

IM SYLLABUS (2026)

PSYCHOLOGY

IM 35

SYLLABUS

Psychology IM 35 Syllabus	(Available in September) 1 Paper (3hrs)
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Introduction

Psychology is best described as the scientific study of people. It observes the various ways how of individuals think and act in specific situations, and attempts to establish a reliable explanation as to why they do so. Psychology today is professionally applied in various fields such as health, law and management, education, family and sport, among many others.

At Intermediate level, psychology will introduce students to its major approaches, research methods, and areas of interest as outlined in the syllabus below. This programme will make psychology accessible to those who are interested in this area of study. It can be a preparation for the undergraduate study of Psychology or complement other fields of study by offering a depth perspective of human behaviour. It is also an opportunity for students to gain insight and reflect upon their own behaviour and that of others.

Method of Assessment

The Assessment consists of a three-hour written paper, divided into two sections. Section A will cover modules 1 and 2 from the syllabus, and will carry 40% of the mark. Section B will tackle the other three Modules and will carry 60% of the mark. For both sections, candidates will answer a compulsory question together with another question from a given choice of two questions. In section A the compulsory question covers module 1 and in section B it will be a case study with a number of short questions. Each question in section A will be allotted 20 marks, and each question in section B will be allotted 30 marks.

Aims

The aims of the syllabus are to lead students to:

- a. an appreciation of a wide spectrum of aspects and schools of psychology;
- b. an ability to learn from research and be familiar with research methods;
- c. an opportunity to learn from observation, application and experience;
- d. foster a culture of reflection both on inner process and attitude in relation to self and others.

Objectives

Students should:

- a. be able to define/describe the themes covered in the syllabus, describe major theories and research and be able to give examples from daily life;
- b. be aware of some of their own thought processes and some of the internal thought processes of others;
- c. recognise and identify basic psychological influences on thought and behaviour with reference to case studies;
- d. be aware that what we know is based on research and should be able to understand both process and content of research as well as to appraise what research has contributed to particular areas.

CONTENT

* Vide: Memo December 2015

MODULE 1: WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGY?

- a) Definition of Psychology
- b) History of Psychology
 - i. Structuralism
 - ii. Functionalism
 - iii. Psychoanalysis
 - iv. Behaviourism
 - v. Humanism
- c) Research methods in Psychology
 - i. Qualitative and quantitative methodology
 - ii. Sampling techniques
 - iii. Reflexivity
 - iv. Method 1: Experiments
 - v. Method 2: Observations
 - vi. Method 3: Interviews
- d) The profession of Psychology: What psychologists do and where they work.
 - i. Clinical
 - ii. Counselling
 - iii. Educational
 - iv. Organisational
 - v. Health, Social
 - vi. Research

MODULE 2: MAJOR APPROACHES IN PSYCHOLOGY

- a) Biological approach
 - i. The nature of heredity
 - ii. The nervous system
 - iii. Structure and functions of the brain
 - iv. Ways of studying the brain
- b) Behaviourist approach
 - i. Classical conditioning
 - ii. Operant conditioning
 - iii. Applications in learning
- c) Social approach
 - i. Attachment and deprivation
 - ii. Pro-social behaviour
 - iii. Social influence
- d) Cognitive approach
 - i. Perception
 - ii. Memory
- e) Personality
 - i. Psychoanalytic approach
 - ii. Humanism
 - iii. Trait theory

MODULE 3: DEVELOPMENT AND OBSERVING HUMAN BEHAVIOUR: REFLEXIVITY AND PROCESS AWARENESS

- a) Development:
 - i. The Nature/Nurture debate.
 - ii. The phases of the life cycle and 5 major psycho-social life tasks of each phase: infancy, childhood, adolescence, early middle and late adulthood.
 - iii. Erik Erikson's theory of development. Describing each phase, defining what is achieved in this phase, and the result if the phase is not successfully negotiated (e.g. Trust Vs. Mistrust). Displaying the ability to exemplify each stage by describing persons who display typical behaviour.
 - iv. Observation: Having experience of seeing each of the above (point i) phases in action (in order to answer questions like: "Describe the behaviour of a baby and give reasons for the behaviour you have observed"). Observation is also training in ability to notice that there are underlying reasons for a person's behaviour. This ability will also be tested in the case study. Candidates are expected to show an understanding of behaviour that goes beyond external manifestation, i.e. inner emotions and reasons behind behaviour. Candidates are encouraged to link their observations with theory.

- b) Understanding behaviour:
 - i. Describing, and exemplifying the communication model.
 - ii. Defining and exemplifying non-verbal behaviour and being able to describe some typical non-verbal behaviours and what inner reality they indicate.
 - iii. Defining and describing needs using Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
 - iv. Introduction to groups: types of groups, roles in a group, agendas in a group, describing and exemplifying task/person orientation, defining and exemplifying process in groups.
 - v. Reflection and process awareness: Candidates are expected to dedicate some time in self-reflection regarding their life and development, particularly what their personality is like, how they developed, how they communicate, what their needs are, what groups they belong to and how they behave in each. This work enhances students' acuity in preparation for the case study and enables them to answer case study questions and also answer such questions as: "How have you grown so far in your life, and what needs to grow in you in the near future?"

MODULE 4: PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

- a) Introduction and perspectives on Psychological Disorders
- b) Defining Psychological Disorders
- c) Understanding Psychological Disorders
- d) Anxiety Disorders: Generalised Anxiety Disorder
 - i. Panic Disorder
 - ii. Phobias
 - iii. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
 - iv. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- e) Understanding Anxiety Disorders
- f) Mood Disorders: Major Depressive Disorder and Bipolar Disorder
- g) Understanding Mood Disorders
- h) Schizophrenia
- i) Personality Disorders

MODULE 5: THEMES IN PSYCHOLOGY

THEME 1: STRESS

- a) Introduction
- b) Causes of stress:
 - i. Stressful life events
 - ii. Personality
 - iii. Noise and Heat
- c) How does stress cause illness?
- d) Methods of reducing stress: Biofeedback
 - i. Drug treatment
 - ii. Social support
 - iii. Stress inoculation training
- e) Coping strategies

THEME 2: AGGRESSION

- a) Introduction
- b) Development of Aggression:
 - i. Media influences
 - ii. Social learning theory
 - iii. Biological approach
 - iv. Family processes
 - v. Frustration-Aggression hypothesis
- c) Reducing Aggression: Fostering empathy
 - i. Removing rewards
 - ii. Eliminating coercive cycles

THEME 3: GENDER

- i. Observed sex differences
- ii. Cultural differences
- iii. Theories of gender development
- iv. Masculinity and femininity

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

British Psychological Society Website: <http://www.bps.org.uk/careers-education-training/how-become-psychologist/types-psychologists/types-psychologists>

Eysenck, M.W. (2002). **Simply Psychology 2nd Ed.** New York: Psychology Press.

Chapters 1 (2-9), 3, 4 (49-50, 54-63), 6 (82-88, 92-93), 7, 11, 12 (169-174), 14 (201-208), 15 (217-223), 18, 20 (291-300), 21 (307-314).

Myers, D. G. (2010) **Psychology (9th Ed.)**. New York: Worth Publishers.

Prologue (1-6), Chapter 14 (593-597), (601-608), (611-624), (628-630).

Pearson Baccalaureate: Psychology for the IB Diploma (Pearson International Baccalaureate Diploma: International Editions 2010. Chapter 1, pages: 8-12, 14-17, 19-22, 26 -32.

MEMO DECEMBER 2015:

Re DSM-5. The section on Anxiety Disorders no longer includes 'Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder' and 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder' (or 'Acute Stress Disorder'). Although these disorders have been branched into different sections, they remain sequentially ordered in the Manual, reflecting the close relationship between them.

Students are to consider all the disorders as relevant and cover the five disorders as presented in the suggested text listed in the syllabus. They should be aware that the two disorders 'Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder' and 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder' (or 'Acute Stress Disorder') should no longer be grouped under the term "Anxiety Disorders".