

Psychology

(ATAR)

In the Psychology ATAR course students will be introduced to psychological knowledge which supports an understanding of the way individuals function in groups. Students learn about major psychological models and theories, and the methods used to conduct scientific investigations in the discipline of psychology.

Students apply research methods and ethical principles as they analyse data to illustrate how empirical procedures are used to examine phenomena, such as memory, attention, attitudes, personality and group behaviour.

Acquiring this foundation of scientific method and critical thinking is a valuable skill which students can apply throughout their study, work and everyday lives.

Course Structure

Year 11

Unit 1

- This unit focuses on a number of concepts that enable students to gain an understanding of how and why people behave the way they do.
- Students are introduced to the human brain, focusing on the major parts and lobes of the cerebral cortex, and review case studies, illustrating the link between the brain and behaviour.
- Students also explore the impact of external factors, such as physical activity and psychoactive drugs, on individuals' behaviour. Cognitive processes, such as sensation and perception and selective and divided attention, are investigated. The impact of others on behaviour is also studied.
- Students examine different types of relationships and look at the role of verbal and non-verbal communication in initiating, maintaining and regulating relationships.

Unit 2

- This unit introduces students to developmental psychology by looking at the concept of average development and changes expected as people age.
- Students analyse twin and adoption studies to gain insight into the nature/nurture debate and look at the role of play in assisting development.
- Students explore what is meant by the term personality and examine several historical perspectives used to explain personality such as Freud's psychodynamic approach.
- Students investigate the influence of others on self-concept, identity and attitudes. They explore the behaviours observed within groups, such as deindividuation and social loafing, and causes of prejudice.
- Psychological research methods introduced in Unit 1 are further explored.

Year 12

Unit 3

- The focus of this unit is to introduce new concepts which assist students to have a better understanding of human behaviour.
- In this unit, students study the functions of the four lobes of the cerebral cortex and examine how messages are transmitted from the brain to the body.
- They focus on how behaviour is influenced by learning, by reviewing classical and operant conditioning, negative and positive reinforcement and observational learning.
- Students further expand their knowledge and understanding by examining behaviour that is not influenced by learning, such as heredity, hormones and recreational drugs.
- Students learn about the impact of others on individual behaviour. They examine the socialisation processes observed within families and explore how social background and gender can shape communication styles.
- They expand on their knowledge of ethics in psychological research by considering the role of the experimenter and participants' rights such as privacy and anonymity.
- Students engage in detailed investigations of experimental methods, noting practical issues associated with research and its application.

Unit 4

- In this unit, students are introduced to theories of development, including Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Kohlberg's theory of moral development.
- They review contemporary personality theories and their limitations and analyse the causes of conformity and obedience by investigating the results of famous experiments conducted by Asch, Milgram and Zimbardo.
- Students also gain an understanding into factors that shape a sense of community and explore the varied responses individuals have to significant events.
- Students continue to develop their understanding and application of psychological research methods. They manipulate dependent and independent variables to test hypotheses and use statistical significance to draw conclusions.