

IBDP Psychology SL/HL

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Should you wish to learn more about our course or to discuss your learner's progress, please reach out to the email above to schedule a time to meet.

Course Description and Units of Learning:

At the core of the DP psychology course is an introduction to three different approaches to understanding behavior: the biological, cognitive and sociocultural approaches. Students study and critically evaluate the knowledge, concepts, theories and research that have developed the understanding in these fields.

The interaction of these approaches to studying psychology forms the basis of a holistic and integrated approach to understanding mental processes and behavior as a complex, dynamic phenomenon, allowing students to appreciate the diversity as well as the commonality between their own behavior and that of others.

The contribution and the interaction of the three approaches is understood through the four options in the course, focusing on areas of applied psychology: abnormal psychology, developmental psychology, health psychology, and the psychology of relationships. The options provide an opportunity to take what is learned from the study of the approaches to psychology and apply it to specific lines of inquiry.

Psychologists employ a range of research methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to test their observations and hypotheses. DP psychology promotes an understanding of the various approaches to research and how they are used to critically reflect on the evidence as well as assist in the design, implementation, analysis and evaluation of the students' own investigations. Surrounding the approaches and the options are the overarching themes of research and ethics. A consideration of both is paramount to the nature of the subject.

For a more detailed exploration of this course, [the IB Subject Guide is available at this link for Standard Level and Higher Level.](#)

A Brief Introduction to Psychology (G11)

The science of psychology

Timeline of key psychologists and theories

Research Methodology (G11)

The goal of this introductory unit is to learn the language of psychology and begin the development of a "critical thinking toolbox" which students will use throughout the course.

The focus of this first unit is on quantitative research methods, although students will also be introduced to observations, interviews and case studies. Students will learn how to plan out their own research and how to write a research report.

Biological Level of Analysis (G11)

The biological approach is broken into two sub-units. In the first sub-unit, we look at the role of biological factors in memory. These include localization of function, neurotransmission, hormones and the stress response. In the second sub-unit, we look at the role of biological factors in human attraction and sexuality, including neurotransmission, hormones, genetics, evolution and pheromones.

Cognitive Level of Analysis (G11)

Sociocultural Level of Analysis (G11)

HL and SL candidates both have the same internal assessment requirements. They must carry out a replication of a published study and then write an 1800 - 2200 word report, including an introduction, exploration of the methodology, analysis of results and an evaluation of their process.

Students will be guided through this process through use of samples and online resources, before conducting their own research in school.

Abnormal Psychology (G12)

This unit is elective for SL, but mandatory for HL. It is broken into 3 sub-units.

a. Diagnosis:

The unit on diagnosis focuses on how psychiatrists use classification systems in order to diagnosis clients. A big part of the unit is discussing the nature of “normalcy” and the concepts of distress, dysfunction and social outliers. Students learn that diagnosis is a valuable, but flawed process.

b. Etiologies:

The unit on etiologies focuses on the question of cause and effect. The goal is to understand the complexities of disorders and why it is not easy to determine the reasons why people develop disorders. Students should be able to weigh the evidence for biological, cognitive and sociocultural origins of Major Depressive Disorder.

c. Treatment:

The unit on treatment has the long-term goal of informing students about the potential options for treatment for mental health issues. They should be able to judge the strengths and limitations of each approach to treatment and why an approach might be better for a specific disorder or type of individual. The unit looks at both biological and psychological treatments.

Human Relationships (G12)

This unit is elective for SL, but mandatory for HL. It is broken into 3 sub-units.

a. Group Dynamics:

This topic focuses on both the negative and positive aspects of groups working together. The first part of the unit looks at cooperation and how it can be promoted. The unit also reviews the concept of social identity and looks at the question of how we go from in-group/out-group differentiation to actual conflict. Finally, strategies are discussed for reducing group conflict.

b. Personal Relationships:

The goal of this unit is to apply the core to understanding human relationships. The first part of this unit is a revision of what we did in our biological unit, looking at the role of neurotransmitters, hormones, evolution and pheromones on how we choose a mate. We then look at cognitive and sociocultural arguments for attraction. A key focus of the unit is on the difficulty of carrying out valid research on relationships.

c. Social Responsibilities:

In this unit we reflect on one's own level of social responsibility, generate criteria for making an informed judgement and apply psychological theory to promote positive social change.

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This year we have begun planning and implementing units of study based on our Critical Learning Outcomes within the IB MYP and DP frameworks. Please see ManageBac for unit overviews as they are taught throughout the year.

Assessment in the Diploma Programme

Assessment is a key component of the learning process as it allows teachers to respond with targeted feedback to learners for continued growth and to revise their instruction to better meet the needs of their learners. In order to provide learners with the opportunity to reach critical learning outcomes and develop a range of approaches to learning skills, our IB Diploma teachers develop rigorous tasks that embrace a variety of strategies in line with desired learning outcomes and with each course's internal and external assessments.

Working backwards from these assessment components, teachers craft learning experiences which support each learner's mastery of key content, concepts, and skills in every subject. Learners can expect to receive regular feedback on all three elements, with important culminating experiences such as IA drafts and mock examinations in the second year. For culminating tasks, teachers and learners are guided by criteria provided at least one week prior to the due date. DP teachers also work to ensure that learners not only understand but engage in applying evaluation criteria to their own work as well as that of their peers. Core components such as Theory of Knowledge, CAS, and the Extended Essay support each learner's progress across the programme, as learners apply critical thinking, the design cycle, and research skills to each subject.

Families and learners at AISM can expect to receive regular reporting of their performance as they work towards mastery of critical learning outcomes.

Learning Management Systems

Across the Secondary School, we utilize ManageBac for sharing key activities and assessments, as a digital workspace, for communication with learners, and for reporting on learner performance to families. Some teachers may supplement the digital learning environment with Google Classroom, and you can expect an emailed invitation to sign up for regular updates from Google Classroom if so.

Homework

Any learning activity which is expected to take place outside of the classroom will appear as assignments and tasks on ManageBac. Homework is most often an extension of activities or projects either begun or included in the classroom, but may include common activities like reading, reinforcement of content or skills within a unit of study, or distributed practice activities, such as flashcards for example, to support learner recall of low-level content.

Reporting

As a rough guide, learners and families can expect an update on performance every few weeks. These updates, available in ManageBac, represent a check-in on learner performance toward mastering critical course objectives and learning outcomes, prior to each unit's culminating assessment.