

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL AS & A LEVEL

Psychology 9990

Syllabus Overview

Examinations 2028, 2029 and 2030

Understanding the whole syllabus

Psychology uses theory and research to explain behaviour and experience. A theory proposes an explanation; a study supplies evidence that can support or challenge it. The syllabus connects these ideas with research methods, ethical considerations and applications to unfamiliar situations.

For Psychology 9990, the content map below follows the approved subject briefing and the official syllabus. Labels group related areas for orientation; the detailed syllabus remains the authority for individual learning requirements.

Content map

Syllabus area or component	What the area covers
AS: Four approaches and twelve core studies	At AS Level, you examine psychology through four approaches: biological, cognitive, learning and social. These perspectives are illustrated through twelve compulsory core studies covering a range of human and animal behaviours.
AS: Evidence, issues and debates	You will investigate why each study was conducted, how the researchers collected evidence, what they discovered and how their findings can be interpreted. You will also compare approaches and consider important issues and debates, including ethics, individual and situational explanations, nature and nurture, and the usefulness of psychological research.
Research methodology	Research methodology is integrated throughout the course. You will study experiments, observations, self-reports, case studies, correlations and longitudinal research, together with sampling, data, validity, reliability and ethical considerations.
A Level: Two specialist options	A Level candidates continue with the AS knowledge and choose two specialist options from Clinical, Consumer, Health and Organisational Psychology. These areas explore how psychological ideas can be applied to mental health, consumer behaviour, health-related choices and workplace settings.

These areas should be read as a connected course. Begin with the foundational knowledge identified in the first part of the map, then build towards the applications and explanations that depend on it. Connect each topic with its evidence and research methods. Build concise comparisons that explain both what was found and what can reasonably be concluded from the methods used. Where a row describes a choice of topics or components, study the selection required by your agreed route rather than treating all alternatives as compulsory.

Qualification and component choices

Qualification route	Components	Meaning
AS Level only	1 and 2	Standalone AS qualification, graded a-e
Staged A Level	1 and 2 first; then 3 and 4	Carry forward eligible AS marks within Cambridge rules and time limits
Full A Level in one series	1, 2, 3, 4	All required components; A Level graded A*-E

AS and A Level percentages refer to different qualification totals. A component can therefore have one weighting at AS and a different weighting in the full A Level. Confirm the entry option and any carry-forward arrangements with the centre.

At A Level, choose two specialist options from Clinical Psychology, Consumer Psychology, Health Psychology, and Organisational Psychology. Use the same two options in Papers 3 and 4.

The assessed skills

Assessment objectives describe the abilities Cambridge looks for across the qualification. The following explanations paraphrase the syllabus objectives; they are not additional topics or separate orientation tasks.

Assessment objective	Meaning for the learner
AO1 Knowledge and understanding	Select accurate subject knowledge, terminology and examples that answer the question, and explain their meaning.
AO2 Application	Apply the relevant knowledge or method to the specific facts, data or situation in the question.
AO3 Analysis and evaluation	Weigh evidence, explanations or methods, explain limitations and reach a justified judgement.

These abilities work together in an answer. Accurate knowledge supports application, while a clear explanation shows how the evidence or method leads to a conclusion. The balance varies by component, so the next lesson connects these abilities with the actual assessment formats.

Key pointers: Follow the stated examination-year syllabus, cover the required areas for your route and develop skills alongside knowledge. **Next:** Open **Assessment Overview**.