

A Level Psychology (AQA)

Curriculum Intent:

Psychology is the science of mind and behaviour. This subject explores how behaviour can be explained, the most appropriate methods for investigating behaviour and implications of findings for the real world. The aim is to go beyond the popular approach to psychology, taking a more academic route towards an understanding of the various theoretical perspectives and research methods available to us. The topics covered allow the students to develop a contextual understanding of why psychology is so important to study and why it is so relevant in their world. For example, we can look back in history to answer questions such as 'why do people obey?' by studying the behaviour of the thousands who unquestionably obeyed the Nazis in the second world war. More recently we see the discipline come to the fore during the Covid 19 pandemic and its role in studying and treating the effects of lockdown on global mental health. The psychology department is passionate about using real-life examples from their professional practice and those from history to allow students the opportunity to apply their knowledge of the underpinning theories and research they study in the classroom. Our intent is to inspire students to use the knowledge and skills gained during their psychology A Level and use this in whatever pathway they choose to take next, whether that be skills of critical analysis and evaluation, mathematical skills learned during the statistical component of the course or in their personal and professional lives to enable them to become more compassionate, empathetic and tolerant citizens.

The aims of the course are to:

- Offer an engaging and effective introduction to Psychology.
- To learn the fundamentals of the discipline and develop skills valued by Higher Education (HE) and employers, including critical analysis, independent thinking and research.
- To offer a curriculum that reflects advances and changes in the subject and provide a coherent and holistic programme of study.
- To challenge and inspire students to critically analyse evidence, from both academic literature or that which is published by the media for consumption by the general public.
- To develop essential knowledge and understanding of different areas of the subject and how they relate to each other
- To develop and demonstrate a deep appreciation of the skills, knowledge and understanding of scientific methods
- To develop competence and confidence in a variety of practical, mathematical and problem-solving skills
- To develop an interest in and enthusiasm for the subject, including developing an interest in further study and careers associated with the subject
- To understand how society makes decisions about scientific issues and how the sciences contribute to the success of the economy and society.

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Curriculum implementation:

We do not enter students for the AS examination which means that modules are taught in the order which provides a logical introduction to a subject which has rarely been studied before at KS4. Ecclesbourne do not offer psychology at KS4 but occasionally we have students join us from other establishments who have some prior knowledge. When this happens, these students are encouraged to work through the 'core' tasks as a means of revising GCSE content but to swiftly move onto the 'challenge' activity to ensure they remain stimulated and progress at a speed personal to them.

The emphasis is very much on a spiral curriculum as can be seen from the 'rationale' section below. This is important in psychology because a lot of the key terms are new to students at the beginning of year 12 so embedding these early on then revisiting them in context will help with understanding and retrieval.

Year 12:

| Term | Content (HEP) | Content (KRH) | Rationale |
|---|---|---|--|
| Autumn 1 Usually 8 weeks HEP = 16 lessons KRH = 24 lessons | <p>Approaches in Psychology:</p> <p>The Biological Approach = 4 The biological approach: the influence of genes, biological structures and neurochemistry on behaviour. Genotype and phenotype, genetic basis of behaviour, evolution and behaviour</p> <p>The Cognitive Approach = 4 The cognitive approach: the study of internal mental processes, the role of schema, the use of theoretical and computer models to explain and make inferences about mental</p> | <p>Approaches in Psychology:</p> <p>The origins of Psychology = 2 Origins of Psychology: Wundt, introspection and the emergence of Psychology as a science.</p> <p>The behaviourist approach and SLT = 6 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</p> | <p>How behaviour is explained – this underpins everything we do in psychology. Naturally it makes sense to begin with the origins of the subject then launch into the key ways of explaining behaviour. These approaches also feature in later modules so it's important to lay the groundwork at the beginning of the course. Both teachers to cover 'how to write an essay plan/16 marker' in at least one approach so essay writing skills are addressed from the off. 16 markers form over 50% of the marks in the exam so it's important students become well drilled in constructing essay plans so it becomes part of their routine.</p> |

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| | <p>processes. The emergence of cognitive neuroscience</p> <p>Research Methods: Experimental Methods = 8 lessons Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following research methods, scientific processes and techniques of data handling and analysis, be familiar with their use and be aware of their strengths and limitation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experimental method. Types of experiment, laboratory and field experiments; natural and quasi-experiments. | <p>mediational processes and Bandura's research.</p> <p>The Psychodynamic Approach = 4 The psychodynamic approach: the role of the unconscious, the structure of personality, that is Id, Ego and Superego, defence mechanisms including repression, denial and displacement, psychosexual stages.</p> <p>Humanistic Psychology = 4 Humanistic Psychology: free will, self-actualisation and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, focus on the self, congruence, the role of conditions of worth. The influence on counselling Psychology.</p> <p>Research Methods: Non-Experimental Methods = 12 lessons Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following research methods, scientific processes and techniques of data handling and analysis, be familiar with their use and be aware of their strengths and limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observational techniques. Types of observation: naturalistic and controlled observation; covert and overt observation; participant and non-participant observation. | <p>How behaviour is investigated – the next logical step is to study how psychologists go about their research into behaviour. The year 1 research methods will be taught. This is an incredibly important module since it is double-weighted and questions can feature anywhere across all three papers thus making it essential for use of past-paper questions in assessments, mocks, EoY exams etc. It is quite a dry module though at times so the content is split across the two years so students don't lose interest in the course. It is split in this way according to teacher specialism and so students can see a</p> |
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| | <p>Within these methods the relevant processes and methods of data-handling and analysis will be taught</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-report techniques. Questionnaires; interviews, structured and unstructured. • Correlations. Analysis of the relationship between co-variables. The difference between correlations and experiments. <p>Within these methods the relevant processes and methods of data-handling and analysis will be taught</p> | <p>clear split between the two categories of research methods (scientific and non-scientific)</p> |
| <p>Autumn 2 Usually 7 weeks HEP = 14 lessons KRH = 21 lessons</p> | <p>Finish Research Methods: Experimental Methods</p> <p>Biopsychology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The divisions of the nervous system: central and peripheral (somatic and autonomic). • 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 adrenaline. • Localisation of function in the brain and hemispheric lateralisation: motor, somatosensory, visual, auditory and language centres; Broca's and Wernicke's areas, split brain | <p>Psychopathology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of abnormality, including deviation from social norms, 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 | <p>At this point in the course each teacher begins a module which is their specialist area: HEP is a biologist so it makes sense for her to teach biopsychology and KRH is a practicing counselling psychotherapist so it makes sense for her to teach the module on abnormality, the disorders and treatments. Biopsychology is a challenging module so it is taught in the first year of the course it allows plenty of time for material to be consolidated in revision, assessment for and of learning to take place and allows material to be re-visited e.g. in the year 2 stress topic. Teaching psychopathology at this point affords the opportunity to see the approaches come to life in a therapeutic context.</p> |

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| | <p>research. Plasticity and functional recovery of the brain after trauma. • Ways of studying the brain: scanning techniques, including functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI); electroencephalogram (EEGs) and event-related potentials (ERPs); postmortem examinations. • Biological rhythms: circadian, infradian and ultradian and the difference between these rhythms. The effect of endogenous pacemakers and exogenous zeitgebers on the sleep/ wake cycle.</p> | <p>therapy (CBT), including challenging irrational thoughts. • The biological approach to explaining and treating OCD: genetic and neural explanations; drug therapy.</p> | |
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| Spring 1 | Finish Biopsychology | <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. Romanian orphan studies: | <p>Paper 2 (almost) complete thus allowing time for students to begin revision for the EoY exams.</p> <p>Attachment is a good topic for beginning to apply the many key-terms learned in the research methods topic e.g. problems with generalising from samples and ecological validity. It does demand a level of self-awareness and maturity though e.g. in looking at the effects of early attachment on intimate relationships, so leaving this until after Christmas is a good way of ensuring teacher-student expectations and relationships are in place.</p> |

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| | | effects of institutionalisation. • The influence of early attachment on childhood and adult relationships, including the role of an internal working model | |
| Spring 2 | <p>Gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex and gender. Sex-role stereotypes. Androgyny and measuring androgyny including the Bem Sex Role Inventory. • The role of chromosomes and hormones (testosterone, oestrogen and oxytocin) in sex and gender. Atypical sex chromosome patterns: Klinefelter’s syndrome and Turner’s syndrome. • Cognitive explanations of gender development, Kohlberg’s theory, gender identity, gender stability and gender constancy; gender schema theory. • Psychodynamic explanation of gender development, Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, Oedipus complex; Electra complex; identification and internalisation. • Social learning theory as applied to gender development. The influence of culture and media on gender roles. • Atypical gender development: gender dysphoria; biological and social explanations for gender dysphoria. | <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>Gender is taught by HEP due to a significant part of the module having links with biology. It is a great opportunity to re-visit and consolidate prior learning e.g. the psychodynamic approach and SLT were taught in the first module of the course and studying further atypical behaviour (this time in the context of gender dysphoria) allows students to see how the approaches attempt to explain such behaviour. Social Influence is a step-up, in terms of difficulty, from the Attachment module so this affords an excellent opportunity to apply evaluative key-terms in the context of famous research into conformity and obedience.</p> |

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| Summer 1 | Finish Gender Revision/EoY exam | Finish Soc Inf Revision/EoY exam | |
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| Summer 2 | Project | Project | An end of year project brings together knowledge on research methods and allows students to see this applied in the context of a written lab report based on data collected by them! As part of this they will experience the challenges of research design and implementation, as well as give them an introduction to inferential stat testing which is taught in year 2. This is a time of year when lessons are affected by NCS, work experience, field trips, careers drop-down days, university open days etc so it is reassuring for the students to be working in pairs so their partner can support them in catching up from a missed lesson, as well as knowing that the material will form part of the year 2 course when attendance is much more stable. |

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Year 13:

Year 2 of the course is taught by one member of staff

| Term | Content | Rationale |
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| Autumn 1 | <p>Research Methods Top-Up inc. Sign Test:</p> <p>Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following research methods, scientific processes and techniques of data handling and analysis, be familiar with their use and be aware of their strengths and limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content analysis • Case studies. <p>Within these methods the relevant processes and methods of data-handling and analysis will be taught.</p> <p>Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of inferential testing and be familiar with the use of inferential tests. • Introduction to statistical testing; the sign test. When to use the sign test; calculation of the sign test. • Probability and significance: use of statistical tables and critical values in interpretation of significance; Type I and Type II errors. • Factors affecting the choice of statistical test, including level of measurement and experimental design. When to use the following tests: Spearman's rho, Pearson's r, Wilcoxon, Mann-Whitney, related t-test, unrelated t-test and Chi-Squared test.</p> | <p>Students will return after the summer with their lab report ready to present to the group. Off the back of this there will be retrieval practice of the process involved in choosing a stat test and use of statistical tables and critical values in interpretation of significance. Having experienced this first hand in conducting their own research, this knowledge now becomes very much consolidated.</p> |

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| Autumn 2 | <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>Although this is traditionally a year 1 topic, the content very much lends itself to an analysis of research methodology thus allowing students to practice the skill of evaluating research using the knowledge acquired in year 1 of the course. Due to the fact research methods is double-weighted (and questions can feature anywhere across all 3 papers) it is essential knowledge of these key terms is secure.</p> |
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| Spring 1 | <p>Stress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The physiology of stress, including general adaptation syndrome, the hypothalamic pituitaryadrenal system, the sympathomedullary pathway and the role of cortisol. • The role of stress in illness, including reference to immunosuppression and cardiovascular disorders. • Sources of stress: life changes and daily hassles. Workplace stress, including the effects of workload and control. • Measuring stress: self-report scales (Social Readjustment Ratings Scale and Hassles and Uplifts Scale) and physiological | <p>At this stage of the course students are well-drilled in learning and evaluating research to form part of an argument but it is recognised that they cannot continue to learn 3 pieces of evaluation for every two-page spread of the book and recall this volume of material accurately. Since this skill forms 10 marks of a 16 marker it is important that students become almost robotic in evaluating research so that if their memory fails them in the exam they have a toolkit from which to draw.</p> |

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| | <p>measures, including skin conductance response. • Individual differences in stress: personality types A, B and C and associated behaviours; hardiness, including commitment, challenge and control. • Managing and coping with stress: drug therapy (benzodiazepines, beta blockers), stress inoculation therapy and biofeedback. Gender differences in coping with stress. The role of social support in coping with stress; types of social support, including instrumental, emotional and esteem support.</p> | <p>Therefore, this topic not only allows revision of the physiology of stress (taught in year 1) but it is also taught in such a way that students are encouraged to simply learn the study then apply their knowledge of “the flags” (a display in the psychology base of the main ways of evaluating in psychology). This brings together everything they have learned in terms of AO3 which is fantastic on the run-up to the exams in terms of skill and confidence in using these. It is fail-safe! Furthermore, this topic addresses methods of stress management which is very relevant to students at this point in the course!</p> |
| Spring 2 | <p>Addiction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing addiction: physical and psychological dependence, tolerance and withdrawal syndrome. • Risk factors in the development of addiction, including genetic vulnerability, stress, personality, family influences and peers. • Explanations for nicotine addiction: brain neurochemistry, including the role of dopamine, and learning theory as applied to smoking behaviour, including reference to cue reactivity. • Explanations for gambling addiction: learning theory as applied to gambling, including reference to partial and variable reinforcement; cognitive theory as applied to gambling, including reference to cognitive bias. • Reducing addiction: drug therapy; behavioural interventions, including aversion therapy and covert sensitisation; cognitive behaviour therapy. • The application of the | <p>This topic is taught last because of the level of maturity and insight needed to grasp the sensitive content of this module. It is another example of how a spiral curriculum approach means students have the opportunity to see how the underpinning theories/research taught in biopsychology, the approaches and treatments come together in the real world in both a research led and therapeutic context.</p> |

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| | following theories of behaviour change to addictive behaviour; the theory of planned behaviour and Prochaska's six-stage model of behaviour change. | |
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| Summer 1 | Comparison of Approaches Issues and Debates | Comparing the approaches is something students find difficult but extracting it from the main approaches section of the course in year 1 and teaching it here means students have had numerous opportunities to see how the approaches are applied in the real world already. It also serves the purpose of revising the core assumptions of these approaches. Issues and debates have already been embedded and integrated throughout the course so far (it is very difficult not to!) so at this point students are taught the skills, content and structure for a 16 marker on each issue or debate after pooling ideas of how these can be exemplified from their prior learning. |
| Summer 2 | | |

How you are assessed:

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| <p>Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology</p> <p>What's assessed <i>Social influence</i> <i>Memory</i> <i>Attachment</i> <i>Psychopathology</i></p> <p>Assessed Written exam: <u>2 hours</u> 96 marks in total 33.3% of A-level</p> <p>Questions Section A: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks Section B: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks Section C: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks Section D: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks</p> | <p>Paper 2: Psychology in Context</p> <p>What's assessed <i>Approaches in Psychology</i> <i>Biopsychology</i> <i>Research methods</i></p> <p>Assessed Written exam: <u>2 hours</u> 96 marks in total 33.3% of A-level</p> <p>Questions Section A: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks Section B: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks Section C: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 48 marks</p> | <p>Paper 3: Issues and Options in Psychology</p> <p>What's assessed <i>Compulsory content: Issues and debates in Psychology</i> <i>Optional content:</i> <i>Option 1: Relationships OR Gender OR Cognition and development</i> <i>Option 2: Schizophrenia OR Eating behaviour OR Stress</i> <i>Option 3: Aggression OR Forensic Psychology OR Addiction</i></p> <p>Assessed Written exam: <u>2 hours</u> 96 marks in total 33.3% of A-level</p> <p>Questions Section A: multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks Section B: option 1, multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks Section C: option 2, multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks Section D: option 3, multiple choice, short answer and extended writing, 24 marks</p> |
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The intention of the assessment element of the course is to measure how students have achieved the following assessment objectives:

- AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures.
- AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures:
 - in a theoretical context
 - in a practical context
 - when handling qualitative data
 - when handling quantitative data.
- AO3: Analyse, interpret and evaluate scientific information, ideas and evidence, including in relation to issues, to:
 - make judgements and reach conclusions
 - develop and refine practical design and procedures.

| Title of component/paper number | Assessment Objectives | | | | Total for all assessment objectives |
|--|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|-----|-------------------------------------|
| | AO1 | AO2 | AO3 | AO4 | |
| 7182/1 Introductory Topics in Psychology | 11-14% | 6-9% | 12-14% | | 33.3% |
| 7182/2 Psychology in Context | 7-10% | 16-19% | 7-9% | | 33.3% |
| 7182/3 Issues and Options in Psychology | 9-12% | 5-8% | 15-17% | | 33.3% |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Total for the qualification | 30-33% | 30-33% | 36-38% | | 100% |

Enrichment – How can you deepen your understanding of Psychology?

The exciting thing about studying Psychology is that it is dynamic and reflects real life situations so there are plenty of opportunities to find out more. We suggest that you read or listen to the news frequently. Below there is a list of films and books you may wish to enjoy:

BOOKS:

- It's Kind of a Funny Story - Ned Vizzini
- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time - Mark Haddon
- Thirteen Reasons Why - Jay Asher
- The Yellow Wallpaper - Charlotte Perkins Gilmore
- The Virgin Suicides - Jeffery Eugenides
- We Need to Talk About Kevin - Lionel Shriver
- An Anthropologist on Mars – Oliver Sacks
- The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat – Oliver Sacks
- Musicophilia – Oliver Sacks
- Delusions of Gender – Cordelia Fine
- The Sociopath Next Door – Martha Stout
- The Psychopath Test – Jon Ronson
- The Bell Jar – Sylvia Plath
- Junk – Melvin Burgess
- The Cellist of Sarajevo – Steven Galloway

FILMS:

- The Madness of King George
- Memento
- Catch 22
- Shutter Island

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- Hamlet
- A Beautiful Mind
- One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
- Mockingbird Don't Sing
- Trainspotting
- Side Effects
- Suffragette
- The Stanford Prison Experiment

The main textbooks used on the course are below:

Psychology A Level Year 1 and AS: The Complete Companion Student Book by Cardwell and Flanagan

Psychology A Level Year 2: The Complete Companion Student Book by Cardwell and Flanagan

AQA Psychology for A Level Year 1 and AS by Flanagan, Berry, Jarvis and Liddle

AQA Psychology for A Level Year 2 by Flanagan, Berry, Jarvis and Liddle

Useful websites include:

www.aqa.org.uk

www.tutor2U.net

www.bps.org.uk

www.simplypsychology.org

Where next – how can Psychology support your future?

Many students continue to study Psychology to degree level after A level and Psychology degrees score well in employability rankings. You will have improved your literacy, numeracy, analytical and evaluative skills which are transferable to other courses of study as well as the workplace environment.

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For example, students in the past have gone on to work for the government using their knowledge of statistics to analyse data or advise on how to bring about behaviour change. In fact, it has been seen only too recently how psychologists have advised the government on how to get the general public to comply with the social distancing rules during the pandemic.

In Higher Education, almost all British Establishments offer Psychology both as a single honours degree subject and in combination with other subjects, which could lead to academic/applied research. This course provides a firm foundation in principles of psychology, useful for candidates who hope to pursue Higher Education courses in psychology, neuroscience, medical disciplines, child psychology, business or social sciences.

- Careers this course be useful for include:
 - Teaching and educational psychology
 - Health psychology
 - Clinical psychology
 - Industrial/occupational psychology
 - Forensic or legal psychology
 - Sport psychology
 - Speech therapy.
 - It is especially relevant to any of the professions involved in working with people (e.g. medicine, social work, personnel management, police etc).