

Summary of changes

Introduction

This resource outlines the changes we have made to the AS Psychology (7181) specification.

In response to teacher feedback and earlier exam dates, we have made some updates to our AS Psychology specification for first teaching in September 2025.

The purpose of the updates is to:

- reduce the overall specification content
- provide teachers and learners with greater clarity about the specification content
- update the language used to be more reflective of society.

This resource has been created to provide a summary of the updates made. Only changes to the subject content are listed in the summary. No other changes have been made to the specification.

New specification content

There is one new addition to specification content. A summary of the topics with new content is below:

- Research methods.

The changes have been coded as follows:

Change to the specification	This means	Coding	Impact on teaching and learning
Removed	Specification content has been removed.	Strikethrough	No longer a requirement to teach. Review planning and teaching materials in light of change.
Reworded	Change to the terminology used in the specification.	<i>Italics</i>	Amend teaching resources to reflect the new terminology used in the updated specification. No change to specification content.
Reordered	The order of bullet points or the positioning of specification content has changed.	Bold	<i>May</i> impact planning, SOW and order of delivery of the specification content.

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Paper 1 (7181/1): Introductory topics in Psychology

Paper 1 Current specification content	Paper 1 Updates to specification content
<p>Social influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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. 	<p>The following specification content is:</p> <p>Removed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Identification' as a type of conformity. • Conformity to social roles as investigated by Zimbardo. • Role of social influence processes in social change.

Paper 1 Current specification content	Paper 1 Updates to specification content
<p>Memory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 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. 	<p>The following specification content is</p> <p>Removed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of long-term memory episodic, semantic, procedural. • References to 'misleading information' and 'improving the accuracy of eyewitness testimony.' <p>Reordered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of the cognitive interview has been moved to the end of the previous bullet point (factors affecting eyewitness testimony). This now reads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony: leading questions, post-event discussion; anxiety; the use of cognitive interview.

Paper 1 Current specification content	Paper 1 Updates to specification content
<p>Attachment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 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. <i>Romanian orphan studies: effects of institutionalisation.</i> • The influence of early attachment on childhood and adult relationships, including the role of an internal working model. 	<p>The following specification content is</p> <p>Removed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver-infant interactions in humans: reciprocity and interactional synchrony. Stages of attachment identified by Schaffer. Multiple attachments and the role of the father. <p>Reworded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Romanian orphan studies' changed to 'English and Romanian Adoptees project'. <p>Reordered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English and Romanian Adoptees project will now appear after the 'effects of institutionalisation'. This now reads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation. Effects of institutionalisation, including the English and Romanian Adoptees project.

Paper 2 (7181/2): Psychology in context

Paper 2 Current specification content	Paper 2 Updates to specification content
<p>Approaches in Psychology</p> <p>Origins of Psychology: Wundt, introspection and the emergence of Psychology as a science.</p> <p>The basic assumptions of the following approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <i>theoretical and computer</i> models to explain and make inferences about mental processes. The emergence of cognitive neuroscience. The biological approach: the influence of genes, biological structures and neurochemistry on behaviour. Genotype and phenotype, genetic basis of behaviour, evolution and behaviour. <p>3.2.1.1 Biopsychology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The divisions of the nervous system: central and peripheral (somatic and autonomic). 	<p>The following specification content is:</p> <p>Removed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Origins of Psychology: Wundt, introspection and the emergence of Psychology as a science. 'modelling'. 'The emergence of' removed from 'cognitive neuroscience', now simply 'Cognitive neuroscience'. 'Influence of genes' removed from the biological approach. <p>Reworded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theoretical and computer models no longer referenced separately. Changed to 'the use of models'. <p>Reordered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive neuroscience remains and is now incorporated into the biological approach ('The emergence of' removed). Biological approach content restructured and 'influence of genes' removed as redundant. This now reads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The biological approach: the genetic basis of behaviour: genotype, phenotype and evolution. Influence of biological structures and neurochemistry on behaviour. Cognitive neuroscience.

Paper 2 Current specification content	Paper 2 Updates to specification content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 adrenalin. 	
<p>Psychopathology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Definitions of abnormality</i>, including deviation from <i>social norms</i>, 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 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. 	<p>Clinical Psychology and Mental Health</p> <p>The following specification content is:</p> <p>Reworded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title of topic changed from 'Psychopathology' to 'Clinical Psychology and Mental Health'. Definitions of abnormality changed to 'Definitions in the field of mental health'. Deviation from social norms changed to 'deviation from social/ cultural norms.' <p>Reordered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'deviation from ideal mental health' is now the first definition. This now reads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definitions in the field of mental health: deviation from ideal mental health, deviation from social/ cultural norms, failure to function adequately and statistical infrequency.

Paper 2 Current specification content	Paper 2 Updates to specification content
<p>Research methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experimental method. Types of experiment, laboratory and field experiments; natural and quasi-experiments. 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. Correlations. Analysis of the relationship between co-variables. The difference between correlations and experiments. <p>Scientific processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims: stating aims, the difference between aims and hypotheses. Hypotheses: directional and non-directional. Sampling: the difference between population and sample; sampling <i>techniques</i> including random, systematic, stratified, opportunity and volunteer; implications of sampling techniques, including bias and generalisation. 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. 	<p>The following specification content is:</p> <p>Removed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confounding variables. <p>Reworded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sampling 'techniques' changed to sampling 'methods'. <p>*New*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control groups added to Scientific processes. This bullet point now reads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control: random allocation and counterbalancing, randomisation, standardisation and control groups.

Paper 2 Current specification content	Paper 2 Updates to specification content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 in the design and conduct of psychological studies; dealing with ethical issues in research. • The role of peer review in the scientific process. • The implications of psychological research for the economy. <p>Data handling and analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative and qualitative data; the distinction between 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. • Distributions: normal and skewed distributions; characteristics of normal and skewed distributions. 	

Paper 2 Current specification content	Paper 2 Updates to specification content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to statistical testing; the sign test. When to use the sign test; calculation of the sign test. 	