

8. Year 11 Subjects 2011 (Science)

VCE Psychology

Introduction:

Psychology is the scientific study of mental processes and behaviour in humans. Biological, behavioural, cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives inform the way psychologists approach their research into the human condition.

The science of psychology has produced rapid expansion in knowledge, particularly in the fields of neuroscience and cognition. This growth has been fuelled by the emergence of new interdisciplinary approaches, advances in imaging technologies and a broader public interest in applications of psychology. As a result, new ethical frameworks have been required for neuroscientific and psychological research, clinical practice and commercial applications.

In the VCE study of psychology, students explore complex human behaviours and thought processes. They develop empathetic understandings and an understanding of mental health issues in society. Students are given the opportunity to apply psychological principles to everyday situations such as workplace and social relations. Psychology provides students with a sophisticated framework for understanding the complex interactions between biological, behavioural, cognitive and socio-cultural factors that influence thought, emotions and behaviour. The study assists students to further develop effective language skills for communication, and numeracy skills for research, data analysis and other applications. In addition, students develop a range of broader skills including those of problem solving, critical evaluation and the application of processes of scientific inquiry.

The study of psychology leads to opportunities in a range of careers that involve working with children, adults, families and communities in a variety of settings. These include academic and research institutions, management and human resources, and government, corporate and private enterprises. Fields of applied psychology include educational, environmental, forensic, health, sport and organisational psychology. Specialist fields of psychology include counselling and clinical contexts, as well as neuropsychology, social psychology and developmental psychology.

8. Year 11 Subjects 2011 (Science)

VCE Psychology (Cont...)

Unit 1 – Introduction to Psychology

Areas of Study:

This unit consists of two areas of study:

- What is psychology – In this area of study students analyse the contribution that classic and contemporary theories have made to the development of psychology. They are introduced to the scope of psychology – its specialised fields of study and its application in a variety of contexts and settings. Students investigate aspects of visual perception to consider how psychologists approach the study of the mind and human behaviour from biological, behavioural, cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives.
- Lifespan Psychology - This area of study focuses on changes in the interaction between biological, cognitive and socio-cultural influences and learned behaviours that contribute to an individual's psychological development and mental wellbeing at different stages. Students consider how classic and contemporary studies contribute to our understanding of changes that take place across an individual's lifespan. They draw upon one of these theories to research one lifespan stage. They use the major perspectives in contemporary psychology to explain cognition and behaviours associated with particular stages of development, taking into account heredity and environmental influences.

On completion of this unit students should be able to:

- explain how the field of psychology provides scientific explanations of behaviour
- identify characteristics of pro-social and anti-social behaviour and evaluate the factors that influence them
- outline the key developmental stages in perception, cognition and understanding of self and describe the main developmental theories in this area

Assessment:

Unit 1 consists of two separate outcomes:

- Outcome 1 - Students should be able to describe how research has informed different psychological perspectives used to explain human behaviour, and explain visual perception through these perspectives.
- Outcome 2 - Students should be able to describe a range of psychological development theories and conduct an investigation into one stage in the lifespan of an individual.

Assessment Break-Down:

For this unit, students will complete assessments that can include the following:

- research investigation; annotated folio of practical activities; media response; oral presentation using two or more data types, for example still or moving images, written text, sound; visual presentation, for example concept map, graphic organiser, poster; test; essay; debate; data analysis; evaluation of research.
- There will be an end-of-semester Examination.

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VCE Psychology (Cont...)

Unit 2 – Self and Others

Areas of Study:

- *Interpersonal and group behaviour* - It is generally accepted that a key factor in the psychological wellbeing of individuals depends on the extent to which the need for affiliation is met – a sense of belonging and connectedness whether it be to family, a group, a school or workplace, or a wider community. Without this, individuals may experience alienation and isolation expressed in anti-social behaviours such as aggression and bullying. Understanding the interplay of factors that shape the behaviour of individuals and groups can help explain the cause and dynamics of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination, and can contribute to changes in attitudes and behaviour. This insight can be extended towards understanding different patterns of behaviours sometimes evident in different cultures.
- *Intelligence and Personality* - In this area of study, students explore scientific ways of describing, measuring and classifying intelligence and personality. They analyse classic and contemporary theories of intelligence and personality, including the influence of genetic and environmental factors. They compare the research methods used in the development of these theories.

On completion students should be able to:

- explain the roles of the neurons and associated chemicals and describe the functions of the central nervous system
- analyse the strengths and limitations in scientific approaches to defining 'normality' and in the application of psychological assessment
- describe attitude formation and factors that affect prejudice

Assessment:

Unit 2 consists of two separate outcomes:

- Outcome 1 - Students should be able to explain how attitudes are formed and changed, and discuss the factors that affect the behaviour of individuals and groups.
- Outcome 2 - Students should be able to compare different theories of intelligence and personality, and compare different methodologies used in the measurement of these.

Assessment Break-Down:

For this unit, students will complete assessments that can include the following:

- research investigation; annotated folio of practical activities; media response; oral presentation using two or more data types, for example still or moving images, written text, sound; visual presentation, for example concept map, graphic organiser, poster; test; essay; debate; data analysis; evaluation of research.
- There will be an end-of-semester Examination.