

Please read in conjunction with the information provided in the introductory section above

AEA PSYCHOLOGY TEST SPECIFICATION

1. AIMS

The AEA in psychology is designed to help candidates to develop and demonstrate a deeper understanding of psychology than is required at advanced level. It should encourage candidates to demonstrate this depth of knowledge and understanding through:

- applying psychological concepts, theories, approaches and research methodology creatively and in novel situations;
- evaluating information and evidence about how psychology can be used and applied in society;
- bringing together and using knowledge of the ways in which different areas of psychology relate to each other;
- understanding and evaluating the range of methods and techniques used by psychologists to collect and analyse information;
- communicating knowledge and understanding of psychology coherently and effectively.

2. CONTENT

The AEA in psychology is based on the generic '*Subject Criteria For GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced level (A) Psychology*'. It is designed to reflect the content common to all A level psychology specifications and, therefore, is independent of individual specifications. There is a greater emphasis on depth of understanding than in A level specifications.

The AEA in psychology will require students to demonstrate:

- knowledge and understanding as set out in Appendix 1;
- skills of planning, analysing and evaluating research as included in the research methods section of Appendix 1;
- skills of interpretation, critical analysis, evaluation, synthesis and debate as set out in all sections of Appendix 1.

The content is listed fully in Appendix 1.

3. ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE

The AEA in psychology will assess candidates' abilities to apply and communicate effectively their understanding of the fundamental principles, theories, concepts and methods of psychology, using skills of interpretation, critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis.

4. SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment will be 100% external by means of a 3 hour written examination with some choice of questions.

Section A – Theoretical Issues and Debates

- (33.3% - one hour, including reading time.)

A single, compulsory, structured question, with an element of choice, based on one or more pieces of resource material, for example, a text extract or a newspaper report. Candidates will be required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of psychological perspectives, approaches, issues and debates, and their skills of interpretation, analysis and evaluation.

Section B – Methodology

- (33.3% - one hour.)

A single, compulsory, structured question, designed principally to assess candidates' understanding of psychological methodology, including ethical considerations. Candidates will be required to consider issues of research design, and data analysis and interpretation, in relation to a given situation or context in psychology.

Section C – Approaches and Applications

- (33.3% - one hour.)

One essay question to be selected from a choice of three. Candidates will be required to draw upon principles, theories, concepts, and methods from across the subject content. They must apply these in a specified context which may be indicated through stimulus material. Candidates will be required to demonstrate skills of developing an argument, and organising and presenting material coherently.

Use of Resources

In common with other Advanced GCE examinations, the use of dictionaries will not be permitted. The use of any other resources must take full account of the need to ensure fairness to all candidates and the rigour of assessment.

5. PERFORMANCE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

	DISTINCTION	MERIT
	<i>Candidates:</i>	<i>Candidates:</i>
1	bring together knowledge, principles and concepts from different areas and approaches within psychology, consistently demonstrating depth, breadth and clarity in their understanding of the relationships between them;	bring together knowledge, principles and concepts from different areas and approaches within psychology, demonstrating depth and breadth in their understanding of the relationship between them;
2	select and apply principles and concepts of psychology effectively and efficiently across a wide range of familiar and new contexts and situations;	select and apply principles and concepts of psychology appropriately across a range of familiar and new situations;
3	make effective use of a range of appropriate concepts, terminology, data and techniques in constructing arguments and solving problems;	make appropriate use of a range of concepts, terminology, data and techniques in constructing arguments and solving problems;
4	formulate a reasoned rationale for their design decisions; and demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding of issues of data analysis and interpretation;	justify their design decisions and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of issues of data analysis and interpretation;
5	communicate their ideas clearly, precisely and logically, presenting focused, well-structured arguments where appropriate and selecting a form and style appropriate to the context.	communicate their ideas clearly and logically, using structured arguments, and selecting a form and style appropriate to the context.

The Advanced Extension Award in psychology is based on an assessment of the following knowledge, understanding and skills. This knowledge and understanding reflects the content common to all A level specifications.

1. KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND SKILLS

AREA OF STUDY	AMPLIFICATION
1. Research methodology	
1.1 Research methods	The selection, development, justification and evaluation of an appropriate methodology, including ethical considerations.
1.2 Research design	
1.3 Data analysis	Analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.
2. Issues and debates	
2.1 Ethical issues	Consideration of ethical issues in psychological research, including familiarity with The British Psychological Society (BPS) ethical guidelines.
2.2 Debates in psychology	
2.3 Nature and nurture (Heredity and environment)	Consideration of debates which inform critical evaluation of theory and empirical studies, for example, free will, determinism, reductionism and holism. The use of qualitative/quantitative data.
2.4 Biases in psychology	Assumptions made about heredity and environment in psychological theory and research and differing views regarding their relationship.
	Identification and consideration of biases in psychology, for example, cultural bias, gender bias, researcher bias, bias in interpretation.
3. Applications and approaches in psychology	
3.1 The biological approach	Key assumptions of the approaches listed. Evaluation of these approaches. Methodological implications of the approaches. The application of the approaches to the understanding of contemporary issues. (NB Although not compulsory, it is recognised that candidates might choose to use other approaches, for example, humanism, evolutionary psychology, in their answers.)
3.2 The cognitive approach	
3.3 The psychodynamic approach	
3.4 The behavioural approach	
3.5 Applications	The applications of psychology to social issues.
3.6 Contributions, applications and impact of psychology	Consideration of the contributions and wider implications and impact of psychology including social, cultural and ethical implications.