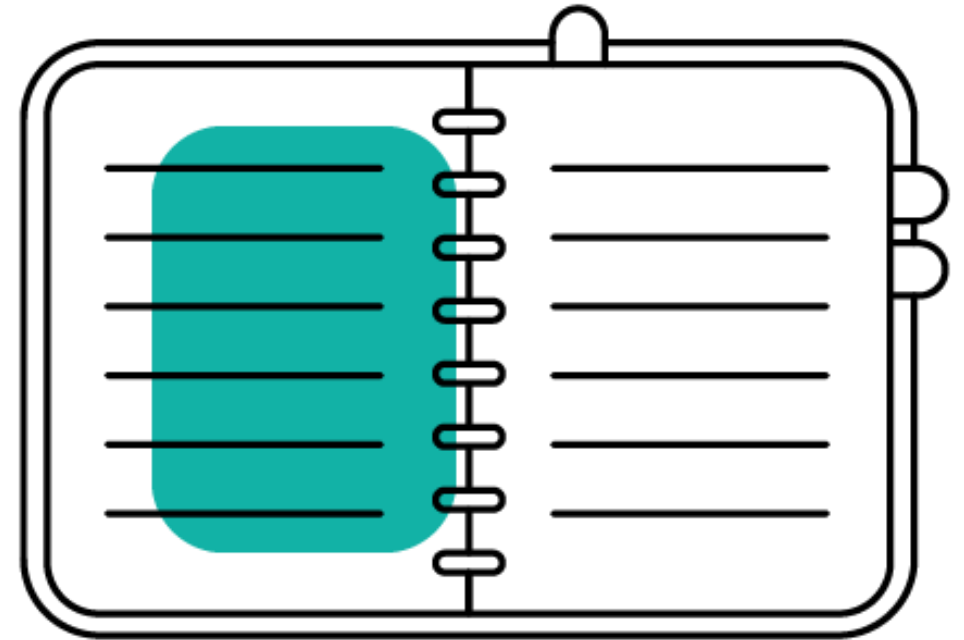


Support for Learning

This section of the training is aimed at offering ideas to support teaching psychology.

There are three sections:

1. Ideas for classroom activities
2. Evaluating theories PEEL
3. Evaluating research GRAVE



Support for Learning

Ideas for classroom activities

Scenario-based questions (Warm-ups or Exit Tickets)

Provide short real-life scenarios and ask students to apply a specific theory.

‘Which Theory Fits?’ Activity

Present a behaviour or case study (e.g. aggression in a school, memory errors in eyewitnesses). Ask students to match and justify the most relevant theory or study.

Application revision cards

Create flashcards with mini-scenarios on one side and target concepts (e.g. obedience, schemas, operant conditioning) on the other.

Students work in pairs to match or explain the links.

Support for Learning

Ideas for classroom activities

Two-sided argument debates

Give students a statement: 'Obedience is mostly explained by situational factors.'

Divide into two teams: Agree vs. Disagree.

Ask them to present arguments using evidence, then rebut opposing views.

Sorting exercise 'Strength or Weakness'?

Provide evaluation points on slips of paper. Give an example study or theory.

Students sort them into strengths or weaknesses and give reasons or justification.

Support for Learning – PEEL: Point, Evidence, Explanation, Link

Point: State a strength or weakness.

Evidence: Use a study or fact.

Explanation: Say why this matters.

Link: Connect back to the theory/question.

Use PEEL scaffolds or templates to help students build structured evaluation.

PEEL Example – Evaluating the Multi-Store Model of Memory

Point: A strength of the Multi-Store Model (MSM) is that it is supported by research evidence.

Evidence: For example, Baddeley (1966) found that we tend to encode short-term memories acoustically and long-term memories semantically.

Explanation: This supports the MSM's idea that the short-term and long-term memory are separate stores with different processes.

Link: Therefore, the model is strengthened by experimental findings that back up its structure and processes.

Support for Learning – GRAVE: Evaluating Research

GRAVE is a helpful acronym students use in Edexcel GCSE Psychology to evaluate psychological studies – especially when tackling AO3 questions. Each letter stands for a key concept used to assess the quality of research:

Generalisability

Reliability

Applicability

Validity

Ethics

Support for Learning – GRAVE Evaluating Research

G – Generalisability

Definition: How well the findings of a study can be applied to people outside the research sample.

Things to consider:

- Was the sample large enough?
- Was it diverse (age, gender, culture)?
- Was it representative of the population?

E.g., A study with only male participants may not generalise to women.

R – Reliability

Definition: Whether the study could be repeated and produce the same results.

Things to consider:

- Was the procedure standardised and controlled?
- Are the results consistent across trials or time?

E.g., Lab experiments often have high reliability due to control over variables.

Support for Learning – GRAVE Evaluating Research

A – Application

Definition: How useful the findings are in the real world.

Things to consider:

- Can the results be applied to everyday situations?
- Do they help improve lives or inform policies?

E.g., Research on eyewitness memory has been used to improve police interviews.

V – Validity

Definition: Whether the study measured what it intended to measure.

Types:

- **Internal validity:** Were variables controlled properly?
- **Ecological validity:** Did the setting reflect real life?

E.g., A memory test in a lab may lack ecological validity.

Support for Learning – GRAVE Evaluating Research

E – Ethics

Definition: Whether the study protected the rights and wellbeing of participants.

Things to consider:

- Informed consent
- Deception
- Right to withdraw
- Protection from harm

E.g., Studies like Milgram's raised ethical concerns due to stress caused to participants.

Support for Learning

General advice for where to get support:

- Use past papers for examples of assessment.
- Use the Examiner Reports and attend the feedback events where possible.
- Use the Exemplars and other teaching and learning resources from the Pearson Edexcel website. For example, the topic guides.
- Use the 'Ask the Expert' service if you are ever unsure.
- Do not rely on social media or textbooks – always use the primary sources and use the specification and information on the Pearson Edexcel website as the definitive source for the qualification.



Q and A check in

Thank you for attending
today's training



Subject Advisor Support

Our subject advisors are experts in their fields and are here to support you throughout the year.

Psychology

Email: teachingpsychology@pearson.com

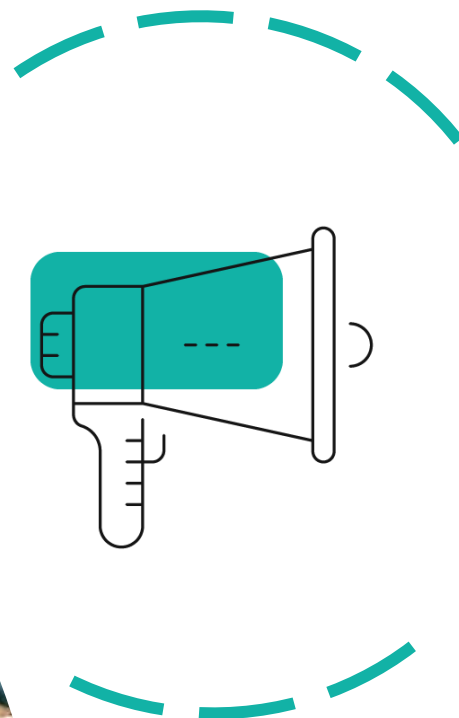
Phone: +44 (0) 344 463 2535
(Mon–Fri, 9.00–17.00)

[Book an appointment with your Subject Advisor](#)

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Tim Lawrence
Psychology





Your Feedback Matters

Following this event, you will receive an invitation to share your thoughts about the session. Your feedback is invaluable to us, as it helps us tailor our professional development materials to better meet your needs. Please don't hesitate to let us know what you'd like to see more of and what areas you think could be improved.

Find out more

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